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CURRENTS in theology and mission

No Continuing City

Contents

Page

Editorial: No Continuing City 2
Ralph W. Klein

A Cosmic Sigh of Relinquishment 5
Walter Brueggemann

The Gospel, Historical Consciousness, and Risk 21
David W. Lotz

The Unemployed: Challenge to the Church 34
Karen L. Bloomquist

Pastoring One's Peers 38
Harry N. Huxhold

The Second Knot of Friendship 47
Travis DuPriest

The Church That Changed Its Name 49
Vernon J. Jahnke

Letters to the Editor in Response to "Probings Toward Ecclesial Discipline" 54

Book Reviews 59

Paradigm for Lutheran Union ..... Inside Back Cover
John H. Tietjen

Drawings by Scott Holl

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No Continuing City

There's more than a touch of sadness in our headline. How we long to be rooted and to have a place we can call home! These three simple words from Hebrews criticize our arrogant pretense; they unmask our several idolatries. Thank God they are only half of a paradox. The deepest truth about us Christians deals not with our mortality and transitoriness, but with our quest for the city which is to come, whose builder and maker is God. Out front of us stands the crucified one, the pioneer, and the perfecter of our faith.

Walter Brueggemann lets us in on the critique raised by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, who issued a threat to all those who sponsored a continuing city. Only those who sigh and groan have hope of a new city after the old one falls. To sigh and groan is to see things as they really are in society and to sense the incongruity between this and the holy God. Since groaning incarnates protest and the public processing of disengagement from the system, this world's regimes will not tolerate it. His interpretation of texts from Exodus, Amos, Ezekiel and Psalms may help us give form to our ministry in the face of no continuing city. As Western hegemony slips, some try to paper over its cracks with nuclear insanity while the wretched of the earth know that their cries mobilize God against every continuing city.

For those of us who are part of Christ Seminary-Seminex, exile and sojourning have been an enduring lifestyle. **David W. Lotz** points to gospel fidelity as a hallmark of Seminex. This seminary was and is convinced that the written word exists for the sake of Jesus Christ, the personal word of God. Theological education for the city to come recognizes the historicality of the Bible, the church's tradition, and of human existence itself; it is not overwhelmed by cultural narcissism or a preoccupation with mental health. Members of a seminary without a permanent home are by

definition have-nots, and so they spontaneously identify with the poor, the sick, the homeless, and the suffering.

What word do we have for today's city, a place of chronic unemployment? **Karen L. Bloomquist** suggests ways for the church to minister to all those unemployed who have lost identity, worth, and power. The church, in addition to offering psychological, spiritual, and financial assistance, can challenge the reigning works-righteousness in our society and its individualistic view of salvation. She calls the church to name as sin those factors in our socio-historic reality that lead to unemployment, such as the valuing of capital over labor or the quest for excessive profit. As actors in the public arena, the faithful people of the church refuse to succumb to those forces which hold people's lives captive.

Pastoring one's peers, according to **Harry N. Huxhold,** is the ultimate test of the pastoral office. He diagnoses what makes this difficult and suggests, from examples in his own experience, how peer counseling might better be done. All pastors are brothers and sisters, integral parts of the one church. Despite these givens, no one person can be pastor to all since we are neither accepted by all or sensitive to all. This essay calls clerical supervisors and "common pastors" to renewed responsibility to each other.

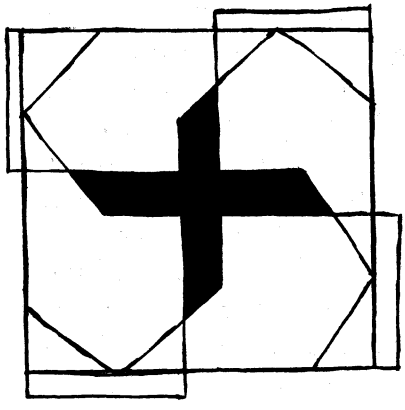
We love good stories, and **Vernon J. Jahnke** has written a stimulating retelling of Luke 15. Rather than summarize his story, let me quote from his letter: "The story deals with those who are lost and those who seek the lost, but walks a step farther in considering what happens when the seekers become the lost who then become the found. Readers of this story will have to discern for themselves whether God is an active or passive seeker. Is God as 'laid back' as Pastor Jones appears to be? Or is the Spirit actually aggressive throughout in the activities of the various characters?"

Travis du Priest continues his series on friendship. While giving is better, receiving is also good, and those who cannot receive from us cannot be real friends. Friendship is the bond upon which all civilization rests.

Concluding this issue is a series of letters from Pastors **Theodore R. Jungkuntz, Rudolph C. Prange, Paul M. Swedberg, and William F. Walles** on the issue of "ecclesial discipline." They are responding to an earlier article by **Jay C. Rochelle,** who replies to his friendly critics.

Abraham lived in the Holy Land as sojourner, mere heir of the promise; old Sarah received power to conceive because she considered him faithful who had promised; Moses feared neither beast nor Pharaoh since he "saw" him who is invisible, and Rahab showed her faith by her friendly welcome to spies. They and all of you are a great cloud of witnesses, citizens of that coming city. I count myself, as ever,

Surrounded,
Ralph W. Klein
Editor



A Cosmic Sigh of Relinquishment

Walter Brueggemann

Eden Theological Seminary, Webster Grove, MO. The first of a series of two lectures delivered by Professor Brueggemann at a convocation entitled "No Continuing City," commemorating the conclusion of the tenth academic year of Christ Seminary-Seminex in St. Louis. The second essay, "A New Creation — After the Sigh," will appear in the April, 1984, issue of Currents.

The hopes, yearnings and passions that have brought Christ Seminary-Seminex into being, and that have sustained it, which we believe are wrought by the power of God, are of course *subversive.* Any act of freedom against system, any practice of "new truth" against established truth, any insistence upon scandal in the face of official certitude is subversive. It makes us notice, look again, and recognize how tenuous are our packages of truth. And where we notice, look again, and recognize the tenuousness, we have a chance for renewal and reform, for being reshaped and reconfigured, for being freshly addressed by the Gospel and given new gifts and new mandates.

Our reaction to such subversion (as has been embodied here) is likely to be one of two things. On the one hand, if we can, we will *resist the subversion,* not notice, not look again, not recognize the tenuousness and simply speak once more the old certitude that, under assault, we take to be solid, reliable and sure, or at least respectable. That has been a response to this subversion on the part of some distractors. But they have no monopoly on such a response. We all do it — every time we have a chance. And without knowing, I suspect that even in the very heart of this movement, there have been times of wistfulness which want to resist the subversion. We do it theologically, ecclesiologically, psychologically, politically. As Freud understood best, we have an amazing capacity to resist the subversion, even though new life from God is given precisely in the subversion where fresh disclosure has an opening.

On the other hand, if we do not resist the subversion, we may *embrace the subversion,* and then as quickly as possible, we process the new shape to make it certain and "liberate" it from all its tenuousness. No doubt that has more recently been a temptation in this marvelously subversive enterprise we call Seminex, not to continue the subversion, but to remember and celebrate a previous subversion now reasonably established.

I assume that our theme for these days is how to sustain, keep free and open the hopes, yearnings and passions of that subversion for a continuation against every settled truth that does not notice or look again or recognize the tenuousness. We are so easily scandalized by being a part of such an enterprise, that we will relax the poignancy at the first opportunity. And likely it cannot be otherwise with us. We cannot live in that state of displacement for very long periods of time. So our purpose, I presume, is to ask about sustaining the hopes, yearnings and passions of *free, evangelical subversiveness,* that does not fall back into old certitudes and that does not rush to dogmatize new certitudes, but that lives in the hard, open space where new futures are given, new gifts are offered and new mandates are urged. For those of us near at hand (but not really engag-

ed in this marvelous enterprise), Christ Seminary-Seminex bears witness to us of the "fear and trembling" that belongs to every community that faces the risen Christ in his full power.

I

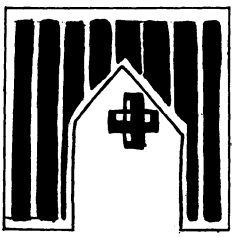
The general theme of this convocation, "No Continuing City," has suggested the direction of my comments. We all crave a continuing city, some of us more than others, but all of us. The "city" embodies and signifies order, solidity, a rule of law, a supply of food, a temple to assure presence, an army to secure it all, a cultural world of symbols that maintains for us coherence and significance. There is something in the very definition and character of city (as distinct from tribe, village or state) that requires the adjective "continuing," for it is in the nature of the city to continue. And all of us who live there and draw life from it want, expect and need the city to continue.

This movement that clusters around Seminex, which we celebrate and for which we give thanks and about which we now inquire, has been wrought precisely in a *withdrawal from that city,* in some sense it has been a *dismantling of the city.* Such subversion is an "unnatural act," an alien work, an act against *our* natural inclination. For we are "meaning creatures." We do what we can to find order, coherence and security. We yearn for a city. We preserve and defend the city in every way we can. We reflect today on what it means to withdraw or dismantle, to depart only in faith, to find resources for life apart from the available, assured city, which means life exposed, precarious, vulnerable. And we wonder each time how long one can live in that jeopardy.

The city that provides us this metaphor is of course Jerusalem, especially for an Old Testament researcher like me. Jerusalem is for Israel a real, concrete city, but it is also a metaphor that has propelled Israel's thoughts, always in touch with the concrete city, but always behind it, always a "vehicle" of walls and streets, but also a "tenor" moving beyond old walls to new hopes.[1] The city we covet and defend is the one we forget only if our right hand withers (Ps. 137:5-6), the one we imagine to be utterly new with rejoicing (Is. 65:18), the one each year we set for our goal, "next year in Jerusalem."

That city, taken concretely and metaphorically, is for Israel always an ambiguous, ambivalent city. It is like a dream come true, a place for God's sure presence, where the ark dwells, and therefore, the seal of well-being. It is no wonder that the city came to have the

[1]The terms are from Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962) 70-91. Exemplary use of the constructs for Biblical interpretation has been offered by Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978) 17, 33.



word "shalom" attached to it, Jerushalom,[2] in much of the lyrical poetry assigned to that precious city. And yet the Bible does not flinch from seeing that this seat of well-being is also the host city for Israel's pervertedness. It became the place of pretension, idolatry, self-sufficiency and inevitably the place of exploitation. This dream of well-being becomes the place for hierarchical ordering of society, the place from which Uriah carried his own death warrant into battle and wherein Solomon practiced his manipulative religion and his political sexuality. Indeed, if Lutherans had written more of the Old Testament, they might speak of this city (and all cities) as *simul justus et peccator.* Which of these dimensions we notice tells a great deal about our yearning for home, and our capacity for subversion.

The *continuing city of David* is increasingly problematic for Israel's tradition of subversion. I focus only on the three major prophets — Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Isaiah seems the most deeply rooted in the claims of Jerusalem.[3] The tradition has Isaiah say: "He (the king of Assyria) shall come into this city, says the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David (37:34-35)."[4] The tradition knows, when filtered through a certain lens, that a continuing city is no small thing to be lightly dismissed. Even Yahweh, in one posture, hopes and yearns for Jerusalem as a continuing city. But as you know well, Isaiah saw more than that. So this poem, shaped like an hour-glass, is set at the beginning of the Isaiah tradition (1:21-26):[5] A *whore* has the faithful city become.

The prophet can remember the ideal Jerusalem, the one that should have continued, marked by the marks of a real city, righteousness and justice. But that is not the city he discerned. Now it is silver mixed with dross. Now it is wine with water. Now the leadership is corrupt, bribes and self-interest, and nobody looks after the marginal, the widows and orphans.

Of course this could not be a continuing city. It dare not; we would not wish it. Isaiah does not urge it. Even Yahweh, who can treasure even Nineveh (Jonah 4:11), is not that moved by this city. So we reach the center of the poem in v. 24. The center is marked by two rhetorical items: a "therefore" and the solemn three-fold utterance of God's dreadful name:

[2]On Jerusalem and Shalom, See Norman W. Porteous, "Jerusalem-Zion: The Growth of a Symbol," *Verbannung und Heimkekr* ed. by Arnulf Kuschke (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961) 235-52.

[3]On the rootage of Isaiah in Jerusalem traditions, see Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology II* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965) 155-69. See also John H. Hayes, "The Tradition of Zion's Inviolability," *JBL* 82 (1963) 419-26.

[4]On the claims for Zion in the Isaiah tradition, see Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (SBT II, 3; Naperville, Il: Alex R. Allenson, 1967).

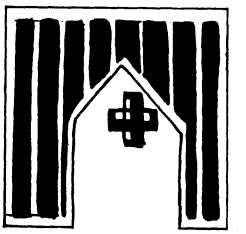
[5]See the discussion of the chapter by Georg Fohrer, "Jesaja 1 als Zusammenfassung der Verkündigung Jesajas," *ZAW* 74 (1962) 251-68.

Yahweh
Yahweh of the troops,
The Mighty One in Israel.

So the judgment on the discontinued city matches the stench: dross smelted away, old leadership modes replace the modern abusers. Then, the poem says, "Afterward." How long? How deep is the cut? We are not told. Only "afterward." After exile, after displacement, after discontinuation, after dismantling . . . then the city will be marked by righteousness and faithfulness and justice, as at the first. At the end, after the break, by the tough mercy of God, uncompromising as it is, the city will finally bear the marks dreamed over it from the beginning.

The claim of 37:34-35 is too sure and too precious, too guaranteed, filtered through wishful thinking, or better, through ideology. A city that is immune to threat is like a Messiah who will not die. The inclination of the disciples to talk Jesus out of death is matched by a determination that the city shall be forever. Where the Messiah does not die, there will be no salavation. Where the whore city is not discontinued, there will be no new Jerusalem of justice and righteousness and faithfulness. Newness is given precisely in the discontinuation. And that is so, even while the city itself is a sign and proclamation precisely of continuity.

The problem is clear in this poem of Isaiah. The city, sign of continuity, must be discontinued if there is to be justice and righteousness. And the tradition is always underway, deciding which way to tilt this unsettling reality. The programmatic poem of 1:21-26 is more knowing, more subtle, more devastating than the untroubled assurance of 37:34-35. The programmatic poem speaks about deep dismantling and then stunning restoration. One can argue that Isaiah here holds to the Zion tradition. But if so, he holds it loosely and gingerly, with embarrassment and with self-awareness. He knows that the city cannot continue as is, because God finally will not countenance even this precious city, when righteousness, faithfulness, justice are perverted beyond recall to harlotry. This Isaiah of a poet is so knowing, because he is the one who dares to say, "I am unclean, I dwell in the midst of an unclean people" (6:5). How remarkable that this prophet, so closely linked to dynasty and temple, uses here a word referring to ritual impurity. "I and my people are disqualified," which means we have no access to the goodies guarded at the center of the city. And no wonder then that he says, "I am undone, I am lost, I am reduced to silence." This one who knows so much about self, about contemporaries, about city, is reduced to the silence of dismantling, because he knows now that the continuing city will not continue. There may be an "afterward," but it is small comfort in the moment when the royal assurance is found to be ideology.



II

It is not different with Jeremiah. He has watched, by a hundred years longer than Isaiah, and has seen the city grow more hopeless. He engaged in a more passionate, painful poetry. And he has gotten a Babylonian fix on historical reality, seeing that God intends the city to be surrendered to the enemy. Jeremiah is correctly perceived as a threat and a traitor to all those who sponsor and benefit from the continuing city (38:4). Jeremiah's words are a massive, subversive assault against every pretension for the city. His programmatic statement is about "plucking up and breaking down, about destroying and overthrowing (1:10), about an end that seems total. Only in his latest texts do the two positive verbs, "planting and building", seem to operate. But these two verbs are for the moment put on hold. It is the abrasive ones that are operational and dominant in the poetry. The claim of the poetry is that the city cannot continue, because God has sworn its demise. The Holy One of Israel is now arrayed against his own city. It is difficult to sort out what belongs to the person of Jeremiah, as distinct from redactional activity which, at the hand of the Deuteronomists, is more reformist.[6] But it appears that his ministry is aimed at this one conclusion: *The continuing city will not continue.* In such a judgment of course, he challenges the dominant religious and political claim that has been honed in Judah since the time of Solomon. He intends to nullify Israel's central plausibility structure. He reads history well. He understands the threat of Babylonian expansionism. But his pathos does not come from reading imperial history, but from discerning the righteous will of Yahweh, the jealousy beyond which Yahweh will not be pushed. And because his work is not reading imperial history, he does not issue policy memos. Because his call is to discern the rightous will of Yahweh, which is not available on a flat surface to standard TV critics, he speaks in poetic, porous impressionistic ways, ways to match the inscrutable agentry of Yahweh:

"Blow the trumpet through the land;
cry aloud and say,
"Assemble, and let us go
into the fortified cities!"
Raise a standard toward Zion,
Flee for safety, stay not,
for I bring evil from the north,
and great destruction.
A lion has gone up from his thicket,
a destroyer of nations has set out;
he has gone forth from his place
to make your land a waste;
your cities will be ruins
without inhabitant.
For this gird you with sackcloth,
lament and wail;

[6]On the critical questions related to Jeremiah, see articles by William Holladay and James Crenshaw, in *Interpretation* 37 (1983) 117-129 and 146-159.

for the fierce anger of the Lord
has not turned back from us.
(Jer. 4:5-8)

And you, O desolate one,
what do you mean that you
dress in scarlet,
that you deck yourself with
ornaments of gold,
that you enlarge your eyes
with paint?
In vain you beautify yourself.
Your lovers despise you;
they seek your life.
For I heard a cry as of a woman
in travail,
anguish as of one bringing forth
her first child,
the cry of the daughter of Zion
gasping for breath,
stretching out her hands,
"Woe is me! I am fainting before
murderers." (Jer. 4:30-31).

