December 1983
Volume 10
Number 6

CURRENTS in theology and mission

Surprise Package V

Contents

Page

Editorial: The Glad Sound: Jesus is A Real Comer 322
Ralph W. Klein

Matthew, Master of Ecumenical Healing 325
B. T. Viviano

None Greater Among Those Born From Women:
John the Baptist in the Gospel of Matthew 333
Edgar Krentz

Discipleship and Economic Justice 339
Don Prange

What's Goin' On? 291
Will Herzfeld

Sex and Sacrament in Contemporary Literature:
The Incarnation as Method 351
Duane P. Mehl

Remembered Spring 364
Maynard E. Stokka

Broken Promises, Broken Circle, Broken People 365
Paul Bauermeister

The Rite 372
Kenn Storck

Just Friends 373
Travis DuPriest

Christmas Eve on Wilshire 375
Karl K. Kniseley, II

Village Creche 375
Ruth Ressmeyer

Madonna Alone 376
Samuel Zumwalt

Conception 377
Joyce S. Otten

Book Reviews 378

In Transit ..... Inside Back Cover
Roger Fjeld

Drawings by Stacy Boorn

Staff

Editor: Ralph W. Klein

Printed in U.S.A.

Associate Editors: Carl E. Braaten (LSTC, Chicago)
Paul Jersild (Wartburg, Dubuque)
Robert Smith (PLTS, Berkeley)

Assistant Editor: Andreas Teich

CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION is published bimonthly, February, April, June, August, October, December by Christ Seminary — Seminex, a non-profit organization, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Subscription rate is $8.50 per year. Second Class Postage Paid at Paxton, IL 60957-0073.

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

December 1983
Volume 10
Number 6

CURRENTS in theology and mission

Published by
Christ Seminary — Seminex
in cooperation with

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

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

The Glad Sound: Jesus is a *Real* Comer

When we say someone is a real comer, we mean that he or she is a person of promise, on the rise, set for a promotion, one to watch. Jesus was such a comer, but the realness of his coming refers not so much to the veracity of his incarnation, but to its carnality, earthiness, and tangibility; he came all the way here — to our real world — where we needed him.

Benedict Viviano writes about Matthew, the gospel for the coming church year, and sees in it vivid evidence for conflicts and disagreements in the early church. Matthew was a Christian of Jewish ancestry, writing for a community flooded with Gentile converts. He was not happy with the cavalier attitude of the Paulinists toward the law, yet he was wary of those in his day who were trying to codify the traditions of the Pharisees. Peter for Matthew was a mediating figure who could hold the broad center of early Christians together much better than could a James or a Paul. The final verses in the gospel opt for a universal mission, not one only to the lost sheep of the houses of Israel. Today's church needs the Matthew who provides a solid ethical and ecclesial basis and the Paul whose message has supplied the dynamite when the church became clogged and frozen.

John the Baptist appears in eight sections of Matthew, and **Edgar Krentz** rehearses this tradition in order to open up its special emphases. John is a counterpart figure to Jesus, in whom the course of Jesus is written in advance. John (and later Jesus) rejected any claim based on national identity. John called people to respond to God and his rigorous demand for righteousness; Jesus issued the same call by his associating in table fellowship with sinners. The reality of ministry for John included rejection by the religious leaders and death at their hands — all this as advance counterpart. His later puzzlement over Jesus' lack of real messianic activity was resolved by a reference to Jesus' proclamation to and for the poor. That's what is really expected in the rule of God.

Don Prange daily rubs shoulders with people ground down by the system in Appalachia. From that reality he reflects on the gospel readings for Advent. Our usual "What does the text say?" needs to be complimented by "What do the oppressed say the text says?" Discipleship and economic justice are the twin themes gained by his liberationist hermeneutic. Advent signals the hope for an end to economic injustice. God comes as one who identifies with the oppressed so that he can join them in their struggle and bestow on them power.

Will Herzfeld is a black pastor and a top official in the AELC. He insists that if we are to understand our opaque present, we must get to know a God on the move, not bound to color, class, or sex. During these times of trouble God is at work on a new thing; we need to perceive him and heed his call. Realism in the church means that we are not participating in a past event or even in something yet to happen. Rather, God calls us to work in a now-happening where all sorts of hurts are "what is goin' on."

How do we break out of a historic, intellectual, literal, one-dimensional world? **Duane P. Mehl** reviews a number of American writers who have struggled to find living symbols of God's presence within the sensible world. He finds that incarnational methods are used by American writers like Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Faulkner, Hawkes, O'Connor, Malamud, and Updike. At their best, these writers have used a metaphoric manner of writing, producing literature believable on a literal level, but open to spiritual realities. This metaphoric manner — reminding us of the hypostatic union of natures in Christ — will always remain the only way in our literature to counteract our urge toward real*ism*, scient*ism*, and the exclusive pursuit of "objective" data.

Increasingly for Christians the real outcome of marriage is divorce. **Paul Bauermeister** outlines what is meant by decision counseling (identifying all the options, helping people to come to their own decisions and to take responsibility for them) and divorce counseling (providing for the parenting of children, enabling an amicable post-divorce relationship in which each can see the other as child of God). Divorce means broken promises and hence sin, but even/especially this sin is drowned in the grace of Christ. Counseling before, during, and after divorce can minimize the breaking of people and facilitate the healing of people who do get broken.

Episcopal priest **Travis DuPriest** has written a series of three essays on friendship, the first of which appears in this issue. Despite all the obstacles to friendship in today's world, real friends last and they act instead of God for us. Friendship is the greatest of relationships, a blessing from God, who in turn deserves our blessing.

The December issue, for the fifth time, is a surprise package of poems and creative essays on Advent and Christmas. Our reader-contributors this year include **Karl E. Kniseley II, Joyce S. Otten, Ruth Ressmeyer, Maynard E. Stokka, Kenn Storck,** and **Samuel Zumwalt.**

We can easily agree to the proposition that Jesus *was* a real comer; the hard part is to hail him today as the one who comes into our world and to live our lives in his wake and rhythm. Our glad hosannas are real enough. Methinks it's faith, life, justice, and peace that must become real if heaven's eternal arches are to ring with the beloved name.

Hence, have a *really* blessed Advent, Christmas, and New Year!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Matthew, Master of Ecumenical Healing

B. T. Viviano, O.P.

Aquinas Institute, St. Louis, Missouri

Conflict is a normal part of life. Today there is even a scholarly quarterly called *The Journal of Conflict Resolution.* Psychiatrists tell us that much mental illness derives from neurotically repressed anger. The essence of Greek tragedy is when two equally well-intentioned people meet on a collision course. This type of conflict brings out the tears in the audience. Yet believing Christians have been remarkably reluctant over the centuries to admit the presence of real, irreconcilable conflict within the New Testament.

The reasons for this reluctance are various. Perhaps the main reason is the picture of the early church sketched by the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Its presentation stresses harmony and serenity as characteristic of the internal life of the early Christians. Tumult comes from without. Internal differences are settled peaceably. This picture is not wholly false, and indeed, if one reads between the lines, one can see cracks in the facade, but the basic impression created by Acts is one of sweetness and light rather than beard-pulling and eyeball-scratching. We only uncover the depth and bitterness of the controversy when we turn to Galatians and James.

Another reason to repress the conflicts within early Christianity is that people experience enough controversy in their normal lives, even in their lives as Christians. There is an understandable tendency to want to find an oasis of calm, to be able to say, "Here at least, in the early church, it was not so." In a world where families are strained by separation or divorce, where international and internal political tensions are often at the breaking point, where even church families are rent by schism and mutual recrimination, the rose garden or love feast image of Acts 2:42 must always exert its charms. All the more so as, in Max Weber's famous and seductive analysis, the church today must function as a kind of free zone, providing momentary refuge from the rigors of a highly competitive technological society.

Theologically speaking, probably the most powerful impetus to deny conflict within the New Testament is the doctrine of scriptural inspiration. If the Bible is the inspired word of God, how can it contain conflicting and divergent views? Must not Scripture contain a single lucid doctrine of salvation? The desire to avoid portraying the apostles in unseemly disputes motivates biblical interpreters to downplay the clash of inner-biblical polemic.

Yet it is doubtful if such an approach does a real service to contemporary Christians. First of all, the Bible presents itself as a real history of real people in all their weaknesses, follies, and sinfulness as they struggle to respond to the divine initiative. Secondly, Christianity is the religion of the Word made flesh. The point then is to trace the divine hand working within the human realities, not

to deny the abiding humanness. But, most important of all, it is entirely possible that an honest portrayal of early Christian conflicts will show not only their disagreements but also their equally real efforts to overcome them, their struggles to preserve the unity of the church even in the midst of the most serious divisions of conscience. Instead of holding up to contemporary Christians an impossible and unreal, not to say historically dishonest, model derived selectively from the Bible, there would be made available to us the full complexity and range of early Christian experience and this would provide useful analogies to interpret and to handle our own contemporary experience. Nor would this approach deny the inspiration of Scripture, because what is inspired is not this or that isolated verse but the whole canon of Scripture as its parts are related to one another dialectically. It is the dialectic of the canon which manifests the inspired truth of Scripture and its relevance for us today.

The idea that there was conflict in the early church and that this conflict is reflected within the New Testament goes back to Friedrich Christian Baur and the Protestant Tubingen school of the early nineteenth century.[1] This tradition has been forcefully revived in our day by Ernest Käsemann, also of Tübingen. In a seminal, intentionally provocative essay Käsemann asks, does the canon of the New Testament provide a basis for the unity of the church?, and his answer in brief is, no. Writing during the first flush of enthusiasm for the ecumenism of the World Council of Churches (1951), Käsemann was trying to dampen it by correcting the sort of biblical naivete which thought that if we could all only "get back to the Bible" we could all be one again. Käsemann pointed out that most of the major divisions in the Christian family today were already present in a rudimentary form in the New Testament. Getting back to the Bible by itself would not help.[2]

Hans Küng replied to Käsemann's challenge in an optimistic essay which admitted that there was division and diversity within the New Testament but which nevertheless affirmed that the *whole* canon must be the basis for our theology and ecclesiology. Küng went on to express his confidence that the breadth of the canon should be the breadth of our ecumenical tolerance and that, while Catholics had something to learn from Protestant evangelical concentration, Protestants should find their place within the full range of Catholic comprehensiveness as reflected precisely

[1] W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), part four, pp. 120-193. P. C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology. A Study of F. C. Baur* (New York: Harper, 1966). Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Oxford: U.P., 1975).

[2] Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes.* (Naperville: Allenson, 1964), pp. 95-107. Further literature in his *Das Neue Testament als Kanon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1970).



in the comprehensiveness of the New Testament canon where Paul and James lie side by side.[3] In brief, Küng took the fact of conflict within early Christianity and built something positive on it.

But it is not enough to admit conflict within the pages of the New Testament or then to see something positive in it. It is also necessary to limn the contours of the controversy as accurately as possible. In the past, from Baur on, the main lines of conflict in the earliest period ran along the division: Jewish Christianity represented by James (or more crudely, by Peter), and Gentile Christianity represented by Paul. (Peter is sometimes represented as a mediating figure between these two hostile camps.) After Jewish Christianity effectively disappears with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the conflict shifts to the front between the emerging "early Catholic Church" and the Gnostic groups.