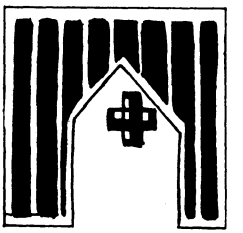
Therefore a lion from the forest
shall slay them.
a wolf from the desert shall
destroy them.
A leopard is watching against
their cities,
everyone who goes out of them
shall be torn in pieces;
because their transgressions
are many,
their apostasies are great. (5:6,
cf. 44:19-22, 23-26, 6:21, 9:1-3)

If these words are in any way pertinent to us, they must be understood for what they are. They are not policy statements, not analytical descriptions, but poetic scenarios, assaults on imagination, invitations to conjure a city-less, Zion-less, temple-less world.

And the reason I insist on this, is that the city "out there" is matched by the city "in here." That is, the city we may relate this to is not first of all bricks and mortar, but our arrangements of certitude and symbol which are social construction and spiritual commitment. The city "in here" is a city of certitude and security, a mighty fortress in which dwells truth and close to it dwells arrogance and triumphalism wrought of self-sufficiency. The city "out there" is of concrete and glass and plastic. But the city "in here" is of self-serving called value, of buoyancy unrelated to reality, of security that cannot be cashed. That city of human symbolization is a city of deception and exploitation, of things called by wrong names, with a deep confusion about what should be used and what should be served.

That city of meaning and security and delight, says Jeremiah, ill matches the reality of Yahweh's purposes. So I submit that the classic analysis, "There is no health in us," is not primarily a statement about human personality, at least not for Jeremiah. It is about the social system:

They have healed the wound of
my people lightly,
saying, "peace, peace,"
when there is no peace.
Were they ashamed when they
committed abomination? (8:11-12a)



For the wound of the daughter
of my people is my heart wounded,
I mourn, and dismay has taken
hold on me. (8:21)
Your hurt is incurable;
and your wound is grievous.
There is none to uphold your cause,
no medicine for your wound,
no healing for you (30:12-13).

There is no health and no possibility for healing for this city on which Judah had placed its very large bet.

III

But it is especially Ezekiel who sees this so clearly. Ezekiel understands that the city is one from which the glory has departed (9:3, 10:4-5, 18:22). The city had seemed so durable, and all the regal institutions had been inclined to make it so. Ezekiel had done an analysis of the situation. His tour through the temple in chapter 8 is unutterable in its repulsiveness. So in chapters 4-8, the prophet presents an analysis, and several scenarios of the city being ended as the place where the glory dwells.

It is with Ezekiel 9 that I want to linger. The narrative is strange indeed, has qualities that hint at apocalyptic. The chapter opens with a summons to the executioners to stand ready, for all the appeals procedures have been exhausted. And there were six of them, ready and waiting, each with weapon at the ready, because those weapons are said to be legitimate tools of "state."

The heart of the chapter, vv. 5-10, is the commissioning of the executioners: "pass through the city . . . and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, . . . And begin at my sanctuary (vv. 5-6)." The sentence is massive. In v. 6, it is said that they begin. They are commanded in v. 7, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go forth." V. 9 offers the reason for all of this: The city is full of injustice. So the conclusion in v. 10: "As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. But I will require their deeds upon their heads." This is not a statement of historical fact. It is a vision, a scenario of God's will for the city. The imaginative account intends that Judeans before 587 should have the spiritual crisis available to them, to act out ahead of time how that terrible scenario must go. What is clear now is that the old claims are void. No appeal is made back to dynastic promises, no Zionist dreams, no summons to repent. This is the point of non-return. The decree is non-negotiable.

As you likely know, there is a strange, even unexpected counter-point in the text. There is a seventh character along with the six executioners. The seventh appears in v. 2 when the executioners are summoned. He is a man clothed in linen with a brief case. He carries no weapons. He is simply "taking names." But the names he takes, i.e., the people he designates, are noteworthy. They are an

exception to the ones subject to the executioners: "Go through the city, through Jerusalem. And put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sign and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." The work of the *executioners* and *the marking one* are in tension. The whole process evokes the pathetic intercession of Ezekiel in v. 8: "Ah Lord God! Wilt thou destroy all that remains of Irsael in the outpouring of thy wrath upon Jerusalem?" The episode is concluded in v. 11 with the report of the work being done: The one with the brief case at his side, brought back word saying, "I have done as thou didst command me." That is all.

Now the main thrust of Ezekiel is the destruction and departure of the glory. It is the full pay-off of the nations of Isaiah and Jeremiah, that there will be no continuing city. In the midst of that solemn irreversible pay-off, there is the wonder of Ezekiel's pathos which sounds like the question of Abraham in Gen. 18: will you destroy all them? No continuing city? And in terms of public statics, it is indeed all of them.

IV

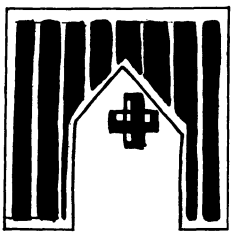
But where I want to focus is on the counter-move in the narrative. I am not interested in any schematic theology of the remnant which has been overstated in importance. But I do observe that the threat has been intensifying through Isaiah and Jeremiah until Ezekiel: And now the threat is implemented in all its terrible finality — and it begins with the sanctuary.

So, do I over-state the importance of this counter theme? What I want to stress is this. The only ones saved, the only thread of continuity in this city that does not continue, are the ones who *sigh and groan.* They are the ones who are marked for exemption. That is an odd credential for the future, a scandalous ground for survival, but one we might want to think about. I have entitled this lecture, "A Sigh of Relinquishment." And it is to this particular verse that I refer. Judgment comes on those who do not sigh and groan. Rescue is for those that do. So my thesis is simply that the only survival posture for the future is to sigh and groan about the present circumstances. The point that I make is that in the face of "no continuing city," it is only from crying and groaning there can come hope of a new city. It is an odd marking given, perhaps parallel to the mark of Cain, a mark of protection and sanctuary.

I suggest that to sigh and groan might mean:

a) to see things as they really are, not to be deceived by the ideology and self-deception everywhere available.

b) to sense the *incongruity* between this situation and the Holy God, and to be aware that this situation cannot endure in God's presence. This means not only to notice but to have a clear discern-



ment of God's holiness that puts the present in jeopardy.

c) to relinquish the present because it must be yielded in light of the holy character of God, not to imagine that somehow the holy God can live with and be present in such a situation of abomination. The implication of course is that those who do not sigh and groan are those who do not notice and who imagine that somehow the city will continue and God will find a way to legitimate it.

V

Now I want to do two things, first to explore this metaphor of sigh and groan, and second, to explore what it may mean in the face of the continuing city.

I suggest that the tap root for this metaphor in Israel's narrative of faith is to be found in Ex. 2:23-25: "And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God." That, it seems to me, is where the history of Israel's groan begins, and where the history of hope and freedom also begins. The book of Exodus is a narrative that begins when people are in touch enough with their real situation that they sense the pain and give it public processing. No doubt the Egyptian overlords did not want the pain to receive public processing. No doubt they hoped the pain would not be noticed, and, if noticed, handled in less disruptive ways. Indeed, one can imagine that for a long time, the Egyptian empire was able to silence the groan, perhaps because people were kept from noticing the pain, or perhaps through laws prohibiting assembly, so there was no public place for processing, or perhaps by keeping the slaves well-fed, so they had too much to lose.

That may have worked for a time, but through the leadership of Moses, there is unleashed a great groan heard both in heaven and throughout the empire.

The groan, the sigh, or the cry is the sound that the regime least wants to hear. The regime wants to hear applause and assent, consent, docility, affirmation of the ideology. But the groan is a mighty protest and disengagement. It is an announcement that the system is not working. And finally that fact has trickled into the awareness of the brickmaking peasants. They found the courage to bring the awareness to public speech. The groan also announces that the system is in fact delegitimated, will not be honored, will not be taken seriously, will not be obeyed, will not be financed. *The groan of pain and hurt publicly acknowledged* means a decisive turn in public history, and the passing of the old order. And we know what came of it all — burning bush, Sinai, new covenant, Israel, none of which would have happend without the groan.

But groaning in grief and stress and anguish is not readily done. And it is not readily permitted. It is always a minority voice that dares to break out of the pat-

tern of the goodies. For once one groans, one never quite gets back in. So we put it off and pretend not to notice. So Amos offers his incredible critique of his people. Beyond the religious promiscuity and economic exploitation, he offers yet a more fundamental comment. His harsh words are like this:

> Who to those who lie upon
> beds of ivory
> and stretch themselves upon
> their couches,
> and eat lambs from the flock,
> and calves from the midst of
> the stall,
> who sing idle songs to the
> sound of the harp,
> and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,
> who drink wine in bowls,
> and anoint themselves with the
> finest oils (6:4-6).

It is a characterization of self-sufficiency, self-aggrandizement, conspicuous consumerism, now labeled by some scholars as "early capitalism."[7] But then Amos adds this zinger: "But are not *grieved* over the ruin of Joseph!" The word rendered "grieved" is *halah,* to be made weak or sick. The prophet reprimands his contemporaries that they are in a socially pathological situation, but they do not notice.

The same word is used in a parallel, though more intense fashion by Jeremiah:

> Thou hast smitten them,
> but they felt *no anguish,*
> thou hast consumed them,
> but they refuse to take correction.
> They have made their faces harder than rock;
> They have refused to repent
> (5:3).

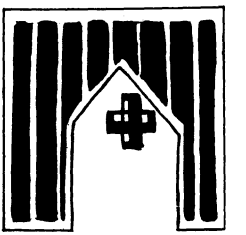
Smitten, but no anguish. Hurting, but no notice. Dying, but no grief. Ending, but no acknowledgment. Jeremiah plays with the same theme in 8:11-12:

> They have healed the wound of
> my people lightly
> saying peace, peace, where there
> is no peace.
> Were they ashamed when they
> committed abomination?
> No, they were not at all ashamed.
> They did not know how to blush
> (cf. 6:14-15).

The prophets address a people so enmeshed in the royal ideology, so believing the dominant truth that was traded on, that they had lost touch with the elemental realities. In Amos they were no longer able to notice the incongruity of affluence and hurt. In Jeremiah they did not notice the abomination against Yahweh's holy purposes, because they have been on a slide into normlessness. Neither the holiness of God nor the hurt of the neighbor gained any attention any more in this city on its way to death.

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[7]See James L. Mayes, "Justice-Perspective from the Prophets," *Interpretation* 37 (1983) 5-17, and Bernard Lang, "The Social Organization of Peasant Poverty in Biblical Israel," *JSOT* 24 (1982) 47-63.



Why was that? Not just because there was a new technology or a new affluence. The prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, are clear that the numbness had such effectiveness because it was given theological legitimacy by the religious leaders. Technology that seduces cannot make its way unless the symbol-makers, the stewards of the mysteries by which the community lives, join an adequate *ideology* to the *technologies* of self-sufficiency.

So Jeremiah can say, "From prophet to priest, each one deals falsely" (8:11). And Ezekiel uses the harsh metaphor of whitewash: "My hand is against the prophets . . . they have mislead my people saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," and because when the people build a wall, these prophets daub it with whitewash." (13:11) The reason the folks and the rulers in Amos, Jeremiah and Ezekiel imagine a continuing city is because the leaders misguided whitewash presents an illusion that does not square with reality.

And then Amos 6:7 adds the "therefore" that was sure to follow.

> Therefore, they shall now be
> the first of those who go into exile,
> And the reveling of those who
> stretch themselves shall pass.[8]

In like fashion, Jeremiah adds a "therefore" in 8:12: "Therefore, they shall fall among the fallen, when I punish them, they shall be overthrown." And Ezekiel echoes in 13:13 with a "therefore":

> Therefore I will make a strong wind break out in my wrath; And there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to destroy it. And I will break down the wall that you have daubed with whitewash and bring it to the ground, so that its foundations shall be laid bare. And when it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it.

Now my argument means to take Jer. 8 and Ezek. 13 as exposition of Amos 6. But stay with Amos 6:4-7. The end result is exile. The ground of exile is not affluence or self-indulgence. It is the failure to be grieved, to be sick, or to have pain, because the points of reference have eroded, having forgotten the norms of governance and the real agent of governance.

VI

So my argument means to present a collage of Ex. 2:23-25, Amos 6:4-7 and Ezek, 9:2-4, 11. The three texts have no visible linkage, either in word usage, or in the history of tradition, except the use of "groan" in Ex. 2:23 and Ezek. 9:4. But I suggest their juxtaposition may illuminate our theme of "no continuing city."

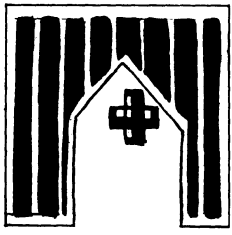
[8]On the use of the same images and words in the sentence to match the indictment, see Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982). On this particular verse, see p. 23.

Amos 6:4-7, I take to be a summary statement of the prophetic assault against the royal notion, the conventional wisdom of a continuing city. The poet sarcastically characterizes the world-view of the well-off, not evil people, but people who simply presume that the present arrangement is guaranteed and permanent. They are those who do not believe that discontinuity is a possibility,[9] do not recognize how fragile social institutions are, who have built a nice and unquestioning identification between God's holy purpose and this historical arrangement.

The prophets may hope for the impossible. What Amos seems to hope for is that people in this social location can distance themselves enough to see beyond their own comfortable self-interest, to criticize and perhaps to change. This is the theme of the continuing city as concerns the rulers of this age. It requires that we face how deeply we are enmeshed in the dominant values, how committed we are to this city, how much we benefit from its continuation. The prophetic invitation is to engage in enough *critique of social ideology* so that we see our true situation, that we notice the abyss between our real situation and the promises for which we yearn. For what we do know, as we remember how to blush and desist from whitewash, is that this city, even this holy city we call home, does not continue. The promises wrought in Jerusalem cannot be sustained in the face of the righteous will of the holy one. And no cosmetic work will make those promises come out right. This is an invitation to grief.

On the other hand, Ex. 2:23-25 affirms a very different perspective on the continuing city. There are two contrasts here with Amos 6:4-7. First, the voice is not that of the well-off. It is the voice of the *hapiru,* the marginal community of the enslaved, used but never valued. They are the ones who notice best that the whitewash is only cover-up, that the city does not keep its promises, that the promises themselves are in fact ideological cover-ups. These marginal ones are not fooled. The second difference, though perhaps not important, is that it is a different continuing city. It is not Jerusalem. It is the continuing city of the Egyptian state. It is the technology and ideology of Pharoah who utilizes and mobilizes people for selfserving agendas. But Pharoah and his priests also engaged in whitewash, also imagining it a continuing city; they did not grieve and did not notice. Indeed, the cities are not very different, except for the political label and the geographical accident. Perhaps that is a main gain for us, to notice how our holy city, even Jerusalem, judged by objective norms, is like the other cities, open to the same temptations and subject to the same terminating judgment.

[9]See my article, "'Impossibility' and Epistemology in the Faith Tradition of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:1-15)," *ZAW* 94 (1982) 615-34.



So we may usefully ask about the juxtaposition of Ex. 2:23-25 and Amos 6:4-7. The poetry of Amos is *addressed to* the rulers of this age, and no doubt resisted (cf. 7:10-17). The Exodus narrative is *addressed from* the hurting ones, an address processed through pain, able freely to criticize because the continuing city is enemy and not ally, because they had nothing to lose.

The theological outcome is known to us. The self-sufficient rarely address a word to the holy one. And when they do, it is often not heard, because it is too grand and symmetrical. It is not the voice for which the holy one has a propensity. But the hurting ones, when they speak to the holy one about the pain caused in the holy city, are heard. And God is mobilized by the cries of the wretched ones against the continuing city. The story of this people is the dismantling of the holy city of Egypt, the beginning of a new history of freedom and justice, a pilgrimage without a continuing city. But the story of this people is also the story of growing settled and fat and erecting a continuing city, a new one, but nonetheless a continuing city, a replica of Egypt,[10] as cynical and callous-ed as Pharoah's city. That story also becomes a tale of loss, displacement and exile, finally not shielded by whitewash.

These two texts give us the social location for faith and ministry in time to come, with reference to the continuing city. We are lodged precisely between Exodus 2 and Amos 6. We are the *children of those slaves* who noticed the pain, brought it to speech and started on a journey into manna. We are also the *children of the ones complacent in Zion* who did not notice, who refused to blush and engaged in cover-up. The issue is not first of strategy. It is first of seeing our situation. And I take both texts to be true. Ex. 2 is a *text of groan* that could permit a future. Amos 6 is a *text of sufficiency* that closes the future and craves the present. Such a juxtaposition permits a class reading, for Ex. 2 is the voice of the margin and Amos 6 is an address to the established.[11] But underneath the class reading these texts together speak the enormous ambiguity in which people like us are placed.

Out of these two texts, we consider Ezek. 9, a convergence of these themes. Ezekiel received this vision and spoke these words at a pivotal point in the history of Judah. The text is dated in the six year period 593-587. To those who believed the managed media, it was a *season of sufficiency* in which not being grieved matched the circumstance. So

[10]On the metaphor of "Egypt" in the literary-theological work of the Deuteronomist, see Richard Elliott Friedman, "From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr^1 and Dtr^2," *Traditions in Transformation* ed. by Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1981) 167-92.

[11]On the voices of the margin and the establishment, see the comments of Harvey H Guthrie, *Theology as Thanksgiving* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981) chapter 1, and the sociological analysis of Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

Ezekiel knows how it will be for most. The majority are to be executed, because they presumed that the sufficiency would last. That was the wrong majority report. But to those who saw with the eyes of Ezekiel or who knew with the courage of Jeremiah, it was already a *season of pain* which required a text of pain, an act of sighing and groaning, a grieving over the ending already well on its way. Ezekiel knows that some will notice, some few will notice and contradict the season of sufficiency with a season of grief and pain. These are the ones marked safe for the future. Some treasured so easily the continuing city. The little cadre of marked ones know the city would not continue, and for the sake of that awareness, lived in the chaos that comes where the city has failed.

VII

One other text warrants mention in this context: Ps. 102. It may seem to lie afield from our topic. I include it in this collage for two reasons. First, other than Ezek. 9:4, it is the only text I have located that contains both words, groan and sigh. Second it is a Psalm by the afflicted concerning Zion, the continuing city. So it seems to me peculiarly appropriate. The first 22 verses, which I consider the main body of the Psalm, can be traced in three elements.