This tidy picture runs into some immediate problems: after all, was not Paul a Jewish Christian, albeit of a unique sort? Had not Jews been living in a Greek civilization, even in Palestine, for over three hundred years?[4] Recently, R. E. Brown has brought some much needed clarity and nuance into this matter.[5] He works out a fourfold typology: (1) Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts who practiced full observance of the Mosaic Law, including circumcision, as necessary for salvation. (2) Those who did not insist on circumcision as salvific for Gentile Christians but did require them to keep some Jewish purity laws (James and Peter). (3) Those who did not insist on circumcision as salvific for Gentile Christians and did not require their observing Jewish purity laws in regard to food, but only in regard to marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1). These Christians could still participate in Jewish feasts and Temple worship and allowed *Jewish* Christians to practice circumcision and the Torah (Paul, at least in Romans). (4) Those who did not insist on circumcision and kosher laws and saw no abiding significance in the cult of the Jerusalem Temple (Paul in Galatians, the Fourth Gospel, Hebrews). This scheme is definitely an improvement over earlier classifications, even though it does not distinguish between "full observance of the Mosaic Law" understood as the 613 commandments of Torah (what in later Judaism came to be called the Karaite position and which

---

[3] Hans Küng, " 'Early Catholicism' in the New Testament as a Problem in Controversial Theology," chapter 12 of *The Council in Action* (NY: Sheed & Ward, 1963), pp. 159-195.

[4] Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadephia: Fortress, 1974).

[5] "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *CBQ* 45 (1983) 74-79. This approach is further developed in R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (New York: Paulist, 1983), on the whole a good book, though unconvincing to this writer in trying to locate Matthew's gospel in Antioch. See B. T. Viviano, "Where was the Gospel according to Matthew Written?" *CBQ* 41 (1979), 533-546.

H. J. Schoeps thinks was Jesus')[6] and full observance which includes the more detailed development of the Law practiced by the Pharisees.

With this background information we now turn to the gospel according to Matthew. It will be our thesis that Matthew's gospel contains some examples of inner-Christian polemic but that precisely in trying to conduct this kind of polemic in a Christian way it offers us some valuable models for dealing with some of the inevitable conflicts which arise in our Christian communities today. A subpoint will be that, although Matthew may not receive as high marks in his treatment of non-Christian opponents, viz, the Jewish heirs of the Pharisees, the emerging rabbinical Judaism associated with the academy at Jamnia, he nevertheless makes a positive contribution even here.

Building theses on Matthew presupposes some view as to what sort of gospel it is. Where for example would Matthew fit in Brown's typology given above? For some time now literature about Matthew's gospel has been seriously divided over whether it is, in its final editing, a Jewish Christian or a Hellenistic Gentile Christian work. The Jewish Chrisian hypothesis is the more traditional one and is still represented by names like Stendahl,[7] Bornkamm,[8] Davies,[9] and to some extent F. W. Beare.[10] This view rests primarily on favorite passages in the earlier part of the gospel, like the Prologue (chapters 1 and 2) and the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5 to 7) and 23:23. The Gentile Christian hypothesis is strongly asserted by Rolf Walker[11] and John P. Meier[12] as well as with some reserve by Trilling,[13] Strecker[14] and Frankemolle.[15] This view rests primarily on some passages in the later parts of the gospel, e.g., 21:43 where the kingdom is taken from Israel and given to another nation (cf. 8:10-12), and especially on the gospel's magnificent ending, 28:16-20, where a universal missionary command is given without so much as mentioning the necessity of circumcision for Gentile male converts. What sort of Jewish Chris-

[6] "Jésus et la Loi juivre," RHPR 33 (1953) 1-20. Cf. the similar position of Viviano, *Study as Worship: Aboth and the New Testament* (SJLA, 25; Leiden: Brill, 1978), p. 177 and *passim;* Stephen Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority* (Lund: Gleerup, 1978); Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer* (Wunt, II 7; Tübingen: Mohr, 1981).

[7] *The School of St. Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968).

[8] *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

[9] *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1964).

[10] *The Gospel according to Matthew* (New York: Harper, 1981), pp. 7f.

[11] *Die Heilsgeschichte im ersten Evangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1967).

[12] *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1967).

[13] *Das Wahre Israel* (Munich: Kösel, 1964).

[14] *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1971).

[15] *Jahwebund und Kirche Christi* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974).



tianity can it be which dispenses with circumcision? On the other hand, it is not *said* that circumcision is not necessary — it is simply not mentioned.

The position taken here is that the author of the first gospel in its final Greek form was a Jewish-Christian, that is, a Christian of Jewish ancestry writing for a community predominantly of Jewish heritage, on Palestinian soil. This community met regularly for worship in its own prayer houses, and kept the main Jewish feasts in its own way. The living of the ritual Torah was simply taken for granted by them, at least to the extent that it was kept by the *am ha-aretz* (non-Pharisaic Jews) from whose ranks many of them had come. Observance of Torah was taken for granted because they revered and read the Old Testament in their religious services, and studied it to find fuller explanations for the person and work of Jesus, the messianic apocalyptic irruption lately in their midst. It was inherited from their family background. They understood Jesus as, among other categories, a great teacher sent from God who brought the messianic halacha, that is, an interpretation of Torah suited to a life-style for the messianic age. This messianic halacha simplified Torah observance for them, and they understood it as quite critical of and superior to the specifics of Pharasaic halacha, then in process of codification (Matt 5:20).

On the other hand, the Matthean community was in transition: Gentile converts and Greek language and the end of the Temple as the visible center of Judaism and as a symbol which stood more or less above the parties — all these could not fail to affect the complexion of the community. Faced with the flood of Gentile converts (a) to their own Greek-speaking services[16] and (b) to the diaspora communities (many under Paul's influence), they were sorely perplexed as to entrance requirments. By A.D. 85, when their gospel was most likely written, they probably accepted the decisions reflected in Acts 15:28-29 (whether these verses are historical in the strict sense or not). That is, circumcision was not absolutely required for males, although some regarded this relaxation of Torah with misgivings and apprehension (Matt 5:19). In any case, they make no mention of circumcision in their great statement of missionary strategy (Matt 28:16-20).

We now have a picture of Matthew's community which corresponds closely to Type Two in Brown's classification. We have also brought forward some of the

[16] The second and third century rabbis who produced the Palestinian Talmud report that some of their own synagogue services in Caesarea Maritima, on the coast of Palestine, where Matthew's community may well have been located, were conducted in Greek. See Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: JTS, 1942); *idem, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, JTS, 1950); N.R.M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976). If this was so for the rabbinical Jews, how much more so for the mission-minded Christians.

texts which will be the basis of our claim that Matthew was a master of ecumenical infighting. To a closer look at these texts we now turn.

(1) "Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:19, 20).

These verses from the Sermon on the Mount contain any number of problems and are often discussed. Our intention here is not to consider all their implications or all the opinions about them, but simply to make a few observations and draw conclusions for our thesis.[17] First, we accept the common view that verse 19 is a pre-Matthean tradition and that verse 20 comes from the evangelist himself, but in any case, he affirms *both* verses. Second, note that the two warnings in the verses have contrasting penalties for failure to heed them. In the first case, the culprit will only receive a lowly place with God. In the second case, the shirker will be totally excluded from heaven, a much more drastic destiny. Third, we accept that controversial interpretation (of Johannes Weiss)[18] which sees the main target of the warning in verse 19 as Paul and the Pauline Christians who are largely Torah-free, especially on matters like circumcision. The targets of verse 20 are the non-Christian rabbis who are trying to codify and carry on the traditions of the pre-70 Pharisees. Matthew is locked in an internecine struggle to the death with these nearby opponents and gives them no quarter. They are outside the pale of the messianic community. Matthew is much gentler with his inner-Christian (Pauline) opponents. It is obvious he is not happy with the cavalier attitude of the Paulinists to the Torah. But he cannot bring himself to excommunicate them. He stretches the limits of his tolerance, even though the dispute has to do with the revealed will of God. At the limit, even though for Matthew Jesus comes to fulfill the Torah, not to undo it (Matt 5:17), adherence to Jesus takes precedence over earlier stages of revelation, however much it must grieve Matthew to say so.

(2) "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:18, 19).

Again, we do not attempt a full dis-

[17] For our fuller treatment, see *Study as Worship*, pp. 177-183.

[18] Johannes Weiss, *The History of Primitive Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1947), II, p. 753. For a cautious discussion, see W. D. Davies, *The Setting*, pp. 316-341.



cussion of these much discussed verses.[19] We only ask the question: why did Matthew accept this earlier tradition which singled out Peter for special authority in the post-Easter church? What were his alternatives? If he had been a Gentile Christian, his natural choice would have been Paul. (Of course in the gospel narrative context this would have been impossibly anachronistic.) Since he was a Torah-living Jewish Christian he might like to have supported James, the brother of the Lord, the "pope"-martyr-hero of the Jewish Christians. This actually happened in the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. There we read: "The disciples said to Jesus: We know that you will go away from us. Who is it that will then be great over us? Jesus said to them: In the place to which you have come, you will go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into existence" (logion 12).

This saying, embedded in a gnosticizing apocryphon, probably goes back to a Jewish Christian tradition that thought Paul was the messenger of Satan and did not think much of Peter either because he allowed himself to be intimidated by Paul (Gal 2:11-14)[20]. Matthew refuses to go this far. He may not like Paul but he will not portray him as Anti-christ. He knows Peter's weaknesses (14:28-33; 16:23; 26:69-75), but he also realizes that he was important both in the pre-Easter and in this post-Easter Christian community and he is too honest to deny this. But besides this concern for historical truth, Matthew also realizes that if the Christian movement is not to fall apart into factions, it must find and identify with a bridge figure, a mediating apostle whose significance is respected by or at least acceptable to all parties. Such a one could only be Peter. Thus, Matt 16:18, 19 shows Matthew at his ecumenical best, working out a symbolic figure who could hold the broad center of early Christians together. The verses represent, among other things, Matthew's statesmanlike decision to put his partisan preferences in second place, behind the sovereign good of the unity of the church.

(3) 'And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you

[19] *Peter in the New Testament,* ed. R. E. Brown, K. P. Donfried, John Reumann (New York: Paulist/Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), pp. 75-107, 173-175. From the many recent articles we select Christian Kähler, "Zur Form-und Traditionsgeschichte von Matth. XVI. 17-19," *NTS* 23 (1976) 36-58; J. D. Kingsbury, "The Figure of Peter in Matthew's Gospel as a Theological Problem," *JBL* 98 (1979) 67-83; J.-M van Cangh and M. van Esboeck, "La primauté de Pierre (Mt. 16, 16-19) et son contexte judaique," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 11 (1980) 310-324.

[20] *Clementine Homilies,* XI, 35, 3-6, readily available in W. A. Meeks, *The Writings of St. Paul* (New York: Norton: 1972), 178-183.

always, to the close of the ages'' ' (Matt 28:16-20).