First, vv. 3-11, after an introduction are a cry of profound grief, rage, indignation and anger. It begins: "My days pass away like smoke." And it ends: "My days are like an evening shadow, like grass." This is the voice of one who knows there is no continuing city, and who watches with anguish while the old, known world vanished in thin air, helpless to keep it from going. The metaphors here are rich and varied — loss of appetite, loss of sleep, isolation, all brought to speech, "because of my loud groaning," the same word used in Ex. 2:23 concerning the end of Egypt, the same word in Ezek. 9:4, one genuinely grieved over the ruin of Joseph. This is the voice of one afflicted and faint (Ps. 102, superscription).

The second element, vv. 12-17, counters the complaint, "But Thou." "Thou" is contracted with the smoke, shadow, grass. In this scene the speaker turns from the self to the future of Zion, the continuing city, now discontinued:

v. 13 Thou wilt arise and have pity on Zion.

v. 14 Thy servants hold her stones dear, have pity on her dust.

v. 16 The Lord will rebuild Zion.

v. 17 He will regard the prayers of the destitute.

But the speech is all *Thou,* not Zion. No one at ease in Zion. No sufficiency. The speaker has come liturgically and imaginatively to the relinquishment of Zion, to get focus on the one who continues while Zion is discontinued.

And in the third element, vv. 18-22, things have turned. Not it is after the discontinuation. So now praise, resolution, new well-being gained precisely

through relinquishment. And now, "Yahweh looked down from heaven, he looked at earth," He looked for a single reason: "to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die" (v. 20). As in Ex. 2:23, Yahweh is moved not by the sufficient, but by the groaners, that in time to come, "Men may declare in Zion Yahweh's name, in Jerusalem his praise to worship the Lord" (v. 22). In the reprise of the Psalm, vv. 23-28, we finish with the doxology of v. 27. "Thou are the same, they years have no end." That is an astonishing doxology to match the misgiving in v. 2.

So the structure of this Psalm appears like this:

vv. 3-11 load *groan* as life vanishes
vv. 12-17 But *thou* who rebuilds Zion.
vv. 18-22 a rejoicing in Zion for the one who heard *groans*.

How does the Psalm move from the old abundance to new celebration, from the wretched groan to the solved sign? I submit this is the bridge of sigh, the bridge from loss to reception, from end to new gift, the bridge made not only by turning to Yahweh, but by writing off the old city, as the people in Amos 6 are unable to do, as the slaves in Ex. 2 do, as the few in Ezekiel 9 are marked for doing.

VIII

Now consider this collage of Ezek. 9, Exodus 2, Amos 6 and Ps. 102. Ask for yourself if this grouping of texts informs our future ministry in the face of no continuing city. The principal social reality which is our context of ministry is "Enlightenment Denial," which functions as a whitewash against the realities.[12] It is an ideology of cover-up which countenances no unresolved darkness, no real risk into the unknown, no jeopardized certitudes. And yet what we know out of this tradition of texts is that the darkness is real and powerful, and must have its own say. If there is to be a new city, it comes out of the groans and sighs. If there is a new future, it comes out of the relinquishment. But not quickly and not for sure.

1. The Western cultural, political hegemony is sliding, perhaps irretrievably. That is the underneath side of the nuclear insanity which does not get articulated. It is as though the city can be propped up continually.

2. The scientific hegemony of managing is now under assault, for we see, late and slowly, that scientific gains are never disinterested, and unless the royal ideology is shattered by broad-based humaneness, our technology will be only for exploitation and the maintenance of inequality.

[12]See Langdon Gilkey, *Society and the Sacred* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), on the move of our culture out of the Enlightenment modality.

3. The old continuing city has been broken since the first memo was written in Germany ordering the first oven. I do not minimize or dismiss other scenes of brutality, but that Western assault on Jews stands as a message and a burden, that every city that would continue, desperately resorts to demonic self-serving in the end.[13]

4. No one knows better than colleagues in this room, that the continuing city of economic, political hegemony, technological self-sufficiency and Aryan liberalism, has shown its colors, no one knows better the deep jeopardy also of our orthodoxies which are too sure, too certain, too absolute, too cynical against the candor of the human spirit. And that certitude can do desperate things as well. So the church must also desist its own whitewash which protects a triumphalist world-view.

I leave it to you to see if I overstate, overdramatize. I leave it to you if I make too easy a move from the world of the text to our world. Perhaps so. But the alternative seems to me to image a continuing city in which there are no groans, no moves to pity, no visions of the holy, no relinquishments, but only wine in bowls and bored songs we invent for ourselves to pass the time.

So the question may be, who shall we be?

— We might be the cohorts of Amos, unwilling and unable to be grieved over the ruin.

— Most of us likely will not be the wretched ones, the companions of Moses, willing to dismantle the empire with the groans and sighs of our bodies.

— Perchance with Ezekiel, we shall be in the community of the marked, capable of a cosmic sigh, which relinquishes the continuing city, stops the whitewash and stands marked for time to come.

As you are aware, I have articulated simply a theology of the cross. I hope I have done that with fidelity to the prime Lutheran claims. I hope more, I have done it with social realism. For it seems to me this company must work at the hard task of translating its evangelical conviction into public categories, for the loss of the continuing city is unavoidably a public question.

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[13]See the powerful analysis of Emil Fackenheim, *To Mend the World* (New York: Schocken Books, 1982).

The Gospel, Historical Consciousness, and Risk

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This address was given at a convocation entitled "No Continuing City," which commemorated the completion of the tenth academic year of Christ Seminary-Seminex in St. Louis, MO.

> For, I ask, is it not new things that faith effects? . . . Was it not a new thing when Abraham offered his son? Was it not a new thing for the children of Israel to pass through the sea? Will it not be a new thing for me to go through death to life? In all these things it is the Word of God, not the novelty that we regard. If we should stop at the novelty of a thing, we would never be able to believe anything in the Word of God.[1]

The words are Martin Luther's, addressed to evangelical Christians in Bohemia in 1523, urging them to elect and create their own bishops. I cite them now because they seem especially relevant to the events that have brought us here today.

Christ Seminary-Seminex, during its nine years of existence in this place, has surely been one of faith's "new things." And faith is now effecting yet another new thing, namely, the deployment of this seminary's resources at other centers of theological education in Chicago, Berkeley, and Austin. The history and mission of Christ Seminary-Seminex are thus signs of the surprising novelties that faith lets loose in our world.

Yet faith, as Luther reminds us, has no regard for mere novelty, and is not captive to its creations. Faith is the correlate of the gospel promise, and so we ever look beyond the new things of faith to the gracious Word of God that alone enables us to affirm our past history with gratitude and to accept our present mission with joy.

In this spirit, I propose to consider our history and mission under these rubrics that impress me as particularly germane: "the gospel," "historical consciousness," and "risk."

1. "The Gospel"

Let us recall, first, the origins of Seminex. What was it that led to the establishment of this seminary in exile on February 9, 1974? It was, above all, fidelity to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as found in the Holy Scriptures and confessed by the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Fidelity to the gospel, to Scripture and to the Lutheran Confessions, I say, *not* infidelity, as the partisans of an unscriptural and unlutheran theology said then and still say.

Seminex came into being as the institutional embodiment of an evangelical protest of conscience against the relentless attacks on the integrity and faithfulness of the former president and faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who were charged with teaching and tolerating false doctrine in the church. These attacks were nothing new in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, but for years they had been the private stock-in-trade of hate merchants and character assassins associated with such publications as "The Confessional

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[1]LW 40, 39 ("Concerning the Ministry," 1523).

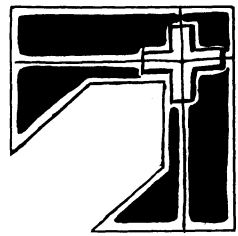
Lutheran" and "The Lutheran News." In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, following the 1969 election of J.A.O. Preus as the president of the LCMS, they were given the active encouragement and support of the highest echelons of church leadership. Indeed they were now carried out under the aegis of the synodical president himself.

These attacks, based as they were on fabricated charges, amounted to nothing less than malicious slander. They culminated, as we know, in the infamous Resolution 3-09 of the Missouri Synod's 1973 convention in New Orleans. This resolution, adopted by a vote of 574 to 451, declared that the faculty majority at Concordia Seminary was guilty of embracing a theological position that subverted the authority of Scripture by false methods of biblical interpretation, that replaced the normative authority of "Scripture alone" with that of the "gospel alone," and that denied the so-called third use of the law.

It is clear in retrospect, if it was not already painfully clear at New Orleans in July 1973, that the adoption of Resolution 3-09 marked the final and complete triumph in the Missouri Synod of "denominationalism" over "confessionalism," namely, the substitution of majority vote in church convention for the authority of Scripture and Confessions. A truly confessional church would never presume to resolve profound questions of faith and morals by a show of hands on a summer's day, or allow ecclesiastical politics to triumph over evangelical principle. The New Orleans convention effectively unmasked Missouri's pretensions to be the standard bearer of confessional Lutheranism in this country.

Thus Seminex came into being in the name and for the sake of "gospel freedom," not "academic freedom." The chief accusation levelled against its faculty founders was that they were "gospel reductionists" — teachers, that is, who wilfully reduced the normative authority of the whole of Scripture to the sole authority of the gospel. This charge was, and remains, patently absurd. What they actually taught and still teach is that the *Scriptures alone* are to regulate the church's teaching and preaching *because* they bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and for this reason the gospel is rightly identified as the norm *within* the Scriptures. At the heart and center of the Bible we find the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith; which, like a great light, illumines the entire Scriptures and opens them to our believing understanding; and which imparts to the whole of Scriptures their binding authority for the faith and life of Christ's church.

If this be called "gospel reductionism," so be it. The label should be worn as a badge of honor, though it was intended as a political shibboleth. For no less a teacher of the church than Martin Luther was a gospel reductionist! "One thing, and only one thing, is



necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom," declared Luther in 1520 in *The Freedom of a Christian*. "That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ."[2] For Luther, as this quotation shows, the "Word of God" was first and foremost the gospel, the spoken (not the written) Word, the oral proclamation of God's unconditional acceptance of sinners for Christ's sake through faith alone. Hence in 1521 Luther further declared that "the church's entire life and substance reside in the Word of God," namely, in the gospel:

> For the gospel — even more than the bread and baptism — is the unique, most certain, and noblest sign [*symbolum*] of the church, since it is through the gospel alone that the church is conceived, formed, nursed, born, trained, fed, clothed, adorned, strengthened, armed and preserved.[3]

Luther, of course, never hesitated to call the Bible the *written Word* of God, and no confessional Lutheran will decline to make that identification. Yet the written Word exists solely for the sake of Jesus Christ, the *personal Word* of God, who is the Bible's matchless content and the focal point of all its teaching. "Take Christ from the Scripture," asked Luther of Erasmus in 1525, "and what more will you find in them?"[4] The written Word, moreover, exists for the sake of the gospel, the *spoken Word* of God. According to Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, the Bible always points beyond itself to the contemporary act of preaching. The Bible is the record of past proclamation — of the preaching of the prophets and apostles — which even now exists to become present proclamation.

The biblical gospel, accordingly, must be liberated from its bondage to the "letter" of Scripture and sound forth ever and again through the living voice of the preacher. The spoken Word is the preeminent form of the Word of God because it is the real presence of the risen Christ. Christ himself preaches through the voices of all true servants of the Word, and the faith-filled hearing of such evangelical preaching is itself the present event of salvation. The church is thus the continuous creation of the gospel, and precisely for this reason the gospel is the church's "one thing needful," its "entire life and substance."[5]

In this light, then, all of the "gospel reductionists" associated with Christ Seminary-Seminex can regard themselves as authentic bearers of evangelical and confessional Lutheranism — the protests of their self-proclaimed "orthodox" op-

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[2]LW 31, 345.

[3]WA 7, 721 ("Ad librum Catharini responsio," 1521).

[4]LW 33, 26 ("The Bondage of the Will", 1525).

[5]Throughout this section I have drawn on two of my recent articles: *"Sola Scriptura:* Luther on Biblical Authority," *Interpretation* 25 (July 1981) 258-273; and "The Proclamation of the Word in Luther's Thought," *Word & World* 3 (Fall 1983) 344-354.

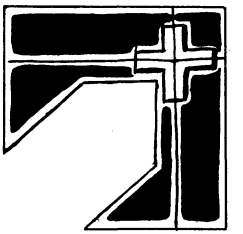
ponents notwithstanding. This insistent concentration on the biblical gospel, far from being a feature only of our history, remains an indispensable component of the new mission of a deployed Seminex to the church at large.

For one thing, the struggle continues unabated within American Lutheranism between a merely "traditional" theology and a properly "normative" theology. So-called conservative theologians (whose "conservation" is highly idiosyncratic), chiefly within the Missouri and Wisconsin synods, are still bent on making the petrified theology of seventeenth-century Lutheran Orthodoxy the *de facto* standard for determining authentic Lutheranism. They read Holy Scripture, Luther, and the Lutheran Confessions through seventeenth-century spectacles and demand, in effect, that all "true Lutherans" follow suit. This strategy, which all of us know to be divisive and schismatic, must be opposed at every turn, not only in the interest of Lutheran unity but in the name of "pure doctrine."

Luther and the Lutheran confessors, as we have seen, could never contemplate speaking about the Bible in abstraction from the Bible's incomparable content: Jesus Christ and the gospel that proclaims him. For them everything came to focus on the *doctrina evangelii,* the present preaching and teaching of the gospel by the living voice. For Lutheran Orthodoxy, by contrast, everything came to focus on the "inscripturation" of the gospel, its past encoding in a supernaturally perfect Book. Such biblicism is foreign to classic sixteenth-century Lutheranism and has its justification, if any, only in its immediate seventeenth-century context. Its perpetuation into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was an anachronism, and has engendered many unnecessary and fruitless controversies between Christian faith and the historical and natural sciences. It has also been one of the main obstacles to Lutheran and Christian unity. Still, one may grant orthodox traditionalism a right of existence in the church, but one cannot tolerate its elevation to normative status.

So long, therefore, as the whole of American Lutheranism purports to be genuinely confessional, and proposes church union on this basis, the battle with the "orthodoxists" must be waged, distasteful though that be to most of us and redolent of old struggles that we would prefer to forget. Fidelity to the gospel and to the true heritage of the Lutheran Reformation still calls us to join in the fray. (I use military metaphors intentionally: we *are* engaged in a "battle for the Bible" and for "true Lutheranism"!)

A new Lutheran church in this country — an organic union of the ALC, AELC, and LCA — is now in the process of being formed, or at least of being planned. Presumably most of us find this a cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving. Yet permit me a cautionary word. It seems to be



universally assumed that we are one in doctrine and confession, and that *only* the specific details of church organization remain to be worked out. This assumption, however, may well be an invitation to disaster *if* we are thereby led to divorce doctrine and confession from church polity, as if polity were entirely an adiaphoron or "free thing" with no direct connection to the gospel.

Some might argue, for example, that an episcopal polity — based on the historic "threefold order" of bishops, priests, and deacons — is the preferred polity today because it is the most "catholic" and hence the most "ecumenical." Such considerations are weighty, but surely the fundamental question remains: what is distinctively "evangelical" about such a polity? Indeed, one must ask, what "evangelical safeguards" (if I may so call them) have to built into this particular polity if it is not to degenerate into that "hierarchicalism" against which the Lutheran reformers battled in the name of gospel freedom?

My point, I trust, is clear. I am not now contending for or against a full-fledged episcopal system of church goverment and of ministerial order. I am maintaining that every polity proposal for the new Lutheran church must be tested by the gospel, not merely by political criteria (such as the need to "compromise" in view of the past histories of the three uniting bodies). Fidelity to the gospel means that at every juncture we ask: how, concretely, are the preaching and teaching of the gospel — hence "the entire life and substance of the church" — being served and preserved in this particular recommendation for the ordering of our life together? Failing this, our new church will not be evangelical but only consensual.

This leads me to utter another word of caution. All of us acknowledge that "gospel freedom" does not mean "anything goes." But for most of us the chief enemy of evangelical freedom has been a coercive dogmatism that confuses the gospel with traditional theological formulas, mainly of seventeenth-century vintage, and so brooks no deviation from the "faith of the fathers." I think we are prone, therefore, to identify gospel freedom with a climate of tolerance and of collegiality, where every viewpoint is allowed to have its say and is credited with intrinsic importance. Thus our understandable reaction to "dogmatism" leads us to embrace "pluralism," and in place of "coercion" we enthrone "consensus." Fair enough, but now new problems arise.

No single person or group, we commonly say, has a monopoly on truth; hence we conclude that the "whole truth" is a function of multiple viewpoints. This notion of truth as "intersubjective agreement" is plausible, and in many contexts unimpeachable, but in a confessional church it is of dubious value. My warning, therefore, is this: if the new Lutheran church simply aims to

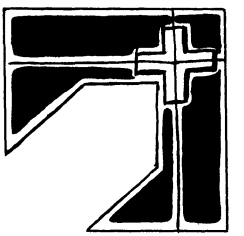
accommodate as many theological and quasi-theological viewpoints as possible, without carefully testing each and every viewpoint by the biblical gospel, and by the church's confessions of faith, then our public doctrine will be at best a political theology, and at worst a new tyranny of the "collective consciousness" over the evangelical conscience. Even so we will have no truly confessional church, but only another American denomination made up of the religiously and socially like-minded. Therefore fidelity to the gospel — which I have identified as the chief hallmark of the Seminex tradition — remains a *sine qua non* of our churchly mission today.

2. "Historical Consciousness"

Seminex also came into being, we recall, because its founders, faculty and students alike, gave scope to modern historical-critical scholarship in their biblical exegesis and in their understanding of the contemporary theological task. For this they were accused of undermining the authority of Scripture by subjecting it to false, indeed godless, methods of interpretation. This accusation, like all the others, was baseless. It was put forward only to inflame passions and nurture intolerance. That it did, but at the price of concealing the true issues and creating abysmal ignorance of what is really at stake in theological education today.

No member of the Seminex community has ever advocated a radical historical criticism that views the Bible as merely a human document, which provides data about the religious beliefs and practices of ancient near eastern peoples. Nor has anyone adopted the metaphysical postulates that "miracles cannot happen" and that "God-talk is superfluous" for purposes of historical interpretation. The entire controversy, rather, which extends far beyond the confines of American Lutheranism and remains a pressing ecumenical concern, has to do with this basic question: how is Christian theology to be carried out in an age that takes for granted a historical understanding of reality, that views all phenomena in terms of their origins and development, their rootedness in their own time and place and thus their inescapable "pastness" and "foreignness" to people of a later time and place?

This question touches upon the very foundation of Christian belief. For Christianity claims to be a uniquely historical religion: it stands or falls with its ties to one specific past revelatory event — the historical appearance of Jesus of Nazareth — for which it still claims absolute, normative significance in the present. Yet how can that event be *absolute* and *normative* if now irrevocably past, and so limited to that past by the remorseless flow of history? Or how is that event to be *actualized* in the present so as to reassert once more its binding nature? And what *meaning* does



such a revelatory event in fact hold for present-day existence?[6]

Self-styled "conservatives" and "evangelicals" in the church have shunted these questions aside; in fact they have not even raised them, since their understanding of Christian theology is entirely controlled by a propositional doctrine of revelation that either takes the Bible completely out of history or makes privileged claims about the events recorded in Scripture ("privileged," that is, because they are exempted from testing by the methods of historical science). No amount of dogmatic pronouncements about the Bible's supernatural character, however, or about the "timelessness" of the Christian faith, can prevent people from examining biblical religion in all its historicality. Our modern Western culture, grounded as it is in historical modes of thinking, inevitably treats the Bible and the sum total of Christian doctrine as historical phenomena through and through.[7] The root issue is whether such "historicization" necessarily relegates Christianity to the status of the "merely" historical, to a distant past that is now "dead and buried."

It is to the lasting credit of the academic community at Christ Seminary-Seminex that it has intentionally allowed modern historical consciousness to inform its educational program. Hence it has not evaded the task of addressing the crucial issues attendant upon the problem of "faith and history." One can say, therefore, that Seminex has been the institutional embodiment of an authentic "sense of history," of a mode of doing theology that recognizes the historicality of the Bible, of the church's teaching tradition, and of human existence itself.

Fundamental to this enterprise is the recognition that servants of the Word bear responsibility not for repeating traditional doctrinal formulas but for proclaiming the biblical gospel in such a way that it speaks with power and pertinence to its contemporary auditors. Fidelity to the gospel thus requires us to "translate" ancient texts, rooted in their own time and place and once instinct with power for their auditors, into new historical contexts, thereby endeavoring to open up their salutary meaning to people who, as historical beings, inhabit new and ever-changing worlds of thought and language. This endeavor involves the further recognition that we can only hope to preach the *same* gospel that the apostles proclaimed if we venture to say it *differently* — in words, that is, that are comprehensible to people for whom the biblical world of thought and language is alien and often alienating. Historical-biblical study has shown that this risky interpretive process is not

[6]See Gerhard Ebeling, "The Significance of the Critical Historical Method for Church and Theology in Protestantism," in *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 17-61.

[7]See David W. Lotz, "Theology as Risk," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 29 (1974) 169-180.

something novel, but was already at work in the history of the primitive church itself (and, for that matter, throughout the history of Israel).

Consider, for example, the way in which St. Paul proclaimed the Lordship of Christ to the Gentiles, for whom the original Palestinian confession of "Jesus is the Christ" was largely irrelevant, concerned as they were not with the problem of historical continuity between the old and the new Israel but with the problem of the cosmos, in which they "saw themselves as prisoners of a system of authorities and powers and subject to the constraints of fate from which there was no escape."[8] Paul, therefore, ventured to use another title for Jesus that had but a marginal function in the Palestinian church, namely, "Son of God":

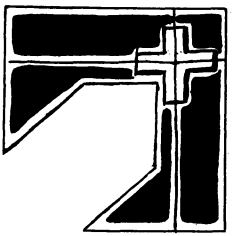
> The confession *"Iesous Christos"* was not able to present the Gospel to the hellenists as the act of God which spoke to them and their situation; but this was possible by confessing Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God, who existed before the cosmos, whose incarnation had stripped the cosmos of its power and whose exaltation as Lord had forced all the cosmic powers to their knees, so that now "every tongue (can) confess, 'Jesus Christ is Lord' " (Phil. 2:11).[9]

Paul's Christology was certainly open to the misunderstanding that the title "Son of God" referred to some unhistorical, mythical figure who symbolized the divine powers available to human beings in their world alienation. Hence Paul never failed to make plain that the one true Son of God is none other than the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. For Paul the gospel always remained the Word of the cross, foolishness though that was to Greeks and a rock of offense to Jews.

We thus have apostolic precedent for our bold interpretive ventures. At the same time we must entertain no illusions about the dangers involved. In every such venture we risk the very substance of the gospel, since our intepretations or translations may amount to little more than facile accommodations to the *Zeitgeist.* The concern for "relevance" often masks homiletical irresponsibility and manifest heresy. Who can deny that the church's preaching today has time and again degenerated into superficial social commentary, or political sloganeering, or psychological nostrums for the depressed, or moralistic calls to "build the kingdom of God"? The solution, of course, is not to eliminate the hermeneutical task, as if orthodoxy were inseparable from traditional language, but to insure that theological education is truly preparation for proclamation of the *Biblical gospel.* Such education is an arduous affair, and those engaged in it

[8] Jürgen Roloff, "The Historicity of the Scriptures and the Witness to the One Gospel," in *The Gospel as History,* ed. Vilmos Vajta (Philadelphia, 1975), p. 131.

[9] *Ibid.*



will soon have reason to confess with Luther that "prayer, meditation, and soul-struggle make a theologian" *(oratio, meditatio, tentatio theologum faciunt).*[10] I do not doubt that this sort of education has been carried out at Christ Seminary-Seminex during its nine years of existence, or that it will now be newly "embodied" by the deployed Seminex faculty at Chicago, Berkeley, and Austin.

I have been arguing that theology culiminates in proclamation, and that a developed "sense of history" is requisite to the task of interpreting the gospel to our contemporary situation. But what is the particular form that evangelical preaching must assume today? What, in fact, is the present cultural situation into which our message must now be uttered? These questions are too important and too complex to be treated in passing. Yet I will venture some cursory observations.

The biblical gospel must be proclaimed today, I think, to vast numbers of people who, for various reasons, have so radically "historicized" worldly reality that they now find themselves with no treasured past and no meaningful future, no vital sense of historical continuity with earlier generations and no deep concern for posterity. The past is felt to be irrelevant and insignificant, the future uninviting and hopeless. Past and future alike are swallowed up by the present, and the prevailing passion is to live for the moment. "You only go around once in life," a popular beer commercial announces, "so you have to grab all the gusto you can." The Schlitz slogan is but a trivial clue to current sensibilities, yet it bespeaks a general cultural situation that Christopher Lasch has labelled "the culture of narcissism," and that Philip Rieff has described as "the triumph of the therapeutic," namely of what he calls "psychological man."[11]

Plagued by inner emptiness and insecurity, sustained neither by loving memories nor by fond hopes, the narcissistic personality of our time is preoccupied with immediate personal well-being: self-realization, self-improvement, self-expression, self-assertion, self-gratification, self-esteem, self-love. Overarching everything is the anxious quest for psychic well-being, "mental health," which has become the secular form of salvation, even as therapists have replaced pastors and priests as the new guides to spiritual "wholeness." Lasch describes post-Freudian therapies and their popularizers as follows:

> Therapy constitutes (not a new religion in its own right but) an antireligion, not always to be sure because it adheres to rational explanation or scientific methods of healing, as its practitioners would

[10]Cf. LW 34, 285 ("Preface to the German Writings," 1539).

[11]Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York, 1978); Philip Rief, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York/London, 1966).

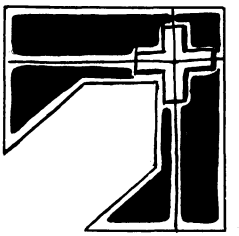
> have us believe, but because modern society "has no future" and therefore gives no thought to anything beyond its immediate needs. Even when therapists speak of the need for "meaning" and "love," they define love and meaning simply as the fulfillment of the patient's emotional requirements. It hardly occurs to them — nor is there any reason why it should, given the nature of the therapeutic enterprise — to encourage the subject to subordinate his needs and interests to those of others, to someone or some cause or tradition outside himself. "Love" as self-sacrifice or self-abasement, "meaning" as submission to a higher loyalty — these sublimations strike the therapeutic sensibility as intolerably oppressive, offensive to common sense and injurious to personal health and well-being.[12]

One does not have to tar every psychotherapist, or every therapeutic method, with Lasch's brush in order to concede that he scores telling points. The question remains: given the accuracy of Lasch's analysis, what does the Christian message have to say to these new narcissists and to their professional "support-groups"?

Let me cite one proposal that has just recently been advanced by an influential TV preacher and minister of the Reformed Church in America: "We must proclaim the Good News! God wants to reclaim and redeem lost humanity. We must tell people everywhere that God wants all of us to feel good about ourselves!" This prescription comes from Robert Schuller, in his book *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982, p. 58). Schuller informs us that the traditional Christian language of sin and judgment has "often insensitively and destructively offended the dignity of the person," and so has failed "to proclaim the gospel in a way that can satisfy every person's . . . spiritual hunger for glory" (p. 31). Hence it comes as no surprise that Schuller recommends the Lord's Prayer as a "classic therapy for the universal restlessness in the human mind that deprives persons from really feeling good about themselves" (p. 78).

Robert Schuller's response to our cultural situation is exactly the one that Lasch has led us to expect a *purely cultural religion* to make. Unabashedly allying himself with the therapistis, Schuller has tailored his message to fit the contemporary cult of personality. He may fairly be judged a high priest of narcissism, of an unrelieved self-centeredness now decked out in Christian guise, indeed masquerading as gospel truth. The self of which Schuller speaks is not the perduring self created by the miracle of God's unconditional love for the godless, not the self crucified with Christ in repentance and self-

[12]Lasch, *op. cit.*, p. 13.



abasement, not the self raised again with Christ into a new life of self-emptying service. The self of which he speaks is the anxious, insecure, hollow, fragile, crumbling self that now requires assurance of God's favor as an aid to self-esteem.

Schuller, in sum, has not risked the Christian gospel through new interpretive strategies, through bold linguistic proposals; he has replaced the gospel with a message that is as banal as it is alien to the Word of the cross. Hence his vaunted "new Reformation" is a complete caricature of the original Protestant Reformation, though we are told that Schuller is well-versed in Calvin's *Institutes*. Had he lived in Calvin's Geneva, and dared to call himself "Reformed," he would probably have found himself in the company of Servetus at the stake!

I have directed attention to Schuller's "new deformation" of the biblical gospel because it so clearly represents *the* cultural religion of our time and place, and so must be taken with all seriousness. Robert Jenson has rightly said of Schuller's book that "one could find few better mirrors . . . of what the church has to combat specifically in America."[13] Such combat, as I have already indicated, will not take the form of simply repeating biblical phrases and Reformation slogans, but of preserving the pattern of evangelical truth in language that directly addresses people whose lives are empty of meaning and hope, and whose endless self-preoccupation conceals an anxious yearning for true personhood.

I trust that this challenging interpretive venture, which aims to break the power of cultural religion by the gospel and to bring people from self-love to faith and to faith active in love, will be placed high on the agendas of the deployed Seminex faculty and all the theologians, pastors, and educators who identify themselves with the history and mission of Christ Seminary-Seminex.

3. "Risk"

Seminex has been the institutional embodiment of the theological risk involved in allowing modern historical consciousness to shape the task of preparing faithful ministers of the Word. Beyond this, it has also been the embodiment of risk in a special sense, in a way unique among contemporary educational institutions.

The student and faculty founders of this seminary literally risked their existence — their livelihood, their reputations, their anticipated futures — in choosing exodus and exile over the old securities that would have remained theirs had they taken their consciences captive to ecclesiastical mandates and to the charges of their accusers. No doubt they little realized, during their palmy days on one of this country's loveliest campuses, that one day soon the great

[13]Robert W. Jenson, *LCA Partners* 5 (April 1983) 10.

biblical motifs of exodus and exile would burst the bounds of their classrooms and become their own lived experience. God, as God will, had surprises in store for them, to which they said their trusting and hopeful "Amen!"

I have no desire to romanticize the people at Seminex as heroes and heroines of the faith, not least because such idealization would contradict their own self-understanding. Yet one surely does not err in seeing in this community of God's people a paradigm of the evangelical life, the life of gospel freedom.

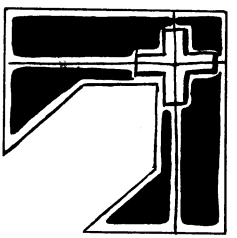
Life lived under and out of the gospel knows that life itself is not our possession, subject to our control, but is solely God's good gift, which we can confidently entrust to God's good keeping. For that very reason it is a life full of surprises and, no less, of uncertainties, for we do not know in advance where, and in what circumstances, God will call us to render our obedience of faith. Luther once declared that this is precisely "the glory of faith, namely, not to know where you are going, what you are doing, what you are suffering, and, after taking everything captive — perception and understanding, strength and will — to follow the bare voice of God and to be led and driven rather than to drive."[14] Little wonder that Luther could appropriate the language of the mystics and speak of Christian faith as "a cloud in our hearts, that is, trust in a thing we do not see, in Christ, who is present especially when he cannot be seen."[15] And little wonder that Luther would also assert that Christians live not by their eyes, but solely by their ears, by listening to the voice of Jesus sounding in the gospel and calling them to a freedom that to worldlings looks like folly.[16]

Gospel freedom is the freedom of people who know that they are exiles and pilgrims in the world: people whose identity is determined not by what they possess, but solely by what God promises; people who do not set their hearts on what is already at hand, but who live in hope for the full realization of the new humanity and new world that God has inaugurated in Jesus Christ. Hence gospel freedom is at once freedom from dependence on material things, and freedom for loving service to the whole of needy humanity — since people who do not define themselves by what they "have" are at liberty to empty themselves on behalf of all of this world's "have-

[14]LW 29, 238 ("Lectures on Hebrews," 1517-1518).

[15]LW 26, 130 ("Lectures on Galatians," 1531/1535).

[16]Cf. LW 29, 224: "For if you ask a Christian what the work is by which he becomes worthy of the name 'Christian,' you will be able to give absolutely no other answer than that it is the hearing of the Word of God, that is, faith. Therefore the ears alone are the organs of a Christian . . . ."



nots."[17] Indeed exiles and pilgrims, who know that here they have "no continuing city," are by definition have-nots, and so they spontaneously identify themselves with the poor, the sick and suffering, the aged, the imprisoned, the oppressed, the victims of war and of social injustice and racial prejudice.

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that during the nine years of its existence Christ Seminary-Seminex has displayed in its life together, as well as in its publications, a heightened sense of identification with the outcasts of the earth. The experience of exile, interpreted in the light of the ministry of Jesus the Suffering Servant, has created a new awareness of universal human aspirations for liberation from social, political, and economic bondage, together with a new readiness to devote both personal and institutional resources to the cause of justice, peace, and freedom in our time. This accent on what one may justly call the "social gospel" has long been muted in the conservative Lutheran circles out of which most of us have come. Thank God that we have made bold to sound it at last. And thank God for the "exile" if for no other reason than that it has loosed our tongues to speak of the Christian vision for a humane social order no less than of our hope for heaven.

The past history of Christ Seminary-Seminex thus points the way for its present mission. Fidelity to the gospel, theological education informed by an acute historical consciousness, and the life of gospel freedom in service of suffering humanity: these have been hallmarks of the Seminex tradition. American Lutheranism, and the church catholic, will be well served if this heritage is now truly "re-embodied" in new educational contexts. God bless you on your way!

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[17]Cf. LW 30, 35 ("Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," 1522): "We must use everything on earth in no other way than as a guest who travels across country, comes to an inn where he must spend the night, and takes nothing but food and lodging from the innkeeper. He does not say that the innkeeper's property belongs to him. Thus we must also deal with temporal goods as if they did not belong to us. We must limit our enjoyment of them to what is necessary for the preservation of the body. With the rest we must help our neighbor. Thus the Christian life is only a night's lodging; 'for here we have no lasting city' (Heb. 13:14), . . ."

The Unemployed: Challenge to the Church

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The discouraged, the depressed, and the desperate people who are out of work are not new to the American landscape. They have been here all along, but often have gone unnoticed. They are disproportionally black and young female. Having given up looking for work long ago, they no longer are counted in the unemployment figures. They are the "underclass," the down-and-outers, the objects of charity. They are unlike the "rest of us," who try hard to find and keep our jobs, and who are repulsed at the idea of accepting any kind of "handout."

But for an increasing number of white, "middle" Americans, unemployment is no longer a problem "out there." The unemployed can no longer be stereotyped as those who are afraid of work or otherwise seen as morally inferior. Unemployment has struck home, challenging the values, worldview, and theology of those who have been securely sheltered from it since the Depression. Although some statistics would lead us to believe that the problem is going away, those who live daily with anxiety and anguish are not fooled so easily. Unemployment may be the tip of an iceberg that will re-shape those values, lifestyles, and communities which we have taken for granted. The question is what role the church will have amid the flux.

The damage inflicted by unemployment is primarily financial. It casts into jeopardy that promise of the "good life" which folks have worked so hard to achieve. For a considerable number, sheer physical survival becomes a real issue. Churches set food pantries in middle class communities, and people nobody knew were hungry come in — first the woman, then her children, finally her husband. Even if one is eventually able to find another job, it is likely to be at a lower salary. For example, two years after auto workers lost their jobs due to plant closings, their average earnings were only about 43% of what they had made previously (Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America* [New York: Basic, 1982] 57). As industrial jobs decrease, high tech is held out as the new hope, but a relatively small percentage of jobs will be generated here. Most new jobs will be in the much lower-paying service sector, which also is slowing down in its ability to absorb new workers.