This magnificent conclusion to Matthew's gospel[21] represents a triumph of universal mission spirit over other traditions in Matthew's community which held that not only Jesus (15:24) but also the apostles (10:6) were sent ''only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'' Matthew realized that, much as he and his might have preferred a cozy Palestinian church of the ''little ones'' of Israel, to remain within those narrow confines would be in effect to surrender the world church to the Paulinists with the tremendous loss of tradition, both Jewish and Jesuanic, which that would entail. The world church needed to hear another, balancing voice. Matthew needed to send his gospel out to the world, to address a world audience in a worldwide language, if he was to get the hearing, and to have the (moderating, enriching, deepening) impact that he wanted. He turned his back on the provincialism in the final, unforgettable, verses of his gospel.

The result of this ecumenical courage is that his gospel quickly became the favorite and most quoted canonical gospel, even in predominantly or even exclusively Gentile churches.[22] Henceforth, neither Paul nor Matthew would win a complete victory. Both would be read side by side. Each would win on some points and lose on others. But the dialectical tension between Law and Gospel, between Matthew and Paul, would continue down through the millennia, Matthew providing a solid ethical and ecclesial basis, Paul the dynamite when the church became clogged and frozen and inert.

Matthew was not intimidated by Paul's brilliance. He stood his ground in sober, lapidary prose. He was a competent teacher, an ecumenically minded Jewish Christian, faithful to the traditions of his own church, yet developing them to meet the challenges of his new time, reaching out to Christians of other traditions. He made his points effectively without losing his temper at his opponents. In all this he represents a model to us for ecclesiastical, ecumenical infighting, because he is religiously serious and yet never exceeds (in his dealings with fellow Christians at least) the bounds of Christian charity.

[21] See the fine recent work by Jane Schaberg, *The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: The Triadic Phrase in Matthew 28:19b* (SBLDS, 61; Chico; Scholars, 1982).

[22] E. Massaux, *Influence de* l'évangile de saint Matthieu sur la littéerature chrétienne avant saint Irénée (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1950).

None Greater Among Those Born From Women: John the Baptist in the Gospel of Matthew

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

Matthew wrote his gospel with consummate artistry. He made extensive and effective use of literary devices to structure his material, to interpret the events he reported, and to underscore significant details, emphases and motifs in Jesus' words and actions. A number of these devices can be listed without giving detailed evidence. He used *inclusio* (ring-composition) to stress the significance of the presence of the resurrected Christ by repeating the "God with us" language of 1:23 in 28:20. Formulae and formulaic expressions are used to reinforce either structure (cf. 4:17 and 16:21) or motifs (see the conclusions of the five great discourses [7:28, 11:1, 13:53; 19:1, 26:1]), and to mark off divisions within larger sections of his gospel (cf. 6:4, 6:18). Matthew's use of the number fourteen to structure his genealogy is made clear in the text itself; elsewhere the numbers seven, five or three are used as a structuring device. Key terms occur over and over in contexts where they are not found in the parallel synoptic accounts (check the concordance on "Son of David" and *dikaiosyne*). The five great discourses are divided by narratives that both illustrate the earlier words and prepare for the next discourse. In short, Matthew uses a variety of literary devices to support and clarify his interpretation of Jesus.

The same is true of the way in which he deploys the other actors in the story. Peter, Judas, the Pharisees, the disciples, Pontius Pilate, and John the Baptist are all given distinctive treatment in Matthew. They function as foils to highlight some significant aspect of Matthean theology or historical interpretation. This article will survey Matthew's delineation of John the Baptist as an example of such Matthaean literary art. The delineation highlights aspects of Matthew's theology that deserve emphasis in proclamation in the year of Matthew in the three year lectionary cycle.

John the Baptist appears in eight different sections, longer or shorter, of the Gospel. The three year lectionary omits some of them, as the following table makes clear:

Give *Currents* to a friend for Christmas.

Send your order to:
Currents, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615
Price: $8.50. We will send your friend a gift card.

Passage	Theme	Lectionary occurrence
3:1-6	John's initial proclamation	Advent 2
3:7-12	John's proclamation	Advent 2
3:13-18	Jesus' baptism by John	Epiphany 1
4:12	Jesus initial preaching caused by John's imprisonment	Epiphany 3
9:14-17	Question on fasting by John's disciples	not in lectionary
11:2-9	John's question from prison; Jesus' witness to John	Advent 3 (only 11:2-11)
14:2-10	Execution of John by Herod	not in lectionary
16:14	In Confession at Caesarea	Pentecost 14
17:13	Witness to John after Transfiguration	not in lectionary
21:25-27	Question of authority	not in lectionary
21:28-32	Parable of the two sons	Pentecost 19

Most of the omissions are not serious, though the truncation of Matthew 11 leads to a possible misinterpretation of 11:25-30 on Pentecost 7 and the omission of 17:9-13 from the Transfiguration story on the last Sunday of Epiphany might cause the preacher to miss the stress on the passion and death of Jesus in the context.

John the Baptist does not appear in the Matthaean infancy narrative (contrary to Luke). Instead he first comes into the narrative as an adult preacher (3:1). The Matthaean emphases in the story *(3:1-6)* are striking. The narrative is tied to the preceding context by the phrase "those days" to refer to a time of fulfillment. John is not for Matthew the last of the Old Testament prophets, as he is for Luke (16:16). The genealogy and the fulfillment citations in Matthew 1-2 make clear that the birth of Jesus himself begins the age of fulfillment. John appears "in those days" as part of the fulfillment cast of characters. That is also stressed by two other uniquely Matthaean characteristics: John's message is identical with that of Jesus (3:2 and 4:17): "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has come." John and Jesus are tied closely together as preachers of the eschatological kingdom. John appears in the wilderness of *Judaea,* a chorographic note that is not found elsewhere. Matthew also heightens the popularity of John with the addition of "all the territory of the Jordan" in 3:5. Finally, by reversing the order of Mark and placing the appearance of John *before* the citation of the Isaiah 40 passage, Matthew



makes the proclamation of the kingdom the event which fulfills (Second) Isaiah's vision of the preparation of the road of God. In this way the prophetic character of John is preserved, but downplayed. His clothing and diet (3:4, cf. 2 Kings 1:8, Zech. 13:4) are mentioned after the fulfillment citation is applied to his role as preacher of the kingdom.

Matthew 3:7-12 presents the wording of John's more extended proclamation. Vv. 7-10 makes clear the nature of the repentance he demanded: a radical reorientation of life in the face of the coming kingdom. Luke shares this passage (from Q) with Matthew, but uses it differently. While Luke applies it to the crowds (Lk. 3:7), Matthew has John speak it to Pharisees and Sadducees, the lay reformers and the religious authorities. It is a word of uncompromising challenge. Descent from Abraham, i.e., membership in the elect nation, will not benefit at all. Only the bearing of fruit will allow one to escape the fires of judgment. The appellation "offspring of vipers" identifies the religious leaders as ones who reject the proclamation of the kingdom.

A careful reading of the proclamation of Jesus later in the Gospel shows how John's message here is also shared by Jesus. It is the Pharisees especially who are Jesus opponents in this Gospel (cf. 5:20, 7:29, 9:11, 34, etc.). Pharisees and Sadducees question him in the temple after the entry into Jerusalem (21:45; 22:15, 16, 23). After the Pharisees "take counsel against him, how they might destroy him" (12:14), they accuse him of healing with the aid of Beelzebub (12:24). It is then that Jesus calls them "offspring of vipers" (12:34; cf. 23:33) and uses the figure of the tree that produces good or rotten fruit to pass judgment on their "speaking against the Holy Spirit" (12:32, 33). Those who do not produce good fruit will be cut down and cast into fire, says John (3:10), and Jesus echoes him in 7:19. John's uncompromising demand that repentance must be manifested in good actions is repeated in the proclamation of Jesus (cf. 7:13-27).

John's words challenge the priority of race as an effective aid in surviving the coming of the kingdom. Descent from Abraham will not benefit by itself (3:9). Jesus shares this attitude also; indeed, the Gospel of Matthew is strong in its stress that Jewishness does not benefit if the Jew does not respond in faith. The faith of the centurion (8:10) is greater than that in Israel. Hence Jesus speaks about the gentiles reclining at table with the patriarchs while the children of the kingdom are thrown into outer darkness (8:11-12). Jesus makes the same point implicitly in the cursing of the fig tree (21:18-22) and explicitly in the three parables told after the first question in the temple (21:28-22:14), especially in 21:43, 45. The kingdom "will be given to a different nation that produces its fruits." John's demand for repentance and his rejection of any claim based on national identity are reiterated and reinforced by Matthew's Jesus.

Matthew attaches the words about the coming mightier one directly to the end of 3:10, without any kind of verbal transition. Thus he regards them as part and parcel of the same basic Johannine message, the proclamation of the kingdom (3:2). Although Jesus and John share the message and are both part of the age of fulfillment, John points to Jesus as the ultimate bringer of the kingdom. Jesus will do it by gathering the righteous (the grain) and destroying the evil (the chaff), an application of the figure of Israel as God's threshing floor (3:12). John anticipates that Jesus will bring the separation of the just and unjust (cf. Ps. Sol. 17:21ff.). Here John and Jesus part company, as the later John the Baptist passages show.

Matthew 3:13-17 is the second great John passage in this Gospel. The baptism of Jesus in Matthew has two unique features, both of which relate to Christology. The first is the interchange between John and Jesus in 3:14-15. Jesus responded to John's message ("then" 3:13) and came expressly to be baptized. John recognized him as the "coming mightier one" and questions the propriety of his baptism (3;14) in the light of his position. John implies that he, Jesus, should baptize him, John, with the Holy Spirit (3:11). Jesus' answer is highly instructive: his baptism is part of his fulfilling all righteousness (*dikaiosyne*, 3:15). *Dikaiosyne* is a key term in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The righteousness of disciples must surpass that of Scribe and Pharisee (5;20). It is the characteristic that determines the mode of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting done in secret for the notice of the heavenly father alone. Disciples are blessed when persecuted for *dikaiosyne* (5:10, cf. 5:6); no wonder that they are urged to seek the kingdom and its righteousness beyond all else (6:33). The Kingdom and its *dikaiosyne* are tied closely together, as tree and fruit. Jesus therefore dare not omit a response to John's demand for repentance and faith (3:2), for to omit it would be to place oneself outside the demand of God and the omission of true piety. The voice from heaven announces to John ("This is . . ." 3:17) that Jesus has done just what he ought to do and therefore is the son in whom God rejoiced when he came to be baptized. In Matthew Jesus' baptism is a mark of his piety and ties him closely to John.

Matthew 4:12 introduces yet another theme into the relationship of John and Jesus. Their careers as preachers of the kingdom are closely related. The imprisonment of John is the occasion for beginning of Jesus' ministry (4:12, 13). Jesus enters Galilee in fulfillment of Scripture (as John had come to Judaea in 3:1, 2), to take up John's message (4:17). That tie is supported later by Jesus himself.

John is a preacher of righteousness; that righteousness expresses itself also in fasting (6:16-18). That lends a peculiar sharpness to the question of John's



disciples about the lack of fasting by Jesus' disciples (9:14). It is here that Jesus himself introduces a sharp distinction between himself and John, a distinction that is important for the understanding of chapter 11.

Matthew 11:2-19 is the longest passage on John's significance in Matthew. It comes immediately after the second discourse, the sending out of the twelve. Chapters 11 and 12 are the section in which Matthew separates the disciples from unbelieving Judaism, a separation based on their knowledge of Jesus and his role in the kingdom (cf. 13:51, 52). While there is not space for a complete interpretation of this passage here, several comments on the significance of John in relation to Jesus are important. (1) John's question from prison arises from Jesus' failure to do what he had anticipated: baptize with Holy Spirit and fire (3:11, 12) in the sense of gathering the righteous and obliterating the unjust. John questions Jesus' activity. The response of Jesus points to his deeds, especially his preaching to the poor (for "poor" in the sense of the faithful see Ps. Sol. 5:2, 11; 10:6; 15:1; 18:2) as evidence that he is doing what is expected in the rule of God (cf. Is. 61:1ff., 29:18; 35:5, 6; Enoch 5:8, 9; 25:5-7, etc.). The fruit which Jesus stresses over against John is the response of faith to the proclamation of God's rule (cf. 8:10; 15:28, and the context in 11-12, esp. 11:20-24 and 12:23-27).

(2) Jesus gives John extreme importance in human history. He is "more than a prophet" and "the greatest born of women" — except for Jesus himself. He is the eschatological Elijah (11:14), a note peculiar to Matthew.

(3) Thus it is not surprising that Jesus views John's proclamation as a word from God's Wisdom, the reverse side of his own proclamation. In 11:16-19, a passage omitted from the lectionary, John and Jesus are set on a level as *the* two speakers whose life and words called people to respond to God. John did it by his rigorous demand for righteousness, Jesus by his conduct relating to fellowship at table with sinners. The failure of people to respond to either of them is what passes judgment on Chorazin, Bethsaida, and at Capernaum (11:20-24).

(4) This illuminates the context for Matthew 11:25-30 (Pentecost 7). In this prayer of thanksgiving Jesus rejoices because God's choice does not depend upon human capabilities. That is the background for the invitation to take the yoke of Jesus on one's shoulders. What Rudolf Bultmann once called the "burden of religion" is the antithesis against which Jesus speaks. One does not achieve status before God, one is given it. Thus Jesus' invitation is not a general invitation to get rid of all worry, but a call to accept the free election of God.

The close tie between Jesus and John is further underscored in *14:1-21.* The death of John is reported in connection with Herod's speculation that Jesus might be *John redivivus* (14:2). When

Jesus hears of John's death (14:13), his actions precipitate the clearest claim to messianism in his actions, the feeding of the five thousand (14:13-21). Once again, an incident in John's career stimulates Jesus to action.

Pentecost 14 takes the confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-20) as its Gospel. This pericope opens a sequence in Matthew that is bracketed by references to John. The first response the disciples make to Jesus' question, "Whom do men say the Son of Man is?" is "John the Baptist." While the question ultimately demands a different answer, there is a sort of correctness about this answer. John is one of the heralds of the kingdom. His message and Jesus' message are closely related. And his death is a model for Jesus' own way to Jerusalem. That is made clear in the conversation with the disciples after the transfiguration (17:9-13). Jesus tells them to be quiet about the vision until "the Son of Man is raised from the dead" (17:9). That leads to the identification of John as Elijah who was to come and the correlation of the suffering of the Son of Man with John's death (17:10-13). Verses 12b and 13, where this is made explicit are unique to Matthew. Those who recognize John for who he is should infer from his death the future course of the Son of Man. Similar messages lead to similar fates. Both are rejected by the Jews (11:2-19) and both suffer death for their message. The mark of disciples is that they understand such matters and recognize the significance of John (and Jesus, 17:13).

Matthew 22:18-32, the last John the Baptist reference, is part of the Gospel for Pentecost 19. It underscores several motifs that we have already seen. (1) It identifies John as a preacher of *dikaiosyne* (21:31). (2) Response to proclamation, not social or religious position, determines whether one is under the royal rule of God. Prostitutes and Publicans precede the religious leaders of 21:23 into the kingdom. Thus there is a new kind of righteousness that goes beyond that of scribe and Pharisee. (3) The rejection of the Jewish people is in the background; it becomes explicit in the next parable (21:33-46).

The treatment of John the Baptist in Matthew is unique. He is the counterpart figure in whom the course of Jesus is writ in advance: proclamation of righteousness, rejection by the religious leaders and the people, and death at their hands. He also prefigures the eschatological newness in Jesus' words. Careful attention to him (and to other secondary actors) throws Matthew's message into sharp profile and will aid in making preaching in the year of Matthew more sharply contoured and biblical.

Discipleship and Economic Justice

Don Prange

Appalachian Ministries in Economic Justice, Nora, Virginia

The following pages come out of a personal faith journey of the last 20 years or so. That *worship* has something to do with *life* did not come naturally for me. However, some 'saints' along the way and being close to some meaningful events of history in the 60's and 70's led me not only to a deeper understanding of the relationship of worship to life, but to see *liturgy* at the very roots of shaping mission and ministry: spiritually, socially, economically, politically. And as the struggles of liberation all over the world tell us (to say nothing of the struggles reflected on in the Scriptures), those basic needs of life cry out for an economic justice in terms of *revolutionary* substance. In the first years of the decade of the 80's we will have to deal more seriously than ever with the revolutions which have occurred in the last 40 years in Asia, Africa and Latin America — and with the revolutions which are sure to come because of conditions of economic oppression which are so acute. While we are somewhat removed from a revolutionary situation in the U.S. (although the need is all too evident in many quarters) — we cannot avoid that reality on the international level. And the more the imperialism prevalent in the U.S. is threatened, the more repressive it will become. Thus, those whose discipleship is tied to the Lord of history will indeed have some *revolutionary choices* to make. It seems appropriate, then, that liturgical reflections which will begin anew in Advent, 1983, should be shaped by a critical analysis of economic oppression in the world and by the hope of that revolutionary new world which is coming, a world of economic justice liberated from the alien liturgies which continue to assault the truth.

There are some biases and assumptions in the following pages. They grow out of a theology of hope and a belief that church — generic church, not "the" church or institutionalized church — can be a force for change, revolutionary change. That faith grows out of celebrating the liberating God of history and it leads naturally to the development of liberating communities: the kind of *church* manifested in the *base community* movements in Latin America and some other countries. Such a *church* begins in the confessional attitude that the first step of making revolutions is to bring about change where we have the direct power to accomplish it: *in our own lives.* And when we share in the experience of that struggle with others we can become liberating communities, being church with an emphasis on revolutionary mission, a *calling* far removed from either getting power in or trying to reform the institution we now call church. And with all of this there is a bias which believes one of the strategies (if not a force for change itself) toward such an understanding of ourselves is related to worship and liturgical reflection/action.

A first task is to rescue worship from its pietistic captivity, including the contemporary pietism of some 'folk mass' celebrations which delude us into thinking that using popular cultural forms or instruments makes us more relevant than the 'proverbial page five' of a well known hymnal. Liberated worship relates to substance and its forms grow out of that perspective.

For us, worship is liturgical action which celebrates history from the perspective of the God who is involved in history. It means more than just marking an occasion. It means celebrating history *conceptually* by internalizing the meaning of God's actions in history. For example, Christmas obviously has no objective, historical relationship to a day on which Jesus was born, but we have chosen December 25 to celebrate the *meaning* of that birth. Worship translates historical event (and substance) into *liturgical event.*

But *liturgical event,* with its heart and center celebrating God's presence in history, must be translated into a *way of life* if it is to have historical relevance for the present. Just as history is celebrated in liturgical mythology, a reverse process is necessary. Liturgical actions need to be "demythologized" (so to speak) and become historical events again in the now of contemporary needs. Again, using Christmas as an example, to celebrate the liturgical event is to become incarnate in the world of today; and, as we have suggested in the introduction, the revolutionary needs of the oppressed for economic justice will necessarily give direction for how we become involved in struggles for liberation.

Our bias is a quest for politicizing the liturgical tradition in which we have our roots and in which we attempt to understand who we are and why we are in the world. It is a concern for putting *liturgy* in the context of a *praxis* of identifying with the oppressed and revolutionary struggles for liberation. *God's kingdom and justice* are to come *first* (cf. Mt. 6:33), and worship which avoids this content is closer to idolatry than to the kingdom of God. What we seek is an ultimate liturgy in the world which flows naturally out of an old Epiphany collect . . .

> ". . . receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may both know and understand what things they ought to do, and may have grace and power faithfully to do them . . ."

The Church Year is the traditional pedagogical process for developing both that understanding and the building of community which gives power to act on that understanding. In a more politicized way of speaking, it brings together *theory* and *praxis.* Advent, as the introduction to a year of liturgical action/reflection, develops the central themes of God's action and the breaking into history of the *kingdom of God:* the judging, liberating, revolutionary action of God which



reverses the condition of the oppressed and introduces principles of justice, equity and peace. It is in that action of God that a basis for identity and purpose unfold — not in the context of some kind of dogmatic blueprint for correct beliefs and actions, but in a principle of identifying with the struggles of the oppressed celebrated in Christmas. For us, it is in that understanding that a fundamental hermeneutical principle is established for the use of the Scriptures in worship: we read them from the perspective of the coming of justice for the oppressed. In what might be called *dialectical hermeneutics* we must not only ask what does the text say, but *what do the oppressed say the text says?* It is with this hermeneutical principle growing out of Advent/Christmas concepts that we will approach the Church Year lectionary as we get ready for celebrating another year of our Lord in terms of *discipleship and economic justice.*

It is the almost exclusive use of the Gospel of Matthew in Series "A" which has led us to a theme for the year of *discipleship and economic justice.* Some will argue that Matthew intended no such understanding of his Gospel — but to exclude that possibility is to read the Gospel of Matthew in the context of a piety which separates the ministry of Jesus (and the discipleship he calls us to) from the world of oppression in which economic injustices are the root cause.

As part of the introduction to the proclamation of the *kingdom of heaven* in Matthew (beginning in ch. 3) there are illustrations of the contradictions it exposes in the kingdoms of the earth. There is the paranoid reaction of Herod with the genocidal bloodbath of two-year-olds around Bethlehem. There are the very obvious ties to the history of Jesus' ancestors who were liberated from Egypt and called to follow God in a new way and to be a new people, to be a light of peace and justice in a world of slavery and oppression. Then comes an introduction to the preaching of John — an 'Elijah figure' — who spoke out against the abusive, exploiting excesses of an imperialistic throne and the "brood of vipers" (3:8) who surrounded it. Would John have been arrested if he were not a threat to the ruling class around Jerusalem?