The losses due to unemployment include confusion about identity, worth and purpose. These are losses which require the same grieving process as does the death of a relative or close friend. Deterioration of physical and emotional health is commonplace, ranging from headaches to heart attacks. Statistics for a Congressional report indicate that a 1% increase in the aggregate unemployment rate sustained over a period of six years is likely to yield:

37,000 deaths
920 suicides
650 homicides
500 deaths from cirrhosis of liver
4,000 state mental hospital admissions
3,300 state prison admissions
(Bluestone and Harrison, 65).

The social, medical and psychological costs may well out-weigh the direct economic costs of losing one's job.

Unemployment has the potential to strip away our pretenses and reveal an equality that most of us find shocking. We may proclaim that all are created equal, but we like being able to reassure ourselves that at least we are more motivated or ambitious — "better" than the guy or gal at "the bottom." To be preceived as equal to every other person in the unemployment line or free food line is a rude awakening. We are conditioned to be self-sufficient — not vulnerable. Having absorbed a value system that glorifies success — "making something of ourselves" — we begin to feel as if we have fallen short as human beings, suddenly worthless to the community.

In many congregations those members who are out of work often are absent or invisible. How sad that many of them perceive the church as another place where one needs to keep up a pretense! Even an unemployed person's tithe is seen as another financial commitment that can not be met. The pastor may preach that "all are one in Christ," but what about those very real material differences that do exist? We know that we are not defined or valued in God's sight according to what we do for a living, but that can sound naively idealistic when a person is in the throes of unemployment. Unemployment may provide time to engage in volunteer activities in the church or community, but many soon sense that this is an avoidance of the real gnawing problem.

There are at least four levels on which the church can attempt to meet the challenges raised by the spector of unemployment. The first is by providing a means of support for unemployed individuals and their families, be that psychological, financial or spiritual. Many congregations in high unemployment areas have sponsored counselling services, support groups, job clubs, and job-finding resources, in addition to providing emergency funds for food and housing needs. Although not distinctive to the church, these are important and necessary services. They begin to plug the dike, but usually do not move on to address the wider problem.

Secondly, the church can employ its uniquely theological resources for dealing with people's shattered dreams and hopes and for enabling them to face the new vulnerabilities and fears that unemployment provokes. Many within our churches have gotten so caught up in a frantic scramble to achieve "the good life" that it has become close to a salvific absolute. They work hard to acquire "the good things in life" for themselves and their families, or at least to make sacrifices so that their children will "make it." The job, the style of life and the future which it makes possible, become absolutes. If a person receives a pink slip, suddenly the whole edifice which he or she has erected begins to crumble. No longer can they count on that in which they had placed their identity and hope. The unemployed in our midst put us all on edge, revealing how vulnerable we too are, and how precarious are the lives we have built up for ourselves. "You are what you make of yourself!" This kind of works-righteousness, which is so ingrained in

our national ethos, needs to be exposed in all its wounding power.

The exposure of this popular, operational theology provides an opportunity for the evangelical message of the church to be heard afresh — for God's word of grace to be proclaimed with new clarity and specificity. On Sunday morning we may hear that we are justified by God's free gift of grace rather than by our works, but somehow that heart of the Gospel has an incredibily difficult time permeating the everyday, material realities of our lives. Too often we keep the secular and spiritual arenas separate, thereby giving free reign to a cultural theology which insists that we are what we make of ourselves in the world (unless we are somehow incapacitated, in which case we become objects of charity). Those who no longer have access to the means of "making something of themselves" feel bereft of meaning, value and purpose — even if they are life-long Lutherans! An individualistic view of salvation, nurtured in no small part by the Protestant work ethic, must be challenged from within the core of our Lutheran theology.

At the same time — and from a biblical perspective found in Genesis — we must recognize that who we are and what we do are part of a continum. Work as human activity is an expression of our relationship with God. It does matter — not as a means of salvation but as an expression of who we are. Through it we exercise our co-creativity with God, our calling. As Pope Paul II's recent encyclical on work, *Laborem Exercens,* points out, work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth, and is to be exercised for the sake of human welfare. But this expression of our humanity becomes distorted and alienated from us. That which human beings as subjects have created through their labor becomes a source of oppression, a structure or "god" ruling over them, dominating and distorting human life.

A third task of the church is to name as sin the socio-historical reality that emerges in the crisis of unemployment. Such sin is manifested by the way in which money has become the determinant of work which is valued in our society. If work does not contribute to the Gross National Product, then it does not count, no matter how socially useful it may be (e.g., the caring for children). The sin is manifested also in the way in which capital acquires priority over labor. "Capital" refers to the means by which persons appropriate natural resources and transform them to meet human needs. It is stored-up labor, something human beings have created and which is intended to serve them, the laborers. In our present economic order, however, human beings have become subject to capital, and it, in turn, has acquired a god-like power over human life. Capital's needs, especially profit and growth, now have priority over human needs, including the central need for meaningful employment. Economic growth takes priority over jobs. This is especially evident in the phenomenon of "de-industrialization."

In their pivotal book, *The Deindustrialization of America,* Bluestone and Harrison document the process of disinvestment of capital which has resulted in massive plant shutdowns and the loss of 32-38 million jobs during the 1970s alone. There has been widespread and systematic disinvestment in the nation's basic productive capacity. Companies divert capital into acquisitions, mergers, and foreign investments — for the sake of greater profit — rather than investing it in the updating of a plant's productive facilities. Once profitable companies are now "milked as cash

cows." This means that the plant becomes run down, the equipment or capital stock is relocated elsewhere (especially where labor is cheaper), and that eventually the plant is shut down. The result is the devastation of the people and the community which had depended on that plant for its livelihood. For every manufacturing job which is lost, three other jobs in that community are jeopardized.

It is not that making a profit is "sin" per se, but that "bottom line" thinking can define lives so pervasively and rule society as an unquestioned absolute that it functions idolatrously, which for Luther was the essence of sin. The absolute of profit-making pits capital against labor, one community against another, one country against another. It keeps us in bondage to fear and insecurity. People will do anything to keep their jobs, but as many are discovering today, even selling their souls is no guarantee. Finding some way to "blame the victim" is the common means in our society for explaining away unemployment. "If only they had worked harder . . . . if only the union hadn't insisted on higher wages." Others blame government regulations or foreign competitors.

The fault does not lie simply with the American worker, "big government," or the Japanese — the usual scapegoats — but is due to the mobility of capital in its continual endeavor to seek not just profit but the highest profit. (Bluestone and Harrison, 14). Until that is recognized and addressed, employees and employers will continue to be in bondage to this socio-historical manifestation of sin and jobs, lives and communities will continue to be destroyed. Structural unemployment is due not to a "natural" dying-off process of companies but to conglomerate strategies of planned disinvestment for the sake of profitability, usually with little regard for the human costs involved.

Massive unemployment is a social evil according to the Canadian Catholic bishops. "Capital has become transnational and technology has become increasingly capital-intensive. The consequences are likely to be permanent or structural unemployment and increasing marginalization for a large segment of the population . . . ." ("Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis," Jan. 5, 1983).

In the face of such a situation, faith refuses to give in to fear and insecurity. The unaskable questions are asked: Is "making a profit" the only principle by which a society or economy can operate? As long as a company is making some profit, should it have the right to make the highest possible profit? What is an adequate, rather than maximum rate of return? What responsibilities does a company have toward the people and community in which it is located?

As the church begins to ask and act on the basis of these questions, it moves from reacting to acting in the public arena. It seeks to understand and address the wider causes, and to hold companies more accountable to the people they affect, rather than merely responding to those who are the victims of plant closings. The church does so in coalition with other groups in the community, Churches have initiated efforts to fight plant closings and save their communities in such areas as Youngstown, Pittsburgh and south Chicago. Such efforts are a public witness to a faith which refuses to succumb to those forces which would hold people's lives captive, insisting instead on re-ordering the basic values and priorities of economic development, so that human needs, including that of meaningful labor, might take precedence over the maximization of profits and growth.

Pastoring One's Peers

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This is not an essay on the techniques of pastoring one's brothers and sisters in the ministry. Rather it is a handful of observations about the need for pastoring one's peers and some ideas that might encourage more peer counseling.

First, it is important that we are talking about peer counseling, because there is a pronounced need for such counseling in the ministerial profession. One would think that a profession that is so closely knit with judicatories and pastoral conferences would not be wanting for this type of professional attention. Yet from all of the studies made of our clergy in the transitional period when we were trying to shape the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, it was abundantly clear that the pastors wanted some kind of structure in which they could receive personal attention and counseling. While the need for counseling of pastors is so clearly demonstrated, it is questionable whether new structures in themselves will satisfy the demand.

Pastors Are Good Counselors

All of us may entertain some private hunches why there is not more peer counseling going on in our profession. Our pastors, for the most part, are good counselors themselves. I have been associated with the social work profession for a good part of my ministry and can testify that our pastors as a class of counselors rate very high. They enjoy the confidence of other people as well or better than any group of counselors. They are faithful, insightful, and durable.

Why then is there not more peer counseling going on? The answer is that it is not readily available; nor do we have it built in. While, theoretically, we may like to think that we could build it in, it is really remote from the scene where it should be happening. Pastors serve in congregations. The lay people they serve have working situations in which the greater part of them are responsible to someone and may have opportunities to go for counseling. The congregation to which our pastors are responsible rarely have individuals who will formally monitor or counsel with them. Some congregations may have a Board of Elders or pastoral relations committee that is assigned such functions. That is not the norm, however. Rather, congregations tend to regard their pastors highly, leave them unsupervised and without counsel. Pastors, consequently, are lonely in their profession, are permitted to develop false notions about their own performance, and are generally surprised when they are called to account.

Disrespect for Peers

much peer counseling going on among pastors is that pastors may have a huge disrespect for their peers. In spite of the fact that pastors may feel a desperate need for counseling, they may not seek it from their peers for fear of what they think they may hear from them. An

analogy from the medical profession may help to make the point. Doctors head the list for being poor medical patients. All too often they make their self-diagnosis and self-prescription. Even when they become the patients of their colleagues, they tend to go on doctoring for themselves. One of the physicians of my parish was hospitalized for surgery. When I called on him in his hospital room, he said, "Boy! Am I glad to see you. I can't stand the sight of these doctors." I strongly suspect that pastors are highly dubious of the kind of counseling they will receive from their peers in the ministry, no matter how keenly they feel the need for their help. Some may also feel a sense of competition with or jealousy for peers.

What then is the solution? What can we do to increase the amount of peer counseling and to develop a support system that will make it possible? Within our English Synod we have tried to encourage the practice with the development of the office of the counselor, who is to be seen as one who represents the needs of the pastors more than the need of the Synod. Hopefully, whatever we develop by ways of structures in the New Lutheran Church we will be able to make available the same kind of offices that will serve the interests of the professional workers of the congregations.

Informal Training

In addition to whatever we are able to build into our structures to encourage peer counseling, we ought to assess what we already have going for us for doing peer counseling right now. All of us have both some formal and informal training for peer counseling. My conscious awareness of some informal training at peer counseling began a long time ago when I was a "sextaner" at prep school. It was the beginning of the first fall term that I was walking down the corridor when I heard someone call me an obscene name from his bedroom. I turned on my heels and went in to sock him in the nose. Instead, within minutes I discovered that we were two thirteen-year-old lonely boys very much in need of friendship. Before our first conversation was over I had invited him to my home for the Thanksgiving recess. During that holiday he suggested to me that we be honest with one another and tell each other our faults. That was a horrifying thought to me. To openly criticize a friend seemed too despicable thing to do. However, his suggestion proved most valuable then, and I have found it valuable ever since.

Another such incident was helpful some years later. After graduation from the seminary, one classmate and I exchanged bulletins during our very first parish assignment. One week he returned my bulletin with corrections and questions. I recall how angry I was when I first received that mail, but how grateful I was later to keep those corrections in mind for future bulletins. But more than that, I was grateful that someone across the miles could care and offer counsel. I am sure that each of us can relate many more and similar incidents of peer counseling that have had a profound effect upon us. They are meaningful experiences that helped to condition us for our work in counseling others.

Formal Training

Some of our training for counseling, of course, is formal. Seminary training today does offer more opportunities for counseling courses than in my day. Also, many of our seminary graduates have had some counseling in their undergraduate careers. I have had counseling courses in a graduate school of social work, and I strongly urge that those persons who have had little train-

ing in counseling avail themselves of whatever opportunities they have to take counseling in formal education classes or seminars. Many pastors have seen fit to take Clinical Pastoral Education under the auspices of some hospital or in conjunction with advanced degree programs. That also should come highly recommended, because CPE makes peer counseling an integral part of its program. I have been associated for some years with a program of counseling students at a local seminary. The program is called Supervised Concurrent Field Education. This is a program of counseling for students already assigned to parishes. The course is now required for credit, and it is built upon the assumption that the novitiates in the parishes are sorely in need of counseling of all sorts.

Our Theology

However, with all the advantages of formal programs and courses in counseling, I believe that the best preparation we have for peer counseling is our theology. All of the help from the behavioral sciences is in the area of methodologies and techniques. However, it is our Lutheran theology that offers the insights, the sensitivity, and the help for the best therapy available. I believe that our theology also offers the realism and the hope that is lacking in many of the approaches of the behavioral sciences and that our theology is often a corrective for the behavioral sciences. It is not my purpose to draw out a theology of counseling in this essay, but simply to say that this is where we begin. Our theology is more than a plus to counseling, an addition, an extra, something thrown in. It is the basic assumption for our counseling and it permeates what we are and what we do in counseling. The pastoring of peers should come from a pastoral heart with pastoral concern.

All Are My Brothers And Sisters

Because we begin with a pastoral heart there are some basic pastoral assumptions which we can make about pastoring our peers. The first assumption is that all in the pastoral profession are my brothers and my sisters. What we can say about the whole Christian Church on earth in the best ecumenical sense we must say about our profession and then some. In our profession we also know that our work suffers when the work of one of our brothers or sisters suffers. We share in the joys and the sorrows of the whole ministry. When one person in the ministry is a scandal or is scandalized, the whole ministry suffers. We do not benefit from the failure of a Roman Catholic priest or a born-again evangelist. We fail with them. Our peers in the ministry are also our brothers and sisters of other communions. It appears to be only natural that those in our closest association would be the ones we feel most responsible for. Yet we may discover that we are equally effective pastoring with peers in other communions. Sometimes we may discover that we are even more effective with them.

It Is The Church

The second assumption is that it is the church. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in that marvelous little book, *Life Together,* helps me to understand certain realities about the church. He reminds us that the church is so much *one* that we cannot dismiss the notion that even our evil thoughts and intentions are somehow injurious to the cause of the Gospel. On the other hand, the church is so much *one* that we benefit from every action and deed performed in love for the sake of the Gospel. We cannot underestimate

the value, therefore, of what is achieved in the pastoring of our peers that works not only for the benefit of one person, but the benefit of the whole church. Pastors' responsibilities in the church are never restricted to their membership lists. They must always consider their responsibility to the larger church and the larger ministry.

Simul Iustus Et Peccator

The third assumption for pastoring our peers is that because it is the church we are serving, we are also *simul iustus et peccator.* We are dealing with the application of both Law and Gospel. I can recall that one Friday afternoon a pastor's wife came to my office to share with me that her husband was having an affair with his secretary and that he was prepared to announce all to his congregation that coming Sunday. He would resign from the parish, leave his family, and take up a secular vocation. I raced out to his study that very afternoon and confronted him with the fact that he could not do that, because of the harm that would come to all, himself, his family, the secretary, and the parish. He told me that was no way to talk to him and that I should be trying to understand and counsel him in a proper way. I told him there was no time for that. I would have to counsel him later. He told me that he and his secretary had prayed diligently about this and they were sure that God had led them to each other and that this was God's will. I told him that was blasphemy, and that he would have to listen to me now. I could say what God's will was in this matter and that we should do what was proper. That called for the time that was necessary to set things right for the pastor and his family. The marriage, the pastor's vocation, and the family were saved and the parish was spared the scandal.

On another occasion a pastor came to my office to confess to me that he was attracted to a lovely lady in his parish. There had been no sexual intimacy, but it was apparent to both parties that they were very much in love with one another. Knowing the pastor, his beautiful wife and family, I knew that it was not his family that was a problem for him. His marriage was not wanting. I could only ask him why he had come to me. It was obvious he wanted me to tell him that he had to give up the relationship with the woman with whom he thought he was in love. It was not difficult to discover why the pastor had become involved with someone. His career was at a standstill. He had not moved upward. He was frustrated in his profession. He needed some excitement. He needed something to stir him. So we could talk about those kinds of things that might be a more satisfactory outlet for him and which would not jeopardize the happiness of two solid families. What appeared to be two similar cases were not alike at all. In the one instance the pastor had to be awakened to the reality of his sin. In the other instance the pastor had to relieved of a burden that he felt very deeply. The one who felt he was justified needed to be reminded he was a sinner. The one who felt deeply his sin needed to be justified.

You Cannot Serve All

There are also some very important assumptions we cannot make. While we must assume all are our brothers and sisters in the profession, at the same time we cannot serve them all. The limitations to time and space are obvious. That is not our basic problem. The real problem is that not all will take counseling from us. Permit me to illustrate this problem backwards. Years ago we did not have full time district presidents or synodical

bishops. Then one district elected a very fine pastoral figure, and he became the model for full-time district presidents. They should be real bishops, the pastor to pastors. Good. Fine and dandy. A marvelous notion. So we elected full-time presidents all over the place. But the majority of them became political figures. They were machine people. They were not necessarily the pastoral types, and they were not pastoring their peers. As counselors you are elected or appointed to your positions. Hopefully, you are to be the types who can serve as pastors to pastors. However, simply because you are part of the political process some people may not take to you. You represent an authority figure to some people, no matter how gracious and understanding you may be. On the other hand, someone else may reject you as a counselor even if you had not been appointed as an official counselor. They may not like your looks, or someone may think you look like Uncle Matt, whom he despises. Another might not like the way you part your hair or the way you wear your green clerical shirt.