Jesus is faced with choices himself (4:1ff) — to follow the God of history celebrated by his people, the Liberator from oppression in Egypt or to follow the path of being his own kingdom builder in the interests of status, wealth and power. His choice to proclaim "the Good News of the kingdom" (4:23) and the acts of healing which accompanied the preaching created a *following,* not from among the ruling class or the 'leaders,' but from the poor, the common people, the *am haaretz, the people of the land.* It is in the context of that following, a following of the oppressed for whom there was no justice of any

kind, that the discourse with the disciples unfolds. The disciples, chosen to organize a movement to usher in *the kingdom of heaven,* were called to a new way of life in terms of material things — *in economics,* if you will. They were called to a new sense of justice, an economic justice (in our judgment) higher than that which governed the people (cf. 5:20), and they were to "set (their) hearts on" the new kingdom, the new ruling principle *first* — and on God's *justice.* (6:33)

We do not presume to say that there is an explicit commentary on discipleship and economic justice in the Gospel of Matthew. We do, however, believe there is an ethical principal on which a process of economic justice can be built. So in that understanding and in the realization that there is a continuing history of economic oppression, in Appalachia, among native Americans, Blacks, and Hispanics, among women, and throughout the so-called 'third world,' we invite your worshipful reflection on *discipleship and economic justice.*

Advent: Discipleship And The Lord Who Is Coming

"When the Stranger says, 'What
is the meaning of this city?
Do you huddle together because
you love each other?'
What will you answer?
'We all dwell together to
make money from each other.'
or
'This is community.'
And the Stranger will depart and
return to the desert.
O, my soul, be prepared for the
coming of the Stranger. Be prepared for him who knows how to
ask questions."

(T. S. Eliot, *The Rock*)

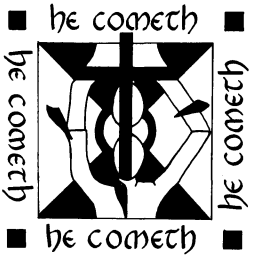
Advent is a time for questions. It is reflection time for pondering the meaning of Jesus as Lord in preparation for a year of celebrating that belief in action. The primary question relates to an understanding of the nature of the Lord who is coming. (Advent I) We feel it is most appropriate to put the word 'Lord' into its proper understanding as *owner.* The

Give *Currents* to a friend for Christmas.

Send your order to:

Currents, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615

Price: $8.50. We will send your friend a gift card.



Owner asks hard questions and makes demands for justice, for integrity and equity, especially for "the wretched" and "the poor of the land." (Advent II) Some would distort the God-movement in history and turn it into a religion which fails to correctly analyze the condition of the oppressed. It reaches out with a false-charity which touches them only superficially in meeting some day-to-day needs; but the reign of justice must await some pie-in-the-sky fatalistic event. But the signs of Jesus' ministry point to a justice with here-and-now reality. (Advent III) What it all points to is a God-with-us (Advent IV), an *owner* who becomes directly involved to bring in a reign of *economic justice.*

ADVENT I — November 27, 1983
Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:1-11;
Matthew 24:36-51 or 21:1-11

The Nature of the Lord who is coming. Two things stand out in this excerpt from the discourse on the "end of the world." (24:1-3ff to 25:46). The first is the *nature* of the Lord. The second is the coming of the Lord.

The Lord is an expression which takes on its fullness of meaning when understood as the owner, which involves much more than paying pious respects to Psalm 24:1: "To Yahweh belong earth and all it holds, the world and all who live in it." It is one thing to affirm on a Saturday or Sunday that Jesus is Lord! It is another to affirm that GOD is the owner of *the other six days.* As the owner, God can't be compromised or dichotomized. Can God's blessings be given to economic systems based on competition and the maximization of profits? Is the kingdom of God not much closer to economic systems which emphasize cooperation toward the end of meeting human need? Our tacit realization of the 'no compromise' reality has often led us to the sanction of the *holy dichotomy* — a kind of theological *laissez-faire* attitude about the world of economics. Calendars have an "A.D." or a "Lord's Year" but things get reduced to a "Lord's Day" unrelated to the rest of the week. This view blesses an economic reality which allows pretending-owners to exploit others while enjoying the good life. (Mt. 24:49, 50).

Advent suggests that compromises and dichotomies between our theology and our economics will be exposed because the Lord, the owner, *is coming.* Advent expresses a present reality about the Spirit of God in history, a spirit which asks questions, questions which demand *decisions:* "What sort of servant, then, is faithful and wise . . ." (24:45) and creates *divisions:* ". . . of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left." (24:41). God is not the only one who knows how great a division there is in both church and world about economic justice; but the message is loud and clear: some decisions have to be made.

The alertness the coming of the Lord calls for is not the piety of getting ready

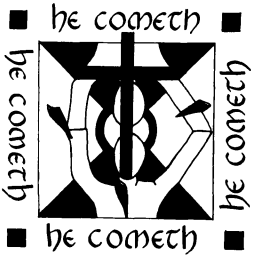
for the end of the world, but for the end of economic injustice and the emergence of a world in which an economic system does justice to both God and human beings. One thing we need to be open to most of all is that the owner is not necessarily coming into the world with an identity we will immediately recognize. God comes among, brings liberation to and retores a world of economic justice through the *dispossessed.* "How happy are the poor . . . theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy *the gentle* (or "the lowly"), *they shall have the earth for their heritage.*" (5:3, 4)

ADVENT II — December 4, 1983
Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

Justice: Integrity and Equity. The relevance of the Bible for liberation struggles and movements for economic justice is that they reveal a God who ". . . judges the wretched with integrity, and with equity gives a verdict for *the poor of the land.* His word is a rod that strikes the ruthless, his sentence brings death to the wicked." (Is. 11:4) God's attitudes are contrasted with the "vipers" of institutionalized religion who are warned of a judgment laid to the "roots of the trees." (Mt. 3:8, 10) So for the oppressed, the wretched and the poor, reflecting on Scriptural history helps to create and strengthen faith: "to teach us something about hope from the examples . . . of how people who did not give up were helped by God." (Rom. 15:4) But those of us with more material things need to learn from John what preparing a way for the Lord means with lifestyles of integrity and equity with respect to "the wretched" and "the poor of the land." It is not enough to celebrate liturgies which incorporate the Bible in our tradition — to say, 'We have Abraham for our father.' (Mt. 3:9) Justice means incorporating the tradition of the Bible into our life-styles, our economic systems. Where those systems oppress the wretched and the poor, they get "the ax." (3:10)

ADVENT III — December 11, 1983
Isaiah 35:1-10; James 5:7-10 (and context from 4:13); Matthew 11:2-11

Signs of liberation and justice. The perspective from which we view movements for liberation and economic justice is crucial to the substance of these movements. In prison, John would have understood liberation and justice in terms of the concrete need of having the prison doors opened. The same can be said for the blind, the lame, the leprous, the deaf and the poor. Their needs need to be met concretely. For *the poor* economic justice can never be an abstraction. What is "good news" will be determined from their perspective. It would probably be "good news" to the poor to know that the Lord would open our eyes to the realities of economic oppression, would help us to stand by and walk with them, would cure the leprosy of monopoly capitalism, would open our ears to what movements for liberation are saying, and would lead us into a new



and different economic way of life. Those are the signs that will be a cause for writing some music to the words in Isaiah 35:1.

ADVENT IV — December 18, 1983
Isaiah 7:10-15; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

A God-with-us. Too often the 'haves' of the world want an easy way out in view of economic injustice; the 'have-nots' are too often waiting for some miraculous solution. The 'haves' recognize some changes must take place but want that to happen without any radical change, certainly not any radical shifts in who owns and controls economic wealth. 'Have-nots' have too often been kept igorant of the realities which keep them in their condition, and under the influence of 'have'-controlled education/media/religious institutions blame themselves or "God" (the 'have'-invented god of fatalism to whom all differences and inequities can be traced) — and whichever way it is, it calls for some sort of miracle to happen. People are led to the point of feeling they have no control over their own situation. The 'haves' want a God willing to stay at a distance; 'have-nots' wait for a God who must either work miracles or promise something better in the proverbial after-life.

But the truth about the coming of the Lord is that God's *m.o.* is to be an Emmanuel, a God-with-us. God becomes part of the struggle for justice, not by announcing abstract principles of justice which can be utilized in the practice of piety without having to be applied to such things as the real world of economics. Rather, God comes as one who identifies with the oppressed and does signs among them, not to convince them there is an all-powerful deity they can rely on, but to bestow a power on and among the people — the power of *faith.* The faith calls us to live out the God-with-us principle of being part of that struggle. "Oh, come, Oh, come, Emmanuel . . ."

The themes of Advent take on specific meaning with historical dimensions in Christmas. The incarnation forever binds together *theory* and *praxis.* The God-with-us who comes as the owner to establish justice is action: "The Word was made flesh and lived among us." (Jn. 1:14) Discipleship means internalizing that principle.

Some additional thoughts for the rest of a year of celebrating *discipleship and economic justice:*

Epiphany: Discipleship And An Understanding Of A Mission In Economic Justice.

Lent: Discipleship And The Struggle For Economic Justice.

Easter: Economic Justice And Radical Change: Discipleship — A New And Different Way Of Life.

Pentecost: *The Way* Of Economic Justice: Making Disciples And Gathering Communities.

What's Goin' On?

Will Herzfeld

Pastor, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Oakland, California, and First Vice President of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. This essay was given at a convocation held at the end of Seminex's 10th academic year in St. Louis.

The title for this presentation was taken from a record album by a black recording artist named Marvin Gaye. It is a rather haunting melody and the lyrics tug at the heart strings. The poetry is from the 1960's and comes basically out of the anti-war sentiment developed during the Vietnam War period. References are made to death in war, to unfair labor practices, to racism, to ecological rape, and to several other social ills. Throughout the record, the question, "What's Goin' On?" is repeated. This record led to Marvin Gaye's being called a "secular prophet" by some church people, and for those of us from the Black Community, he was named our "Main Street Prophet" since we have never been able to separate as neatly as some, that which is sacred from that which is secular. I have chosen Marvin Gaye's question as a way of trying to have us focus on what is going on in the world.

A church signboard carried the greeting: "Welcome to all Who have no Idea What in the World is Going On." That would include just about all of us. The backward look isn't too fuzzy and the future doesn't seem all that obscure; it's comprehending the present, understanding what's going on right now, that's hard to focus on.

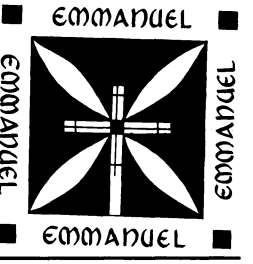
Understanding the present is usually a "no comprendo" situation. The Bible illustrates this: in both Testaments, it seemed quite clear how God operated in the past and how the future would unfold. It was seeing God in the present that seemed difficult.

In the Gospel of John, the disciples didn't readily recognize Jesus when they were out on an early morning fishing trip. Peter had trouble understanding the Lord's mission when Jesus asked him three times if he loved him. Peter was a bit grieved that it took three times to get through to him, and that illustrates the human frailty of not "getting the message." The Damascus Road incident in Acts also illustrates this. Paul's blindness is a metaphor for lack of comprehension.

It is possible, of course, to comprehend God's presence in the world. It takes an alertness and a sensitivity to the things of God, to perceive the sacred in what we call the secular — a fine tuning of our spiritual side. This comes through developing skills in sifting, ordering, evaluating, and studying meaningful events and experiences that tumble forth from the headwaters of life.

To the degree that we can prayerfully perceive God's action in the world and comprehend the movement of God in current events, we can eliminate some of the confusion and frustration within ourselves.

Sometimes God reveals himself through a gentle prodding: "Cast your nets to the other side." . . . At other times, we have had to be knocked flat like Saul on the Damascus Road (much like the farmer who would hit his mule on the head with a two-by-four or apply



a healthy dose of turpentine to a tender spot near his mule's rear end to get his attention).