The ideal is that we should be able to pastor with all our peers. However, some of them simply will not let us. They are turning us off for all kinds of reasons that may even be unknown to themselves. We may even hear them say something like, "I know you want to help me, but I am sorry I just cannot talk with you." Sometimes that hurts us deeply. It is difficult for us not to take that personally. However, we must recognize the dynamics in counseling and face the fact we cannot create relationships with everyone. We should also know that the pastoral office is not a popularity contest. If we cannot counsel with a peer, perhaps another peer of ours can do so. We should not be shocked by that; that happens over and over again to us in the parish. When we had new interns each year I was sure that there would be a certain group of people who would seek the intern out each year, because they did not like Pastor Huxhold. It encouraged the new intern to serve those people in the best way possible. It is no different in counseling and pastoring our peers. Someone else may have to do what we cannot in establishing the relationship with a brother or sister.

You Are Not Sensitive To All

Another assumption we cannot make is that we can be sensitive to all the needs of our peers. There are many needs that escape our attention no matter how much aware we try to be. A few years ago while I was serving as a field supervisor of students at the local seminary, a very fine student was assigned to my group at mid-semester. He was a good participant and I appreciated his contributions. The next semester he did not sign up with my group. It was not mandatory that he do so, though the other students in my group were with me again. I was greatly bothered with that and wondered why that student did not return. It is difficult at times to keep our personal feelings of rejection out of our profession. Just recently my wife, who works at the seminary, informed me that this particular student is known to be gay. I could feel some relief that perhaps I had turned the young man off, and that I was also spared the difficulty of having to deal with the problems that his sexual preference now means in his field placement. However, that would not have made any difference to me. I have counseled gays before as a campus pastor and in parish assignments. What this meant to me is that I could not possibly have caught from this young man's manners that he was a gay, but I may very well have said something or countenanced

something in class that suggested to him that he could not share with me a confession of his gayness.

Just recently I also received letters from a black pastor and the white pastor of a black congregation protesting some literature that we sent out from a Lutheran case work agency which I am serving as acting director. Both men complained that the material we sent had no black faces in it. Now our agency serves a variety of black people in many ways. Yet these men were correct. Some of our staff on the defensive said, "It was just an oversight." Of course it was. But that is what racism is. It is oversight, and it is being insensitive to some very important needs right around us. We must face that fact that our pastoring of peers is always limited by our insensitivity. That is no excuse. It simply means that we must not assume that we are covering all the bases, and we should be ready to make amends when we have hurt someone. I had to write my critics, apologize to them and make the best kind of amends that I could. Last summer, one of our young pastors who had been on the list for the assistantship at our congregation shared with me how hurt he had been when we failed to communicate with him when he was elected to office. I recalled that I had made the effort to send someone to talk to him personally. The person failed to do so. But that was no excuse. I was once again insensitive to the needs of the young pastor.

You Cannot Do It All

We, also, cannot assume that we can do it all. That should be obvious that I should not even take any elaboration. There are so many peer problems that are beyond our depth. However, it is typical of us that we feel guilty when we cannot bring solutions to some of the problems. Yet we should not. Our friends in the behavioral sciences throw up their hands after so many sessions and so many dollars collected to say, "I have done all I can for you, and there is no more I can do." Many times we are picking up the pieces after that kind of therapy. Most of us have more patience and more compassion in dealing with our peers or our parishioners. Yet sometimes we do well to take a page out of their book. We may very well have to say to our peers that we are giving the best counsel we can, and if they refuse to take it, we cannot assure them that we can save them from the consequences. It is the same as when we speak the Word in the preaching of the Gospel. We cannot believe for our hearers. Nor can we believe for our peers, the clients of our counseling. God will have to make believers out of them. God did his best to win their affection and love. If they cannot be convinced by the power of his Spirit, then we should also be ready to shake off the dust and move on.

Informal Structures

When we put all of this together, we must realize that we must work very diligently at trying to create an atmosphere that will be conducive to good pastoring of our peers. There are some important steps we can take in that direction. We can work informally at the business of showing interest and concern for our peers. Some bishops are especially good at that. The cards, the notes, the calls, the memos they pass on to us are most helpful in suggesting to us that they care. All of that is inspiration for us, too. I can recall one week before Christmas that a pastor called from another city and asked me to look in on one of his parishioners who was in town for some special surgery. I assured him I would.

Then I asked the brother how he was. He then shared with me the deep feeling of depression he had about his ministry, and we talked on for some time trying to relieve some of that. In my study the afternoon of Christmas Eve I thought I had better call him to cheer him on a little more. When I reached him, in high delight he told me that he was in the best of spirits. After our last conversation he had gone out and visited his shutins and, as usual, they had ministered to him by their confessions of faith. I stepped into my pulpit that night elated myself by that sharing of Christmas Gospel.

Recently, one Sunday evening I had on my heart and mind one of the pastors in another city. The first thing I did on Monday morning was to phone him. He responded by saying he had thought about calling me the day before. Naturally, our conversation was off to a good start. There are other ways, of course, for encouraging good sharing with our peers. I like the informal get-togethers. I have always tried to bring the pastors together wherever I have been. However, of late, I find that more difficult to do. I am older and perhaps less energetic in that regard. However, I do not think that is the major problem. I think the younger men have less in common than our older people who went through the synodical educational system. But it is less than the system. The whole society is less cohesive. People have gone private. They are far more individualistic. It is not only that they have so much less in common. They do not appear to want to have anything in common. That makes the whole business of informal approaches through entertaining one another in our homes less attractive and meaningful. We will have to do a great deal to promote relationships the best way possible through other means. I have a study group in my office every Wednesday noon to study the propers for the following Sunday. Much happens there. For those of us who are there, much pastoring of peers happens.

Formal Structure

Whatever we do in structuring the new church, I hope that we can somehow encourage the pastoring of peers. I am one of those who is most skeptical of structures. I am not opposed to structures. I believe they are definitely necessary, I simply do not believe that the structures will accomplish in themselves what we want to happen when we talk about pastoring peers. I believe that the best structure will be that which allows for the freedom to pastor the peers. The kind of structure that will allow that to happen is structure that is by design structure and not an end in itself. It is precisely what we tried to do in our English Synod conferences that said we could have two officers. One is a chair person, a political animal, who will see to it that the necessary work gets done. We can also have a counselor who will look after the needs of pastors. Maybe the same person can do both, but we can't bet on it. We can always have two. Maybe that won't work either. But at least it suggests that we know the needs are there and that we are trying to meet them. If the pastors cannot go to their appointed counselor, for heaven's sake, let them go to some other peer who might help!

Inclusiveness

Another very important consideration for creating a good atmosphere that will be conducive to the pastoring of our peers is inclusiveness. Unfortunately, it is very easy for pastors to be elitists. We are no different than anyone else. We like to be with those with whom we are comfor-

table. However, we should be careful that our select group of friends does not become so tight a circle that we give the impression that we are not approachable by others of our peers. Some years ago, someone did a study of the relationships of the pastor with the members of the parish. The result of that study was to demonstrate that the pastor can easily give the impression that he or she is not available to the people of the lower economic strata in the parish. I had difficulty with that study, but have not forgotten the implications of it. The same would hold true for the relationships we have with our peers. While probably the economics would not have the same effects, certainly other social factors can easily play into the picture and become hindrances to good relationships with our peers. I myself like the party that includes all the brothers and sisters as the opportunity to create sociability and break down some of the barriers that our peers sometimes erect themselves. Much good can come out of the opportunities for us to share in an informal way at a reception.

Confidentiality

There are several other considerations that I believe are the most important in helping to create good conditions for pastoring our peers. The most important of these is the guarantee of confidentiality. Pastors carry a great burden with all of the problems that they share with their people. They often need help in carrying that load. Quite often they feel free to discuss their caseload with other professional people and their peers in the ministry. Their peers may suspect that they will do the same with any problems that they wish to share from their personal lives. Of all that we have mentioned or cited as problems in pastoring our peers, the question of confidentiality is a most serious one. If pastors have reason to be dubious about the ability of their peers to handle their problems, it is because they do not want to become an item on the formal or informal agenda of some local pastoral conference. Nothing so disturbs the trust level for pastoring the peers than this fear that a good brother or sister is going to publicize the problem that has been gnawing away at one.

Initiative

Another important ingredient for pastoring our peers is the initiative we take in pastoring them. It is easier to be lethargic about making an approach to the brothers and sisters. Usually we have enough problems to handle. Or we may suspect how difficult or how trying a particular problem may be. We can easily sit back and say that our peers ought to know that they can come to us. We are available. Or we may think that our initiative may be regarded as interference. Very often it is just that. However, we are discovering in therapy more and more that confrontation can be a very important feature of counseling. In alcohol and drug therapy, we know that it may be a serious mistake to wait until the subject creates such havoc in his or her life that one must out of desperation seek help. Now we are firmly convinced that we may have to introduce the trauma in order to rescue the person from great harm. Certainly that ought to be true also of the ministry. Lately we have been reading of the efforts of some bishops to clear the church of mediocrity. How much those bishops may have been spared if there had been better pastoring of the peers. Incompetents have been moved about from place to place, because no one wanted to make some honest and hard confrontations and many people have been seriously hurt and much harm has come to the cause of the ministry.

Patience

One last word. Pastoring our peers takes a great deal of patience. Pastoring the peers takes the same kind of pastoral heart that it takes for the parish, and the results are not all that different. I learned very early in my ministry that a pastor cannot expect that those whom one helps will be grateful for the help received. Very often, it is just the opposite. Those whom we help wish to forget that they received anything from us or that they shared anything with us. Whether we have given them financial help, emotional relief, or good counsel makes little difference. People tend to forget their indebtedness to us. That should make no difference to us. We are not in the business of making people dependent upon us. In fact, it is just the opposite. We are to make them free, and part of that process is to help them grow away from us. Sometimes, however, we feel that it would be nice to get some response. The response that is the most rewarding is that they do not need us anymore. That takes and tests our patience. But then if God can be patient with them and us, we can afford to be patient also. Pastoring our peers, after all, is the ultimate test of pastoring.

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PS Form 3526 July 1981 (Page 1)

The Second Knot of Friendship

Travis DuPriest
Associate Professor of English, assistant to the Rector, St. Luke's Episcopal Church

All our lives we are taught the virtue of giving and the selfishness of receiving. A parent or grandparent or a Church School teacher somewhere early along the way plants "It is more blessed to give than to receive" deep within us. Even our natural feelings and inclinations have a hard time fighting this motto of the subconscious, this "Christmas cliche," of the faith, as it were. Yet most of us know the fun of giving and the joy of receiving.

When one does grow past the childhood urge to buy toys only for oneself or to demand gift-for gift when shopping for a friend's birthday, one discovers the joy of giving something to someone else. Even if the pleasure remains somewhat selfish—"this present reflects my thoughtfulness, my good taste, the appropriateness, my financial status" or whatever we might secretly be saying to ourselves—the pleasure of pleasing someone else is genuine and real. A few of us may even experience the pleasure of "giving away," that is actually giving to someone else a personal object of value. When the object does have value, sentimental, aesthetic or monetary, there can be great pleasure in letting it go and turning it over to someone else. But such is not the norm. Few of us would ever know the exhilaration of people like Francis or Clare or Elizabeth of Hungary who gave up worldly inheritances for a simpler life based on poverty and trust.

We, though, mainly know the joy of receiving—the pleasure of knowing someone else cares for us, the fun of a surprise or of a fulfilled expectation, the excitement of an "event" or party, the happiness of possessing an object, and the satisfaction of being aesthetically treated through the senses.

Not all of us, though. Some of us cannot receive; we will not or cannot allow ourselves to be "gifted." I first learned this through a friend in graduate school, a friend who was "pure generosity." On a graduate student teaching assistantship — at that time about $400 per month — she supported herself, sent money home to her mother, baked a cake for all birthdays she knew about and constantly remembered secretaries and maintenance people on special occasions with small presents. One year a group of us decided that we would make our friend a cake and all chip in and buy her several nice presents. She did not show up at her office, having gotten wind that she might be given a cake or might receive gifts. Two of us went to her apartment. We were not let in, nor would she come out. Several days later, she was back to her normal routine of working and giving.

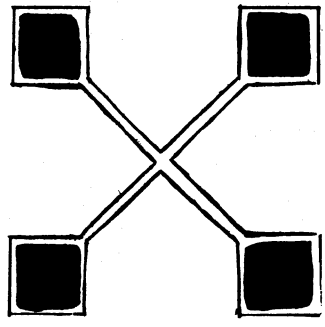
She knew how to give. And give and give. But she could not receive. She would not allow her friendship to be fastened. She would, as my son said when he was five and learning to tie his

shoes, tie the "first knot" but could not tie the "second knot," the loops that hold the first knot down. None of us knew what great pain may have lurked inside her, but what we did realize slowly and painfully was that true and bonding friendship was impossible. For a year or so I thought she was an isolated case, but I have since met or heard about other people who have built various protections against receiving, some even on theological grounds. My uncle has told me of a priest who simply refuses measures of kindness or gifts.

As we know, there are, no doubt, varied and complex reasons why some people cannot allow themselves the joy of receiving. Perhaps a sense of unworthiness or a lack of self respect darkens what Joseph Trotter calls a person's "congress of the interior." Whatever the psychological, heretical, or environmental reasons, however, a Christian theology of giving need keep open a clear theology of receiving, as well. If giving is *better,* then receiving is *good.* Even our "Christmas cliche" does not denigrate receiving, but rather spotlights the former or primary act of giving. The person who cannot "accept" himself or herself and, therefore, cannot accept acts of kindness or presents may need help or counseling, and friends, colleagues and acquaintances with patience and understanding can put this anti-social behavior in a "self to self" context.

Perhaps with a theology of friendship, this context will be firmer. How easy it is to "spiritualize" any good thing; yet Jeremy Taylor, one of the few Anglicans to write about the nature of friendship with a religious bent, points out that friendship, above all, is no mere abstraction. Taylor says friendships are not "metaphysical nothings."

For Taylor, friendship is real; it helps overcome sorrow, it vents disappointment, it multiplies joys and furthers clarity of thought. It has sacramental overtones: His tenth point in a summary of advice on friendship is, ". . .treat thy friend nobly, love to be with him, do to him all the worthiness of love and fair endearment." And as if to underscore the sacramental aspect, Taylor adds, "A gift (saith Solomon) fastneth friendship; for as an eye that dwells long upon a starre must be refreshed with lesser beauties. . .so must the love of friends sometimes be refreshed with material and low Caresses; lest by striving to be too divine it becomes less humane. . ." That the material has its place in our spiritual lives is gladly affirmed: it refreshes and reminds, just as friends themselves, through their friendship, refresh the creation and remind society that friendship is the bond upon which all civilization rests.



The Church That Changed its Name

Vernon J. Jahnke

Pastor, First Lutheran Church, St. James, Minnesota

The following story is a modern parable on the lost and the found, based on Luke 15.

The whole affair at Christ Lutheran Church started innocently enough one Wednesday night in June but it snowballed from there and stretched over a year's time. In some ways it's still going on.

It was at a meeting in the middle of their three-year term as council members that Ed and George, Calvin and Kate, Faye and Linda stopped their orderly procedure for a serious look at what they were doing. In the weary hours of that Wednesday night after deciding which bills to pay and which to hold, how to raise revenues and what the letterhead should look like on the new church stationery, Ed, the council president, uttered the unspeakable.

"I wonder if it's worth our time and energy to keep this operation going," he said.

His admission triggered the thoughts of Linda, the recording secretary, with a question long on her heart: "Does God want us to try to keep institutions afloat or would he rather we reached out to people who are drowning?"

The conversation around the table progressed from there. Pastor Jones found himself getting edgy as he listened, but he couldn't bring himself to dampen the spirit that seemed afoot. For the same questions had formed often in his own mind.

Just before the clock struck twelve that night, Calvin, the head trustee, called for action: "We can spend our time more usefully than we have been these 18 months. I'll instruct the treasurer to pay bills as he is able, and we will get closer to people in need. Let's meet here next month, same time, but then go out to call on some of the members wer are really concerned about." Though Pastor Jones advised them that they could be accused of neglecting their elective duties, Calvin's motion passed with rousing approval.

Now, one might think that after a good night's sleep and a few days to think about it, these council members would have sobered their decision and gotten back to business as usual. Such was not the case. They met again at the regular time, had a prayer and then went out two by two for visitation. Later, over coffee back at church, they told Pastor Jones of their experiences. Some of those they visited had trouble understanding why they had come, but when they realized the sincere concern of the council members they opened up to share their needs.

"It was the most satisfying night I've had on the council," Ed commented.

Faye was just as enthused. "It seemed so much more rewarding than deciding on the color of the carpet in the narthex. I felt appreciated," she said.

Fueled by these positive experiences they decided to launch deeper into personal ministry. Before the next meeting, Linda gathered the names of those families which had neither contributed money to nor communed at Christ Lutheran the previous year. Each council

member took a few of these names and went out to knock on doors to do some active listening. Again they were met with reservation by some of their contacts. Bill and Irene Pierce were pretty suspicious when George appeared at their door. "I suppose you want some money from us?" Irene commented.

"Not so, Mrs. Pierce," said George. "I want to know what has kept you away from worshipping with us this past year and see if I can be of help. Can I sit down with you for a few minutes?"

Later George reported to the rest of the council, "Bill and Irene feel pretty ashamed of themselves since Bill Jr. got caught in that burglary over on the Northside last year. They can hardly look anyone in the eye."

Kate told the rest how one of her visits had been to an older man who was bitter over the loss of his wife. And Ed had been with a young couple who seemed to have a lot of questions about God.

"They don't feel like they can show up at church until they've resolved all their doubts," he said. "Why do all these folks we've been with think that Church is only for good people, successful people, or true believers?"

"Maybe it's because we've given that impression because we're so well dressed and proper on Sunday morning," replied Calvin. "You know the world is sure a messed up place when you get out there in the middle of it. I feel like putting my Sunday suit in storage. I think we should be out there with the sinners instead of rubbing shoulders with all these good folks and calling it Christianity."

After that meeting each member of the council began to discover their own particular gifts and particular places of witness for their faith.

They still met together, in fact every Wednesday night now, for mutual support, but now George took the inactives list and made four or five calls a week, especially to the poorer members of the parish. Faye went to supper with a group she had founded for divorced persons and single parents. Linda spent the evenings in the emergency waiting room of the local hospital with troubled people who didn't know a pastor, as they waited for news of a sick or injured loved one. Kate joined a bowling league and spent nights at the bowling alley. She found she related well to the kids who would come in off the streets at night to play the pinball machines. Calvin offered to umpire at city softball games where a lot of the young men hung out. He got in trouble with the players from time to time over a bad call, but developed real trust with most. He was invited to the tavern after the game one night and over a few beers a couple of the fellows really opened up to him about problems they were having at home. And Ed, the president of the council, found his ministry down at the gas station where all the motorcycle crowd hung out. Ed found that a stripped down two-cycle air-cooled engine was a great thing to have a good honest visit around. His wife complained from time to time when he came home with a greasy shirt, but she could see that he was finally enjoying what Ed called his "church work".

Of course, not everyone in the congregation would call what Ed and the others were doing, "church work." After a few months of this new-style council work, Pastor Jones began to hear complaints from parishioners. No minutes of any council meeting appeared in the parish newsletter. "What is going on with that council of ours?" he was asked. "Why aren't they taking action on any of the church business?"

As the news of the council members' current activities began to get around, the murmurs grew louder. "Ed and his

bunch were elected to provide leadership and oversee the church. They aren't doing what they were called to do or promised to do. . Why, I heard that Calvin spends more time at Clancy's Bar than he does at church. That's some Christian witness, isn't it?. . . They ought to get to their jobs or get off the council."

Finally, Charlie Osgood, a long time pillar of the congregation, came to Pastor Jones' office deeply grieved over the whole affair. "I'am afraid this is causing quite an upset, Pastor," he said. "Things are going to break loose and fall apart around here if something isn't done soon."

Pastor Jones agreed. The next Sunday he announced a congregational meeting for the following Wednesday night. When the meeting came, he tried his best to be a peacemaker with the crowd that assembled but with limited success. Soon the air was filled with heated charges against the six who sat before them; charges of neglect, irresponsibility, unfaithfulness to the membership; charges that by frequenting places of questionable reputation they were tarnishing the good name of the congregation. Even the few who rose to praise them for their sincerity of purpose, questioned their wisdom. Others said they were just "plain fools". The council members faced the congregation very quietly. Finally Ed spoke for them: "I guess we have come to where we have a different idea of what is important than you do. You folks seem so concerned about your own survival that you can't see the real needs around you. We believe God has called us to what we are doing. We'll leave the judgement of our actions with him, not you."

The air grew thick and tense. . .until rapidly striding footsteps broke the stalemated silence. To everyone's amazement Big John Schultz moved from the shadows of the back corner of the room to the podium in front. He ran the auto body repair shop that stood next to the church.

"I've listened to all of this I can stand," he declared, even before he fully arrived at the podium. "You people out there seem to be condemning this handful of members for spending their time with sinners instead of keeping the church comfortable for you. If I remember right from Sunday School lessons, Jesus was accused of spending time with sinners, too. Most of you know I haven't set foot inside this building for years. I guess I felt like I could make it on my own without any help from you or God. I thought I was living as good a life as any of you, but a month ago when my little girl was terribly sick, I sort of fell apart. I went down to the saloon to drown my sorrows for a while. Calvin over there sat down beside me. Before I could get my first drink down I was telling him how scared I was that we were going to lose little Jennie. I don't think he even knew I was a member of this church. I don't think it mattered. He just sat there with me the whole night and I went home feeling like someone had lifted a great weight from my shoulders. His concern really touched me. I had decided to try coming to church again until I heard about this meeting. Ed and Calvin and the others are on the right track as far as I'm concerned."

He turned to them, "I've got a spare room next door with plenty of space. You're welcome to use it for a meeting place from now on if these good people don't like what you are doing." With that, he turned and strode out the door. In the wake of this bombshell, Pastor Jones rose to remind the whole gathering that their first task was to love one another in Christ. And everyone nodded their heads in agreement, but you know how feelings run. It seemed like an un-

bridgeable gap ran between the council and the congregation. The council deliberated for a few minutes and then offered their resignations. The congregation voted to accept. Pastor Jones chaired the meeting until new officers were elected. Ed and others left quietly from the meeting room with their spouses and a few supporters while the new chairman took suggestions for fixing the toilet downstairs, appointing a stewardship drive committee and asked for a final decision on the new letterhead design. No action was taken on the last item, however, as no one that night felt much like advertising or promoting their congregation.

In the days and weeks that followed, the resigned council members continued to carry out their personal missions. Feeling separated from Christ Lutheran, they took Big John up on his offer. With a table and a few folding chairs they turned the spare parts room at Big John's Auto Body into a place of worship and fellowship. They missed communion but the sadness was compensated for by the sense of closeness they shared. Soon Big John and his family joined them as well as others whose lives they had touched with their witness to Christ. Big John, after holding himself aloof for so many years, showed hunger for the Word of God that could hardly be satisfied. Soon he was a leader in the group. He discovered that a body shop could be an excellent place for serving the Lord. With his many public contacts he could seek out the lost even as God had sought him out.

One Sunday morning he declared, "Big John's is the wrong name for a business that's in the saving business. What could I call it?"

Kate, always quick with a pun, suggested, "How about the Resurrection Body Shop?"

John took the suggestion seriously. By the next Sunday morning people driving down that street saw "Resurrection Body Shop" standing side by side next to Christ Lutheran Church. So the two buildings stood through that long winter and spring.

Then a miraculous thing happened that brought yet further changes. One hot Sunday morning in July, as the small group at the body shop was sharing in a moment of silent prayer, they heard through the open windows the sounds of the people of Christ Lutheran preparing for worship. Pastor Jones' voice sounded the words, "Most merciful God" in the distance. The collective voice of the congregation responded: "We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. . ."

As he listened to the words of confession, Ed strangely felt at home, more comfortable than he had for months. He heard the words as a confession to God, but also to him, that the people of Christ Lutheran were sinful and in need of forgiveness. He realized with some shame that the one element his small group had left out of their meeting times was confession of their own need for forgiveness. Ed rose after prayer to share his thoughts with the group. "As I listened to the crowd next door just now, I realized something," he told them. "The lost sheep aren't all out on the streets or in the bars. Some of them are right next door. We just heard them admit it. And there are about 30 of us lost sheep right here. Without God's willingness to have us as his own, we are all lost. In him we are all found. Big John, I sure thank you for the use of this room, but it just doesn't feel right anymore. I'm going

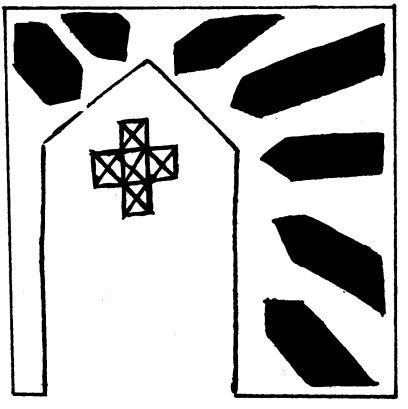
back where I belong. Any of you are welcome along."

It was an amazed congregation and an extremely relieved Pastor Jones who watched a humble looking lineup of old faces troop into the sanctuary just before the sermon. With Ed and Linda leading and Big John bringing up the rear, they filled up the first three pews right under the pulpit. The congregation knew a miracle had taken place. People at Christ Lutheran never sat that close to the front.

Linda stood to speak during announcements: "We heard your confession of sin this morning as we were ending our worship. I guess you need to hear ours. We are sorry for separating ourselves from you and thinking that we were somehow better. We hope the hard feelings will pass. We heard Pastor Jones say through the open windows that "In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for you and for his sake God forgives you all your sins." We hope you can forgive us. We have found some exciting ways of serving God this year but we want to serve you, too, however you can use us."

Linda sat down with tears in her eyes. After the service there were many hugs and handshakes in the sanctuary as the small band of rebels was welcomed back. A pot luck supper was spontaneously called for that evening.

As a sign of their own repentence and in recognition of their long neglected mission to the community, the congregation decided to change their name at the next annual meeting. When the secretary finally got her new letterhead stationery, two full years after she had first requested it, it read, "Resurrection Lutheran Church and Body Shop". One Synod official complained for a time that the new name wasn't very orthodox. But the restored congregation didn't mind. Nor did they think the Lord minded. At least they knew who they were from that point on, what had happened to them in Christ, and why they came together.



Letters to the Editor in Response to "Probings Toward Ecclesial Discipline"

In the August, 1983, issue, Jay C. Rochelle published an essay dealing with criteria for deciding whether or not a pastor should conduct a funeral or a wedding. The following responses were received.

Dear Editor:

Jay C. Rochelle deserves our thanks for at least daring to speak of discipline. The answer to poor discipline is not the neglect of discipline as such (a posture I fear is characterizing much of Lutheranism today) but an evangelical use of it. Evangelical discipline is rooted in the Gospel. Thus it is a discipline which gives expression to that Gospel—a discipline which in no way detracts from Christ's honor nor leaves the terrified conscience without the full comfort of the Good News. With that as our base I should like to question whether Rochelle has done justice to his baptismal starting point.

Baptism, Faith, and Ethics

According to Rochelle, baptism is "the sacrament of initiation to the church and one becomes a member of the community by it and by no other means" (p. 244). His use of a verb in the subjunctive mode ("important and necessary as such affirmations of faith *be*"—p. 244) lets us know that "faith" has its place, but it is not *the* essential reality when it comes to speaking of the new birth which initiates one into the body of Christ. Furthermore he adds that "in this case ethics is not the point" (p. 244). I would like to suggest that both the New Testament and the Lutheran Confessions speak much more boldly about faith than many contemporary Lutherans, who seem to fear that explicit appeals to "believe" will inevitably make of faith a human accomplishment rather than the gift of God's grace which it is. Such fear, however, is not a legitimate ground for seeking to correct the New Testament teaching on the inseparable relationship between baptism and faith and between faith and ethics. Even John 3:5 cannot be divorced from John 1:12-13, and John 3:16-21 and I Cor. 12:13a should not be read apart from I Cor. 12:13b.

In his Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Melanchthon goes to great lengths to make the point that the "outward mark" of baptism by itself does not guarantee membership in the body of Christ, but that "according to the Gospel . . . only these are the true people who *accept* this promise of the Spirit" and that "the church in the proper sense is the assembly of saints who truly *believe* the Gospel of Christ and who have the Holy Spirit" (Apol. VII-VIII, 16, 28-Tappert, pp. 170, 173). He explicitly states that we are "reborn by *faith* in Christ" (Apol. IV, 256, 263-Tappert, pp. 144, 146).

In this Melanchthon was only echoing what Luther had said before him: "Without *faith* Baptism is of no use, although in itself it is an infinite, divine treasure" (L.C.IV, 34-Tappert, p. 440). Thus for the Lutheran reformers the church (in the narrow and proper sense) was never merely the "community of the baptized," but as succinctly stated in the Augsburg Confession, "the assembly of all *believers* among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy

sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" (A.C.VII, 1-Tappert, p. 32).

Fifty years after the presentation of the Augsburg Confession the confessors of the Formula of Concord underscored the inseparable relationship between baptismal regeneration and ethics when they insisted: "It is, of course, self-evident that in true conversion there must be a change, there must be new activities and emotions in the intellect, will, and heart, so that the heart learns to know sin, to fear the wrath of God, to turn from sin, to understand and accept the promise of grace in Christ, to have good spiritual thoughts, Christian intentions, and diligence, and to fight against the flesh, etc. For if none of these things takes place or exists, there is no true conversion" (F.C.II, 70-Tappert, pp. 534-535).

Has Rochelle attempted to lay a basis for discipline in baptism without giving necessary attention to faith and ethics? Does baptism considered apart from faith and ethics honor Christ? Is the comfort the terrified conscience needs the comfort of knowing that it's okay to sin because forgiveness is guaranteed? Is such the *discipline* to which Christ called us when three times in rapid succession he said that people who fail to behave in a certain was "cannot be my *disciples*" (Lk. 14:25-33)?

Funerals

Rochelle's suggested discipline relative to funeral practices is certainly in order, but does he go far enough? He insists upon the discipline of with-holding a funeral liturgy for the unbaptized. But what about the discipline required relative to baptized but unconverted individuals? Doesn't the New Testament reckon with such types—the "sons" who are lost and need to be found, who are dead and need to be made alive again (Lk. 15:24; cf. I Cor. 10:5-22; Hebr. 6:1-9; 2 Pet. 2:17-22)? The confessors of the Formula of Concord were no more "pietistic" than the New Testament when they insisted: "But if those who have been baptized act contrary to their conscience and permit sin to rule in themselves and thus grieve the Holy Spirit within them and lose him, they dare not be baptized again though they must certainly be converted again . . ." (F.C. II, 69-Tappert, p. 534).

I like the way Rochelle refers to a "living community of faith" in the context of eucharist and absolution, but, once again, can these be divorced from personal faith and ethics (cf. Apol. IV, 45-Tappert, p. 113)? Is baptism being misused here just as circumcision was misused in the days of the Apostle Paul, and the Mass in the days of Luther—*ex opere operato*?

Weddings

The truth comes out when Rochelle goes on to apply his understanding of baptismal discipline to weddings. Since the *principium dividendi* is simply "baptism in water in the name of the Trinity" (see editor Ralph W. Kein's comment on p. 196), and since weddings belong essentially to the order of the once-born rather than the twice-born, although the twice-born may get in on them by virtue of the fact that they are also among the once-born, what does baptism have to do with weddings? Basically nothing, says Rochelle, and so we have the separation and division between redemption and creation which neither Scripture nor the Lutheran Confessions allow. A distinction and refusal to confuse, yes, but a separation and division, no. Luther recognized marriage as part of the order of creation, but that creation is fallen and pastors have no call to lay pastoral hands on a fallen creation which does not

desire to live explicitly graced by the forgiveness found alone in Jesus, the Christ (1 Tim. 5:22).

The ecclesial discipline suggested by Rochelle is not the discipline I find called for in both the New Testament and the Lutheran Confessions. It appears to be a "reductionistic discipline" which robs Christ of his full honor and the terrified conscience of its full consolation. It reduces Christ to the one who can justify the ungodly but who cares little to sanctify the justified.

Theodore R. Jungkuntz
Pastor, Lutheran Fellowship of the Word of God
Ann Arbor, MI

Dear Editor:

The author's statement: "One becomes a member of the community (Church) by it (Baptism) and BY NO OTHER MEANS," raised my eyebrows. From my study of Scripture, I see Baptism as, first, uniting us vertically with God (Christ), Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21; secondly, as uniting us horizontally with the Christian community, 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:12; Col. 2:19.

Please note Rochelle's further statement: "To hold a funeral liturgy for the unbaptized seems out of place." Perhaps I do not understand what he means by "funeral liturgy." If he means that a Christian pastor should not officiate at the funeral of any unbaptized person, I find it difficult to agree. Should I come upon the victim of an accident, who is hemorrhaging profusely and screaming, "I'm dying! What must I do to be saved?" my first impulse would not be to get a bucket of water and baptize that person. Rather, I would do what Philip did when the Ethiopian Eunuch asked whom the prophet Isaiah meant by the "sheep led to slaughter." We read: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news of Jesus." Acts 8:32, 35. I would do what Paul and Silas did when the frightened jailer asked: "What must I do to be saved?" They said: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." Acts 16:30-31. True, neither the eunuch nor the jailer was bleeding to death. True also, both of them were baptized, ultimately. Even so, I am sure, Philip and Paul and Silas would have proceeded as they did even if the eunuch or the jailer had been bleeding to death.

Baptism is not the only means of grace. "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the preaching of Christ." Rom. 10:17.

After 59 years as a parish pastor, I would have no scruples about officiating at the funeral of a person to whom I had been able to bring "the good news of Jesus," even though water may not have been available to baptize that person.

Rudolph C. Prange
St. Louis, MO.

Dear Editor:

I appeal for the help of those who are entrusted with preparing liturgical materials for those of us on the "front lines" in a pluralistic age. I admit to an uneasiness when I am in the act of conducting funeral services for the unbaptized, but also when I conduct a service for the baptized who have made the choice to live outside the Christian community. (Rochelle's article, page 245). However, the *Ministers Desk Edition* of the *Lutheran Book of Worship,* page 37, gives some suggestions to help deal with this compromised situation.

Rochelle states that we can have different standards when it comes to participating in marriage services. Although the above mentioned *Ministers Desk Edition of the LBW* seeks to be helpful

with respect to funeral for the "unchurched," it has nothing to say about modifying the marriage service to make it appropriate for those do not name the Name of Christ.

The prayers of the marriage service include these fine phrases, "We bless you for the joy which your servants . . ." "As members with them of the body of Christ, use us to support their life together . . ." (LBW, page 204). Most of the persons who appear before me so that I can hear their wedding vows are baptized, although some are not. It is the rare couple that is composed of *two* persons who actively identify themselves as "servants" of the Lord God, or who think of themselves as members of "the body of Christ."

I do not seek to be judgmental and I trust that I am not. My concern is that "we pray over" people fine sounding phrases which people cannot recognize as being their words or their commitments.

Perhaps Professor Rochelle would prepare substitute prayers for those occasions when the standard prayers just do not fit.

Paul M. Swedberg
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Ponoka, Alberta, Canada

Dear Editor:

It was one of those "outdoor Lutheran" funerals. She had been baptized "Lutheran," married "Lutheran," and now she was being buried Lutheran style. I had never met her. She was mourned by a few dozen friends and neighbors and some twelve to fifteen members of the family. Although most knew the Lord's Prayer, few were "church" people.