When the ancient Israelites gathered around their campfires to reminisce and to dream, they often told the story of father Abraham and mother Sarah as it is recorded in Genesis 12:1 and picked up by the writer to the Hebrews in that well known chapter (Hebrews 11:8). It's this quotation that I would have us recall as we grapple with the topic: "What's Goin' On?"

As the story opens, Abraham and Sarah are in a city called Ur of the Chaldees, where they are engaged in some kind of business with Abraham's father. Among the familiar surroundings of this ancient city, they were consumed by a strange revelation. They were not sure what was going on, but they felt the necessity to leave a place that was comfortable and secure, even though they did not know how it would turn out, they left this place by the riverside in search of a different city.

How far is it from St. Louis to the Ur of the Chaldees where Abraham and Sarah experienced their vision? (We probably can answer more accurately if we were asking the distance between St. Louis and Chicago, or St. Louis and Berkeley, California, or to Iowa.) Surely, the distance is too far for us to spend time in a geographical measurement. If we look for it symbolically, though, we would see it as a place where the minds of women and men are set on distant stars; we would see it as a condition where right meets might and demands an audience with justice. If we see Sarah and Abraham as prototypes of the church in mission, if we see them as actors rather than acted upon, then the message of God's call to Abraham may be applied to this time and this place.

I recall this story, not just to emphasize their discontent with where they were, or to suggest they knew what was going on in their world, but to emphasize our collective call to a new way of walking, talking or even fishing ("like try the other side of the boat, man, and see what the results might be"). God says, "See, I am doing something new!" Now it springs forth; do you perceive? (Isaiah 43:19) (Just another way of asking, Do you know what's going on?)

Before I go any further, I should say that the attempts to find out what is going on may go back through at least three periods in the human search for answers.

The first period is the so-called Jewish-Christian age, roughly from Abraham and Sarah to Luther. It was an age dominated by the question of the naming of the Gods — "O God, Who art Thou?"

The second period was the so-called Modern Age roughly from Luther to this morning. From 15th century Mysticism to Freud and others it could be called the "Naming Self," "Who am I?" That's what is meant by being modern.

The third period is upon us, before we are ready for it . . . "The Naming of the

World," "Who are You," "Who is my Neighbor?" What kind of institutions can heal us after we have destroyed or left the ones that are killing us? This post-modern period for most Lutherans is one in which women, men, Blacks, Browns, Pacific Asians, Native Americans, and some whites are in search of new functions and forms, new styles, a new church. God knows they are all needed.

Item: In one large city, Detroit, 33 out of 100 children don't live until their first birthday. In another city (Avalon Park section of Chicago) it's 55 out of 100. We are talking about racism and the attendant problems of parental poverty.

Item: Almost half a billion people are not getting enough to eat.

Item: Our nation has tens of thousands of priests, ministers, rabbis, reverends, or doctors of divinity who speak of everything except the encroaching sickness of racism, sexism, militarism, ageism and the general destruction of the earth.

Item: The moral decline of American society, highlighted by the serious problems facing the institution of marriage, the burgeoning drug culture, and the apparently increasing malfeasance in high political office, has finally become so obvious as to be barely arguable.

Item: Members of the K.K.K. have now graduated from several of our colleges and universities and perhaps one or two theological schools. The K.K.K. is as visible and vicious now as it ever was.

Item: Namibia and Azania continue under the oppressive white minority's program of apartheid with no hope for an immediate resolution unless the U.S.A. changes its policies regarding South Africa. The U.S.A. invested 2.8 billion dollars in South Africa in 1982.

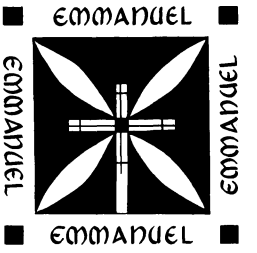
Item: Haiti is an embarrassment to all of us. Haitian refugees are the original boat people because of tyrannical and corrupt government. The oppressive government of Haiti too continues with U.S. support ($475,000 invested in the Haitian Military last year).

Item: Latin America is a mixed bag, a revolution per month in one country or another. What's going on in El Salvador?

Item: While most Americans have the idea that the neutron bomb was shelved after running into a storm of protest years ago, the Pentagon has been quietly producing neutron warheads since 1981. Almost 100 of these are in the Pacific area.

Those seeking quick fixes or easy answers appear to have overlooked the fact that the greatest changers have been the adventurous ones, who first developed their perceptions and then acted: other Abrahams and Sarahs, like Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Ghandi, Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Jr.. There are others; many are nameless, but some are in this room today.

Like Sarah and Abraham, we should look to the other side as well as the



underside of history for some of our answers to the questions, before we start "doing our thing," for it will involve a new understanding of the Christian message. But we are not primarily concerned with how the message is presented. We are more concerned about how the mission is done. Too often have we mounted the barricade in the wrong direction; fighting the wrong enemies, we have been less of a force and more of a form in our world.

I suppose most of us would agree that there needs to be a resurrection of the old ways of viewing reality, especially the God fact. I believe it is becoming increasingly clear that Abraham and Sarah's God is a Nomadic God. A God who is not simply a God of the temple, but a God of the tent. A God who is not bound to color, to class, or to a particular sex. In order to know what is going on in God's world, we must get to know a God on the move. Life is movement and, unlike trees planted by the waters, we must move or be moved.

God's word to Sarah and Abraham was the same as it was later to Israel while she was in captivity in Babylon; as far as the people were concerned, they saw no prospect of overthrowing the might of Babylon or of their ever returning to their ancestral lands in Jerusalem and the surrounding territories. In the midst of these bleak circumstances, God announced to them that a "new thing" was about to be done. Creating them anew! A new spiritual sensitivity, a deeper understanding of God, and an ability to adopt to new forms, in order to speak of their altered conditions as well as the restoration of their homelands.

In the life and death of Jesus, God was again creating something new — The Holy Catholic Church. During the last tortured days of his life and the days in the grave, it was not visible to the early disciples. Nevertheless, God was at work creating a people who could receive the Spirit that had been Christ, that they might be his continuing existence in the world. The new things that the disciples could see and the thing that energized them was an Easter celebration.

So here's what's going on in these times when troubles seem to multiply upon the earth, when global annihilation of human life looms as a menacing possibility. God is at work; we need to perceive him and heed the call.

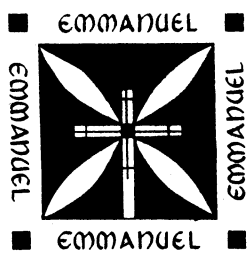
God is at work in Chicago, where 90% of the Black people voted in the recent mayoral election. One writer described the feeling in Chicago this way: "There was nothing political about it, it was a deeply religious movement." There is a worldwide cry for peace, brought on by young people in Europe who are saying, "enough of this madness." Liberation movements all over the world are now redefining the interrelations of all people on the globe, especially between the haves and the have-nots of this world. The cry for justice is now being heard in Rome, Moscow, Washington and other

imperial cities of the earth. This spirit is unprecedented, but finds its affirmation in Abraham and Sarah — and supremely in Christ.

Christ Seminary — Seminex has before it a large agenda. I am encouraged by its willingness to take up this agenda. We remember our biblical prototypes, Abraham and Sarah, who looked for a city which had foundations, and whose builder and maker is God. Were they ever discouraged? Did they want to give up or sell out? Did their hopes grow dim? Did they sometimes despair and long again for the comfort and security of Ur of the Chaldees? I'm certain they did; we could hardly expect them not to. But they did not turn back. There was that *something* that gave substance and reality to their hopes and dreams that helped to strengthen them in the midst of all of the doubts, fears, and dangers that confronted them. What I'm saying is that their faith provided a perspective which caused them to press on, and participate creatively in the newness of their existence.

Russell Schweickart, the astronaut, said something quite profound following the flight of Apollo 9. "When you go around the earth in an hour and a half, you begin to recognize that your identity is with that whole thing, and that makes a change. You look down and you can't imagine how many borders and boundaries you cross again and again and again. From where you see it, the earth is a whole . . . and it is so beautiful. There are no frames. There are no boundaries."

None of us dare to be frozen, no individual dares to be labeled infallible and no institution regarded as being complete . . . Realism about our church and all of its institutions means that we are not participating in a past event, or something that is to happen. But it is a now-happening and we have the power to perceive and to work. That power radiates from the cross through us to others.



Sex and Sacrament in Contemporary Literature: The Incarnation as Method

Duane P. Mehl

Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Charlottesville, Virginia

Though theologians and other ecclesiastics have over the past two centuries frequently complained over the absence of Christian literary expression by serious authors, a group of American novelists have, in fact, written a body of literature profoundly influenced by the doctrine of the incarnation, the hypostatic unity of natures in the person of Christ, and the Sacraments of the Church Catholic. We have seen among some writers and critics over the last 75 years a marked tendency to recognize in the incarnation the basic metaphor underlying all of reality, and to create literature which, in effect, mirrors in microcosm the hypostatic unity of divine and human natures in Christ.

Though critics have often called such literature "romance," or "allegory," and dismissed it as antiquarian, authors have created such forms in order to incorporate both "visible" and "invisible" elements, bodily and spiritual experiences, within one person, object, event, or chain of events. Without this metaphoric form, we would have in literature no way of expressing the completed reality of our human experience in the universe.

By this I mean, simply put, that the hypostatic unity of natures in Christ is one key to the understanding of the nature of the universe, especially of human beings in the universe. All human beings, I believe, participate, especially through the exchange of language, both in what we have come to call an historic or literal space and time, and also in a transhistoric or paradigmatic dimension of reality. Critics in the last two centuries have tried to express the distinctions and relationships between the two dimensions by such categories as objective and subjective experiences, rationality and imagination, by structure and texture in finished literary works (in the case of the new critics of the Vanderbilt Department of English in the '20s and '30s), and by synchronic and diachronic arrangements in language (in the case of structuralists) — and have presented their categories almost as a new thing under the sun.

In Christian theology, however, the distinction and dialectic between literal and transliteral realities has long been a necessary framework for the theological enterprise. Some of the great theological systems (notably St. Thomas') have functioned by means of the relationships between the two realms. Since, however, the time of Bacon, of Descartes, and later of Locke, of Hume, and indeed, since the emergence of the overwhelmingly successful scientific movement of modern times, we have in society and the arts become distinctly queasy about transliteral realities, and discover, in writers of the sort we usually call naturalist or realist, a tremendous resistance to a supernatural dimension altogether.

Regardless of this resistance, incarnational writers have persisted well into our times, and have by now proven their ability to survive even the fiercest onslaughts of scientific realism. The success

of writers such as T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Bernard Malamud, and, popularly, of C.S. Lewis, bears testimony to the endurance of the hypostatis form in modern literature.

In this essay, I wish to examine the "incarnational" methods various modern writers have employed, and indicate some of the curious and exhilarating results they have achieved in characterization and plot development.

I will attend especially to Edgar Allen Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, William Faulkner, John Hawkes, Flannery O'Connor, Bernard Malamud, and John Updike. All these writers have struggled to overcome what Erich Heller in *The Disinherited Mind* called the divorce between "symbol and reality," or what T. S. Eliot called the modern conflict between "sense and sensibility," that is, between intellectual and so-called "emotional" or spiritual experiences. Scholars sometimes call this conflict the "Cartesian dichotomy," as if Descartes invented it. In all probability, the dichotomy would have arisen in our culture with or without Descartes, though he described the split in a manner no intellectual would ever forget.