The husband was destroyed. He had weathered two heart attacks. His gait was past measured. He had lost his "buddy," the closest person he had ever known. They were self-centered in the best sense of that phrase. They had each other, their small family, and some long time friends. There was no pretense. Neither of them would be "missed" on the front pages of the local newspaper. Yet, his loss was as profound as the soul would know.

They had been married more than thirty years. Why the richness of the church had slipped from their experience never was clear. They wanted a Lutheran pastor, just as had been the case in other times of need. The husband knew that a pastor was necessary. They had buried his brother a few years ago. The pastor, then, had left them with impersonal but pious words: "to whom it may concern" funeral. His face asked me, begged me to be true to this personality I'd never met. Not an impersonal obligation, this was the ending of the most precious relationship he'd know.

He told me their story. Their daughter added bits. Nonetheless, the picture was sparse, the material "ordinary." She loved the outdoors; they camped; they did almost everything together. No clubs, no organizations, no church—not even back in a former mid-western life. Now, this funeral which meant everything to them both.

How much do they believe? I can't tell you. Will this "Lutheran" burial turn them back to the saving presence of our Lord? I don't know. Did my presence there lend support to cultural Christian expectations? It might.

But these things I know:

There was a lonely, broken man with terror in his face. He needed a word of hope.

There was a man who needed to do the "right thing" for someone more precious than life. He needed someone to help him say thanks.

There was a man who in a closing gesture wanted the world to see the

dignity of someone it didn't know. She, and he, deserved that.

There was a man who wanted to scream and cry and curse. He should not have to face that time alone.

There was a daughter who thought she had to remain in control and finally lost it. She was relieved when we sat and she cried.

And, I do not know if they will come to church. I only know that the love of Christ was real in the little I was able to give; hence, it was a Christian funeral.

William F. Walles
Tacoma, Washington

A Response by Jay C. Rochelle

The responses to my article indicate, first, that there is interest and concern about the area of ecclesial discipline. A number of people have been moved to reassess their own use of discipline, and that, precisely, was the aim of the article. Discipline implies boundaries and identities. There is no discipline except where there is a community which can affirm it and be voluntarily subject to it. That community may be family, the church, the union, one's society. Discipline implies the limitation of one's freedom in the belief that the greatest freedom is made possible by discipline.

The letters from Pastors Swedberg and Walles are oriented to the issue of pastoral care, it seems to me. In fact, I have prepared substitute prayers for occasions when the standard ones do not fit, to answer Swedberg; I often prepare a prayer within the marriage service which can be spoken by all as an affirmation of the union which is celebrated, since I focus on the centrality of commitment as the sacred moment (so to speak) within the liturgy.

Pr. Prange made an assumption I did not, namely, that he had been in dialogue with the person who died. His discipline is clear: "I would have no scruples officiating at the funeral of a person to whom I had been able to bring good news of Jesus." The point is clear: faith is response to the word, whether or not celebrated through baptism. Of course, I agree, but if this becomes the criterion for ecclesial discipline, it means that anyone to whom you have ever preached the Gospel has a claim on a funeral. I don't see that; it minimizes the nature of baptism as the sacrament of initiation, as the boundary sacrament.

Jungkuntz has moved the argument beyond where I left it, and that is good. He is correct: my article was written from a reductionist perspective, but reductionistic in a phenomenological rather than an ecclesiastical sense. Reduction, in phenomenology, is the exclusion of outside concerns for the purpose of focusing on the center; the reduction, in this article, aimed solely at looking at baptism as criterion for certain forms of discipline.

The central issue in the dialogue is baptism; Jungkuntz has made that clear in his response, though I think he misunderstood me and took my words out of context with relation to the "ethics" quote. The problem is rooted in our baptismal practice. So long as we have a sort of *Volkskirche* approach, with no baptismal discipline, we will be mired in these problems. I certainly agree with Jungkuntz about the inseparability of faith, baptism and ethics, and I intended that inseparability in the article—though it was not explicitly mentioned. The question his response triggers in me is: How do I know what an "unconverted" life would look like? Or, to put it more clearly, where does one stop with the list of requirements and regulations by which the "converted" are to be identified? Must we not, in some way, rely upon baptism and baptismal grace and

recall people to that again and again rather than adding more burdens? I do not want to call Pastor Jungkuntz a legalist, but I don't want to be called a robber of Christ's glory either, when in fact I thought I was aiming at precisely the opposite of robbery.

I still see the Body of Christ/Church as central to this issue, and Baptism as the historic criterion for membership in the Body of Christ. Though an outward sign, Baptism also includes faith and ethical decision-making.

Book Reviews



CHRISTIANITY IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA. By B. Thomson Brown. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983. 240 pages, paper. $6.95.

Only two chapters deal directly with Christianity in China: Chapter Five—"Christianity and the New China" and Chapter Nine—"The Church Alive and Well!" The other chapters seem strictly political: "Red Star in the East," "A Revolution Is No Dinner Party," "The Great Leap Forward," etc.

A person reading through the book carefully, however, will find a wealth of information on Chinese Christianity. In fact, this book is an excellent survey of the history of Christianity in China, as well as a most valuable picture of contemporary Christianity on the mainland, since each chapter provides a well-balanced look at the political and cultural background of China and the results of the Christian encounter with it.

The author was born in China in 1921, where his father was a medical missionary. He has valuable first-hand information to share, in addition to anecdotes from his father and other relatives who lived through this revolutionary period. Item: When the Nationalists fought their losing battle against the advancing Communist soldiers in Xuzhou, he recalls the attitude of the Communists toward the missionaries—and his father's attitude toward them—by quoting his father's diary:

> "THEY" arrived before midnight, and went from door to door reassuring the inhabitants. Came to the hospital gate and said they knew there were three Americans here, but not to fear . . . "THEY" put up notices today, "Promising liberty of worship, protection of property, safety for foreigners, etc." (p. 58).

This book is a faithful record of the Christian as well as political history of modern China. In addition, it provides practical information relevant to such questions as, What about "Bible-smuggling" in China today? Can one go to China as a student? Can missionaries now serve in China in some capacity?

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A HISTORY OF ISRAEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PERIOD. By Henk Jagersma. Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983, xv and 304 pages. Kivar. $13.95.

First published in Dutch in 1979, this textbook could well become a rival to that of John Bright which is now in its third edition. Students will welcome its brevity (Bright has 511 pages), its up-to-date bibliography (though the footnotes unfortunately are placed at the end), its independence (at times Bright rather slavishly follows the Albright tradition), and its avoidance of harmonizing. By numbering major paragraphs and inserting frequently paragraphs marked "conclusion", Jagersma helps the reader

What do the libraries of the Vatican, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Harvard, and Tübingen share in common? UPDATE.

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follow his argument and distinguish evidence from opinion. Bright, on the other hand, has far superior maps, integrates the prophetic message with its historical context in a superior fashion, and makes far better use of the information in Chronicles. The judicial reform of Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 19:4-11), for example, is presented as authentic in Bright, but goes unmentioned in Jagersma. Bright follows the chronology of W. F. Albright while Jagersma uses that of K. T. Andersen, but supplies a helpful table comparing the six (!) major modern chronological systems for the monarchical period.

Jagersma plays down the importance of the Nuzi parallels for the patriarchs, but holds to the relative antiquity of the patriarchal accounts because of the names employed, the mention of holy trees (which would not have been considered proper later), and the absence of references to Baal. He believes Israel may have had several exoduses (here following de Vaux), and he denies the much discussed analogy between Israel's covenant and the international treaties—rightly in my judgment. The conquest in his opinion was no mass invasion, the accounts dealing with Jericho and Ai are etiological rather than historical, and there never was an amphictyony. Since the Dutch edition was published in 1978, Jagersma could not interact with Norman Gottwald's *The Tribes of Yahweh,* a seminal history of early Israel published in 1979. His silence about Gottwald in this English edition, however, is most unfortunate.

The translation is quite readable though "pastors" (p. 22) should of course have been "shepherds." Several typos remain, the worst of which places Jesus ben Sirach in 1900 B.C. instead of the correct 190. These faults aside, teachers of the Old Testament at the college and seminary level should now give serious consideration to Jagersma as an alternative to Bright.

Ralph W. Klein
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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN. By Rudolph Schnackenburg. Vol. III. New York: The Seabury Press, 1982. 510 pages. Cloth. $29.50.

A review of Schnackenburg's entire commentary was carried in *Currents* (August 1981) at the time when the second volume had appeared in English. Here a few further observations and reminders are in order.

The 1,700 pages in the three volumes constitute a monumental contribution to our understanding of the Fourth Gospel. The author offers more than enough in the way of textual, grammatical, historical and literary comment. And his comments are weighty and solid. Nevertheless the commentary excels in the impressive fashion in which it succeeds in penetrating to the heart of John's theological message.

Volumes 1 and 2 covered Jesus' revelation to the world (ch. 1-12) which concludes with a reflection on unbelief (12:37-43). Volume 3 comments on Part II of the Gospel which opens in ch. 13. Jesus is now presented in the circle of his own. Lengthy discourses culminate in the prayer of the departing redeemer (ch. 17), and the prayer is followed by John's narrative of Jesus' arrest, trial, passion and resurrection.

The passion and resurrection are the goal of the entire Gospel, "the vanishing point where all lines converge." The crucifixion has been in view throughout the Gospel. It is Jesus' hour, when he is lifted up or exalted on the cross.

One of the great themes of these chapters is the glorification of Jesus. Words for glory (*doxa*) and glorification (*doxazein*) occur especially frequently in 13:31f. and 17:1-5. The former passage focuses on Jesus' glorification by God, and the latter passage reiterates that theme and expands it in the direction of the significance Jesus' glorification has for his people. The prayer begins (17:1-5) with Jesus' petition for his own glorification so that he may give life to all whom the Father has given him, continues (6-11a) with a description of the disciples' needs, moves to intercessions that the disciples may be kept (11b-16) and sanctified (17-19) and become one (20-23). Finally (24-26) Jesus prays that the disciples may share his glory.

Glory is defined not as some miraculous power but as the splendor and power of divine love (Thüsing), the reality of divine life, solidarity with the heavenly reality (Käsemann). The community's unity and its life of love are the expression of the perfection of God's glory among them. Both "glory" and "oneness" mean life in God and in his love. They are nearly synonymous with "truth" and "eternal life."

The evangelist's main concern in his passion narrative is that eyes may be opened to the mysterious enthronement of Jesus on the cross, his exaltation there, and his conquest of the power of evil.

Of course Schnackenburg, like almost all interpreters of John, sees the tension between the traditional scheme of death by crucifixion on Friday followed by the triumph of Easter three days later and the evangelist's presentation of Jesus' way as the descent and ascent of the Son of Man or of the movement of the pre-existent one through incarnation and cross back to heavenly glory. If the cross is the first rung on the ladder of ascent, the hour of triumphant glorification, what can be the place of a chronologically later resurrection? The evangelist reports the resurrection because it is deeply imbedded in the tradition and because he is reporting the actual course of events. But he puts his impress on these materials as on everything else he touches. He focuses on faith, on coming to faith, on faith as confession that in Jesus we are confronted by God himself, on faith as yielding divine life.

This is the third and final volume of a comprehensive and powerful commentary.

Robert Smith
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THE RISE OF WORLD LUTHERANISM: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE. By E. Clifford Nelson. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. xxi and 448 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

"World Lutheranism" in this book refers to the Lutheran World Federation of churches from the United States, Germany, Scandinavia, and now the Third World. While today's LWF came into being at Lund in 1947, its "rise" is more deeply rooted in the soil of Lutheran history. E. Clifford Nelson focuses on the critical period between the two World Wars, when the Lutheran World Convention first assembled in 1923 at Eisenach, met again at Copenhagen in 1929, and then struggled to survive the Nazi era. The "common catastrophe" of World War I, he argues, had clearly swept away the parochial spirit of the previous century and given birth to a new quest for Lutheran unity. Between Eisenach and Lund, moreover, he sees continuity not only in the realm of issues (unity, relief for the needy, confessionalism), but also in the realm of "emotions." The Germans always seemed to feel that the Americans would use the "war guilt" in order to gain ascendency in the LWC. The Americans, on the other hand, tended to fear that world Lutheranism would be suffocated by German theology. Cooperation came largely through the tireless efforts of LWC workhorses like John A. Morehead, Lauritz Larsen, Lars W. Boe, Ludwig Ihmels, Charles M. Jacobs, and Alfred Th.Jorgensen. Throughout the book, Nelson richly develops the role of these key personalities.

Nelson's chief purpose is to give an "American perspective," one that will serve to complement the work of German and Scandinavian scholars before him. He suggests, for example, that German suspicions were largely unfounded. American representatives consistently sought to transcend political differences. Together, or so they hoped, all Lutherans might become a "bulwark of evangelical truth" in a world that was undergoing rapid secularization. In Nelson's view, whatever the Americans may have lacked in theological acumen was balanced by their compassion for their European neighbors left hungry and homeless by war. Time and again, it was also the Americans who demonstrated the greater flexibility, accommodating themselves to the financial and political exigencies of the Germans, taking the practical steps necessary to keep the sense of worldwide Lutheran community alive following the outbreak of World War II, and scheduling no world convention of Lutherans on American soil until Minneapolis in 1957.

Nelson also demonstrates how lack of unity at home tended to diminish America's strength in the larger world of Lutheranism. The Missouri Synod stead-

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fastly refused to participate in the LWC on the grounds of "sinful unionism." Differences over the basis of Scriptural authority were always close to the surface. Some representatives, most notably those from the Norwegian, Iowa, and Ohio synods, tried to impose the doctrine of verbal inspiration. In addition, while the bulk of the Americans viewed the Lutheran Confessions as a means of insuring that the catholic gospel of salvation by grace through faith might remain at the heart of the whole Church's witness, others did not. For them, confessionalism defined the boundaries between Lutherans and other Christians. Such concerns, Nelson points out, helped to harden the opposition to the notion of a Lutheran "superchurch" and to keep the authority of LWC proceedings more at the level of a "free conference."

Nelson has crafted a significant chapter in the modern history of Lutheranism. Building on such earlier works as *Lutheranism in North America* (1972), he never seems to lose control of a cumbersome body of data. The book contains an especially enlightening and useful chapter on the German "church struggle" of the 1930's, that fairly accounts for the attitudes of Lutheran churchmen toward Hitler's Reich Church. Here and elsewhere, Nelson highlights the human side of world Lutheranism's story. Particularly memorable are his descriptions of the slight-of-hand tricks performed by the LWC executive committee in order to get the likes of such conservative Americans as J. Michael Reu and Hans Stub involved in the Eisenach Convention or to put Lutheranism's best-known leader, Nathan Söderblum, on the speaker's platform without offending those who considered his ecumenical theology too liberal. "Eisenach," writes Nelson "turned out to be a superlative occurrence." But "that it happened at all was a miracle of grace." Indeed, the same thought is one that might be applied to the entirety of world Lutheranism's history.

Jon Diefenthaler
Waynesboro, VA

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Paradigm for Lutheran Union

John H. Tietjen

President, Christ Seminary-Seminex

Half a year has passed since Christ Seminary-Seminex deployed its faculty, students, and other resources to Chicago, Berkeley, and Austin. "How is it going?" people ask as I meet them in my travels. My turn at bat in this column provides opportunity for a report.

How is it going? Almost everything is going according to plan. Faculty and students have been warmly received at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, and in Wartburg Theological Seminary's programs in Austin. Enrollment is up at all three locations. It looks as though the purposes of the deployment can be achieved. PLTS can better fulfill its mission of being the seminary for West Coast Lutheranism. LSTC, among its other programs, can become an even stronger center for graduate studies. WTS can explore with the church in the Southwest the feasibility of having a seminary there. And Seminex can share the insights gained through its unique experience more broadly in the church and expand its work of preparing people for our Lord's Gospel ministry.

Seminex is of course very much on its own in raising the support necessary to make the plan work. One problem that has surfaced in the six months since the move from St. Louis to three new locations has to do with Seminex's ongoing identity. Many people find it hard to understand that Seminex must continue to pay the salaries of its faculty at other seminaries. When we get the opportunity to explain to our supporters what we are doing and why, they believe in our mission and back it up with their gifts. We are at work at finding creative ways of telling our story and gathering support. Is it unthinkable that people in the Lutheran Church in America and in the American Lutheran Church who believe in what we are doing could join with Seminex's present constituency in becoming benefactors of this unprecedented venture in seminary cooperation? The LCA and ALC have much to gain from the success of the present effort and much to lose if it doesn't succeed.

Sharing Seminex resources in three locations is very much in anticipation of Lutheran union. The plan has the approval of the theological education units of the uniting churches and was developed after careful reflection on where Seminex might best share its resources. The plan is designed to make a contribution to the shape of theological education in a united church.

What Seminex is doing in cooperation with three other seminaries is a paradigm of what needs to take place throughout the uniting churches. At the national level, in districts and synods, locally among congregations and agencies, existing institutions and structures need to give way for the greater good of new relationships in new structures and reordered

institutions. We are after all producing a new church, not just meshing the organizations of three churches. In realignment we should be able to eliminate a good deal of administrative overhead.

Union won't happen without sacrifice. Institutions, like people, try to save their lives by perpetuating their existence. Our Lord's words apply to the institutions of the church as well as its members: you find life as you give it away for the sake of the Gospel in service to others. That takes sacrifice and doesn't come easy. Yet we all need to lay down our institutional lives if that will further the church's mission in the world.

In doing so we need to be very mindful of the people who are presently serving the church. The Spirit has endowed them with gifts for the good of us all. We need to be creative in finding the ways to provide these servants with opportunities to use their gifts among us.

The risk of sacrifice is worth taking. As our Seminex experience bears out, you can trust God's promise. If we make God's kingdom our top priority, everything else will be ours as well. You do find life as you give it away to others for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus did. And God raised him from the dead.

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