Hawthorne

In his introduction to *The House of Seven Gables,* Hawthorne expressly states his desire to overcome the Cartesian dichotomy by developing a fiction transparent to spiritual realities — a sort of modern allegory in which a literal story line would overlay a spiritual or moral dimension. (Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Author's Preface," *The House of Seven Gables* [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930], p. xxxi) Hawthorne carried out his goals with almost maddening predictability.

In *The Scarlet Letter,* for instance, Hawthorne makes the Rev. Dimmesdale metaphorically symbolic of a gnostic spirituality divorced from the good earth. Hester Prynne, Dimmesdale's lover, becomes symbolic of the good earth, or natural drives, uninstructed, however, in the potentialities of the spirit. After their adulterous relationship and the birth of their daughter, Pearl, Rev. Dimmesdale becomes gradually aware of his "human nature," and becomes thereby a good preacher, able to empathize with his parishioners' day-by-day problems. Generations later, John Updike would take a cue from Hawthorne and produce the Rev. Thomas Marshfield of *A Month of Sundays.*

Hawthorne's Hester, on the other hand, grows through her stigmatic sufferings into a minor-league Mother Theresa of her Puritan village. Predictably, Hawthorne portrays the couple's daughter, Pearl, as a sort of hypostatic unity of the two natures — mischievously natural as one might expect of any normal little girl, but possessed of numerous artistic talents and deep insights.

Hawthorne would work his incarna-

tional method to the bone, creating one character after another who would develop naturally as a mere bodily presence, but reveal at a deeper reading a basic "spiritual" truth of human existence.

Puritan and traditionalist as he was, Hawthorne was especially adept at developing arrogant scientists hell-bent on experimentation at the expense of the human spirit. He also labored long over the "dark" side of human nature, trying to reconcile, dialectically, the dark with the light, the bad with the good, creating a good deal of tediously romantic clap-trap in the process. The reader trying to catch up on his or her Hawthorne is advised to leave the novels, *The Blithedale Romance,* and especially *The Marble Faun,* to doctoral candidates desperately in search of a thesis.

Poe

Edgar Allen Poe developed many of the same tendencies, though with less literary consistency. "The Fall of the House of Usher," for instance, is a straightforward allegory upon the nature of human fall and death, cloaked within the structure of a Gothic romance. Poe, however, was too strongly attracted to scientific method — witness his detective stories — to be fully convinced of the diabolic character of modern science. Perhaps, because of his fatal addictions to opium and alcohol, Poe also yearned profoundly for a docetic, rather than an incarnational, solution to life's problems. In his essay, *Eureka,* and in "The Colloquy of Monos and Una," Poe reveals in startling, if not melancholy, terms his belief that ultimate unity with God could be experienced only through the death and destruction of the body. In his final years, Poe sounded more like a Valentinus or a Ptolemaeus, writing second-century gnostic tracts, than a modern author struggling to find within the sensible world living symbols of God's presence.

Significantly, Poe found his way out of the world through an overdose of spirits and similar elixirs. As Ronald Terry writes in his curious little book called *The Long Suffering,* addicts are all *homo religiosi* at heart — crypto-Buddhists he thinks. Jean Cocteau, in *Opium: The Diary of a Cure,* makes similar claims. Significantly, neither Terry nor Cocteau ever fully recovered from their addictions, nor probably wanted to — suggesting perhaps that addicts interested in recovery must give up their docetic tendencies in favor of a good healthy dose of incarnational theology and therapy. All chemical mood-alterers, in my opinion, offer an illusion of temporary escape from the burden of corporality, and therefore tend in effect to be heretical displacements for the rigors of an incarnational and therefore sacramental way of life in the world.

Melville

Hawthorne's friend, Melville, utilized, perhaps more by instinct than methodological intention, a similar approach to fiction. In his great *Moby Dick,* Melville created a host of characters and events that do double duty in the incarnational or metaphorical sense of the words. The white whale is killer whale and killer fate, or maybe God — white to "symbolize" both the bleakness and the blankness of divine fate. Ahab is Milton's Lucifer, Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus, a little bit of Job, and, of course, Prometheus, all wrapped up into one tragic and self-destructive modern character fighting against an absent God. Ishmael turns out to be a type of Melville himself, not convinced

enough of God's evil or absence to become an Ahab, nor convinced enough of God's good presence to become a Starbuck. Inevitably, Ishmael and author survive at the end, floating amidst the wreckage of the Pequod, hanging on for dear life to a stray piece of wood. Read what you wish into that stray piece.

In later fiction, Melville, stricken with constant anxiety and depression, struggled with various characters to present both the tension between good and evil, and the absence of a judging and redeeming God in the world, producing in his own words a good many "ambiguities." Curiously enough, some of his short fiction, especially "Bartleby, the Scrivener," comes startlingly close to being what we could today call a Kafkaesque tale, though we have no reason to think Kafka ever read Melville. Melville experienced the intense and neurotic alienation of man alive, but dispossessed of his own cultural foundations. As so often happens in art, however, Melville was unable to express his experiences in controlled forms and therefore emerges as one of the great failed artists in American history — as surely a *poet maudit* as Edgar Allen Poe. In his last year, almost as if he had given up his theological questing, he wrote an allegorical fairy-tale in *Billy Budd* — an embarrassing portrait of Adam unfallen, innocent by means and for reasons undescribed, and victimized by alien forces which seem oddly "natural" for this world, but crudely superior to the helpless Billy.

Faulkner

With the rise of "naturalistic" literature indebted to Nietzschean, or a Herbert "Spenserian," reading of Darwin, the "romantic" author seemed about to die out. In fact, Charles Child Walcutt in his famous *History of American Naturalism: A Divided Stream,* states flatly that this happened with Hemingway. The breed, however, has proven sturdier than Walcutt guessed. We have seen since Hemingway's time a virtual school of "incarnational" writers producing a fiction far more reminiscent of Hawthorne and Melville than Hemingway ever produced. Though the critic, Walcutt, didn't think so, William Faulkner continues the tradition, but of course in highly subtle and eccentric forms.

Contemporary critics have had considerable success in intellectualizing the great and traditional concerns of Faulkner and other modern writers over the relationships of reality to religious symbols — perhaps because few if any critics seem to have suffered emotionally over the "Cartesian" dichotomy which destroys the reality of such symbols. In the academic world, the Pascals and Kierkegaards have been hard to find. Heller relates in *The Disinherited Mind,* that Nietzsche became infuriated with his mentor, *Professor* Jacob Burckhardt, because he was "given," said Nietzsche, "not to distorting truth, but to passing it over in silence." (Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind.* New York: Meridian Books, 1969, p. 80) Burckhardt was not the first nor the last academic to do so. Tenured professorships may go a long way toward resolving metaphysical hurts.

When average skilled readers tackle Faulkner on their own, I think they find much of Faulkner's early fiction to be an elaborate metaphor, sometimes an outright religious allegory. Though Faulkner had in the modern manner "lost" his Christian faith, he frequently and openly dramatized, especially in his early stories, the issues of fall, redemption, the vanishing God, and the place of Christ in a decaying southern culture.

Without the Christian doctrines of fall and redemption, *The Sound and the Fury, Light in August,* and "The Bear," for instance, make little sense.

I think not only of the awkward "Christ figures" Faulkner developed in Benjy and Joe Christmas, both of whom offer up their lives to forgive by means of simple innocence and the other characters in their stories struggling against consequences of a fall over which God seems no longer concerned. I think, also, of the solid "witness" provided by Dilsey and by Lena Grove, the one to the saving Christ, and the other to the nourishing mother earth. Dilsey's ability to endure through the power and the glory of the Lamb, and Lena's ability, like the Virgin Mary, to give birth against all odds to a new generation, literally save the two novels from nihilistic disintegration.

In "The Bear," Faulkner shamelessly develops what I consider a pure "allegory," without substantial reference, revolving around a divine presence, called mostly God but sometimes an "Umpire," in the virgin wilderness, complete with primitive hunters bound by primordial laws, and a Christ-like dog (an heroic mongrel, no less) who gives up his life to help the hunters finally confront the great bear, Big Ben. In a famous description, the hunter, Ike McCaslin, describes his vision of Big Ben with all the reverent gusto a medieval saint might use to describe his vision of God himself.

What precisely Faulkner tried to create in "The Bear" — beyond a dreamy and nostalgic picture of heroic and "archetypal" male hunting cults — is unclear. That he employs, however, what Hawthorne and others would call romantic, or what I would call sacramental, form is unquestionable. Only in later works — especially in the Snopes novels — would Faulkner descend to mere realistic and journalistic descriptions of life in northern Mississippi. By the time he wrote *The Rievers,* Faulkner had perhaps lost both his touch and the intensity for sacramental writing, and consequently produced the sort of humorous and "realistic" work deeply loved by many journalists and resident agnostics in the halls of academe. It is no accident that many critics in this country agree with Hemingway that Mark Twain is our "greatest" American novelist.

Hawkes

The novelist and critic-prof, John Hawkes, belies everything I have said above about academic critics, largely because he has down through the years tried himself to create a fiction transparent to the "forces" of good and evil. Unfortunately, few readers, professional or otherwise, have been able to figure out quite what he's doing.

I personally love Papa Cueball in Hawkes' novel, *Second Skin,* and recognize that he "stands" allegorically for a sort of middle-aged "animus" — in part a disheveled and misused Faust — nourished finally on a floating island in the middle of nowhere in the ample bosom of one of the great earth-mothers of modern fiction, Catalina Kate. If nothing else, Cueball certainly seems to agree with Goethe that all of us need and depend upon the eternally feminine rescuer.

Hawkes also supplies in *Second Skin* plenty of allusions to Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* with characters named Miranda and Fernandez, which turn out, however, to be practically the evil opposite of the original Miranda and Ferdinand. Is Hawkes playing with ideas dear to the hearts of such religio-socio commentators as Nathan Scott, Jr. and Melvin Friedman, who find "dialectically" sacred

significances, supposedly intended by the authors, in outright perversities? A number of so-called "theology and lit" people have — with the help of C. J. Jung, Paul Tillich, and Mircea Eliade — written as if the New Jerusalem coincided with the local dump. Updike and Malamud have not exactly proven immune to such temptations themselves. More on the matter later.

I assume, in any case, Hawkes wanted us to see in Cueball metaphorically — that is by way of incarnation — a type of Prospero. Hawkes' Prospero, however, as perhaps befits an age when even the divine rights of kings and dukes have vanished, remains for good on his island. The world is too much with him, "late and soon." If you remember, the "real" Prospero returns to active political life after Alonso restores his dukedom. In Shakespeare's day, lots of people cared about the fate of nobility whose divine status seemed threatened by a host of cultural developments. But who cares about Cueball?

The novel reveals one of the great hazards of modern allegorical writing. How can a writer make his readers care about the "spiritual" reality he attempts to embody within the structure of his language? Even Lewis, Updike, and more recently Walter Wangerin, Jr., run up against the problem continuously. Do we actually read *Out of the Silent Planet, The Centaur,* or *The Dun Cow,* to experience the spiritual realities of divine activity embodied within the language? Or do we take joy simply in the rhetoric, the sheer verbal highjinks of the prose? Ironically, the latter form of appreciation saps the life blood from this form of literature, and reduces it to a sort of five-finger exercise for advanced readers.

As T. S. Eliot might have said, most writers of allegory, Hawkes included, have difficulty creating believable and "objective correlatives" as vehicles for their symbols. Thus, some Christian writers create fantasy — scientific fiction or children's fables — as the literal story plot overlying the spiritual significances in their works. Such literature, unfortunately, tends to stand twice removed from the average and uninstructed reader in our culture.

O'Connor

The canny Hakwes, however, has seen through the fiction of Flannery O'Connor and recognized sacramental ambitions in her fiction. Already in 1968 he said that O'Connor wrote with the "devil's voice" to establish an ironic point of view toward our "godless" world. (John Hawkes, "Flannery O'Connor's Devil," in *Flannery O'Connor,* ed. Robert Reiter. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1968, p. 26.) Hawkes was roundly chastised by other critics who wanted O'Connor either beatified or certified a lunatic. The critics may be forgiven their confusion. No writer in the 20th century poses so many difficulties for plain reading or criticism than Flannery O'Connor.

Much of the problem for the modern reader revolves around the simple fact that O'Connor felt herself called as a "Catholic novelist" to "transmit the prophetic vision" of the Church that is "good for all time." (Flannery O'Connor, "Catholic Novelists and Their Readers, *Mystery and Manners,* ed. Robert Fitzgerald [New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965], pp. 179-180.) She also claimed herself a Thomist (Sister Kathleen Feeley, S.S.N.D., *Flannery O'Connor: Voice of the Peacock* [New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1978], p. 14) and quite literally wrote in a medieval "allegorical"

form she found described in her own copy of the *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas,* edited by the renowned Anton C. Pegis (Thomas Aquinas, *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas,* ed. with introduction by Anton C. Pegis [New York: Random House, 1948], pp. 17-19).

O'Connor, furthermore, thought she had found in St. Thomas' description of the inspiration and function of the Old Testament prophet an orthodox way to employ grotesque and eccentric characters, animals, or events, as a *means by which God could reveal himself to human beings* in expressions of judgment, of grace, or both. (Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, "Flannery O'Connor: A Realist of Distances," *The Added Dimension,* ed. Melvin J. Friedman and Lewis A. Lawson [New York: Fordham University Press, 1966], p. 254). St. Thomas insisted that God spoke through the Old Testament prophets without depending upon the faith or even the awareness of the prophet himself. O'Connor, I think, jumped at that idea and created a host of prophetic figures and events through which God, regardless of the unlikely nature of his sacramental elements, reaches the main characters in her stories. She loved, for instance, to create rascally old hard-shell Baptist eccentrics hollering about the Last Day and the wrath of the Lord. Presumably, God could use them without the total approval, as it were, of their author-creator.

All of O'Connor's mature works read on four levels — a literal story level, a moral, a doctrinal, and an "anagogical" or mystical level — and end with sudden and dramatic twists guaranteed to startle both protagonist and reader into — what? Therein lies O'Connor's problem as a writer. Though she meant to startle both characters and readers into a recognition of human sin, of God's judgment, and possible grace in Christ, and frequently says so in essays, speeches and letters, she manages much of the time merely to startle even her own fictional characters.

In one of her most famous "incarnational" stories, "Greenleaf," for instance, O'Connor tells the story of a prudish Mrs. May, very down on sex, pursued, for not awfully convincing "literal" reasons, by a scrub bull (similar to Faulkner's mongrel dog, you see) with various marks of the crucified Christ. Though the docetic Mrs. May tries to put off the advances of the "suitor bull" Christ, she finally decides she must kill him in one of the green, sun-shadowed settings O'Connor creates for moments of divine revelation.

The Christian reader is meant to sense at this point that all human beings in one way or another dodge the suitor Christ, the would-be bridegroom, and finally try to kill him to protect their own arrogant and self-satisfied egos. With a little bit of practice, the reader discovers that all of O'Connor's fiction reads in about this same way. The literal story radiates moral, doctrinal, and finally abrupt mystical significances.

How may a scrub bull, however, claim the reluctant Mrs. May? Well, by goring her to death in the general region of the pelvis, no less. As she dies on the horns of the bull, Mrs. May (hints of springtime) sees a vision of the "far country," obviously meant to be the divine-human Christ's realm above. Perhaps, the reader is meant to think that she "enjoys" salvation at the price of such sufferings and death. The circumstances surrounding her mystical fulfillment, however, certainly give the reader — even her most complimentary critics — pause.

It is no wonder that one of her most acrid critics, Josephine Henden, called O'Connor both schizophrenic and

psychopathic (Josephine Henden, *The World of Flannery O'Connor* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970], p. 28), while one of her earliest Roman Catholic readers accused her of indulging in the "gratuitiously grotesque." (William Estey, "In America, Intellectual Bomb Shelters," *Commonweal* 7 [March 1958], p. 588.)

O'Connor's self-imposed demands to be a Catholic, or incarnational, writer have led to some of the more curious conflicts among critics in our century. In her now-famous novel, *Wise Blood,* for instance, O'Connor creates a character named Hazel Motes, who flees from Christ, while yet proclaiming a "Church Without Christ." In the texture of the novel, Christ pursues Motes instead, and drives him to self-mortification which allows him, only after he has blinded himself, to see the true light of Christ. Motes' self-flagellations are so severe, however, that many critics, sympathetic to O'Connor, have tried to get her off the hook she creates in her own story.

Thus, Nathan Scott, taking cues from Mircea Eliade, muses that O'Connor "hoped by creating so many monsters of nihilism and blasphemy to baptize the secular imagination of our time." (Nathan A. Scott, Jr., "Flannery O'Connor's Testimony: The Pressure of Glory," The Added Dimension, p. 149.) By plunging into the negation of all meaningful experiences, the "monsters" of O'Connor's stories, may in Scott's estimation, naturally discover in the depths of their being that original unity where the "heart of darkness coincides with absolute light." (Scott, Jr., pp. 149-50)

Though Scott's words seem serious, I am not sure they mean anything whatsoever. Surely O'Connor, with her bitter-sweet desire almost to preach through *Wise Blood* a sermon about the necessities of mortification of flesh in preparation for the beatific vision, would find Scott's reading hilarious.

Similarly, however, David Eggenschwiler tries to make O'Connor a Christian "humanist" of the Tillichian variety (David Eggenschwiler, *The Christian Humanism of Flannery O'Connor* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972], pp. 1-11), and Leon Driskell and Joan Brittain attempt to turn her into a Teilhardian. (Leon V. Driskell and John T. Brittain, *The Eternal Crossroads* [Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971], pp. 136-40.) In a reading of O'Connor's famous story, "Everything That Rises Must Converge," Driskell and Brittain take the main character Julian, after he has, through self-centered spite, helped to bring about his mother's death, and put him on something they call a "treadmill of consciousness . . . between cause and effect." While suspended upon this "treadmill," Julian presumably awaits elevation to Teilhard's "point omega."

Through this reading, the critics deftly destroy the moral conflicts O'Connor carefully creates in her stroy, and dodge Julian's sudden realization of his own evil. "To judge Julian's treatment of his mother is beside the point," the critics say, "for its effect is clear: his experiences culminate on the treadmill, not in specific 'good' and 'evil' acts," but in the realm of Teilhard's noosphere, of course.

When reading such amazingly irresponsible studies, we may be forgiven for wishing that God had not invented the critic at all — at least the critic who thinks he must find a "theology," a "theophany," or a therapy, with which to do his criticism.

In several stories, however, O'Connor achieved spectacular results in the use of "incarnational" or metaphorical

method difficult even for the hostile critic to deny — most especally in one of her last stories, "Parker's Back."

In this story, a tattooed drifter, Obadiah Elihu Parker, marries a strictly legalistic Baptist woman named Sarah Ruth. Though Sarah enjoys the sexual dimension of their married relationship, she insists that all sexual activities take place in the dark. She also calls Parker's beloved tattoos "a heap of vanity," and compares his artistic creations with the "bad habits" or smoking, dipping, drinking, profanity, and the use of cosmetics and automobiles. Within the texture of the story, Sarah Ruth becomes a classic Manichaean, struggling against an emerging Christ figure in her own husband, O. E. Parker.

Following a "prophetic" accident with his tractor, and in a desperate effort to seek Sarah Ruth's approval, Parker goes to a tattoo shop, and has a "Byzantine Christ" tattooed on his back. When he goes home and shows the tattoo to his wife, however, she becomes so infuriated at his further "blasphemy" that she beats his "Christic" back bloody with a broom. In a final scene, Parker, driven out of his own house, leans against a pecan tree (very fertile), and like Christ over Jerusalem, "cries like a baby."

In the doctrinal and anagogical levels of the story, Parker becomes a Christ suffering at the hands of, but also for, his wife, Sarah Ruth. The divine, or Byzantine Christ, pours forth human blood. And though the reader has no idea what happens next, he feels within the story Parker's sacrificial love and forgiveness for a very typically legalistic human being, bound and determined for "spiritual" reasons to reject the implications of Christ's incarnation. I find it difficult to imagine any author of any time managing to convey in fiction the realities and consequences of the incarnation and crucifixion more effectively.

A critic obviously may say her task was not worth pursuing — or insist that O'Connor's work was only "minor," dread word. Regardless of her slim output (she died at 39 after years of grievous illness), however, she remains, I think, one of the foremost women of fiction of all times. Above all, O'Connor managed to supply for her theological and moral symbols concrete referents workable within the literal text of most of her mature work. O'Connor never resorted to pure fantasy as a vehicle for the expression of spiritual reality. In my opinion, this accomplishment alone places her head and shoulders over such writers as C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, J. R. R. Tolkien, and their followers, who have found no other formal means by which to accomplish their ends. It is the modern equivalent of having only the book of Revelation, and perhaps Hebrews, but neither Gospels nor epistles in the New Testament!

She had, I think, greater success than the self-consciously patrician T. S. Eliot — who after all lacked an earthly Georgian country environment similar to O'Connor's Milledgeville — in providing those objective correlatives absolutely necessary for an incarnational, or metaphorical literature. Homileticians, take note! O'Connor offers, I believe, even within the slight compass of her two novels and twenty-odd short stories, the fruition of Hawthorne's drive to create a believable fiction transparent to metaphysical realities as we still know them in our language and therefore our experience. Hawthorne and O'Connor, I suspect, have both deeply influenced the two writers I want finally to review: Bernard Malamud, and especially John Updike.

Malamud

Malamud has been both revered and castigated for his forthrightly "allegorical" methods of creating fiction. In his first novel, *The Natural,* he created a heroic baseball player, of Babe Ruth's dimensions, who serves in the story also as a Galahad in pursuit of the Holy Grail and the healing of the "fisher king." It is somewhat difficult for a person my age to understand the keen interest of so many authors in Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance,* or even in *The Golden Bough.* If T. S. Eliot may be forgiven his ciphers in "The Waste Land," however, Malamud may be applauded the high good humor of his first mad-cap metaphorical novel.

In his best work, Malamud, I think, has been persistently metaphorical — and though he would not care for my designation, I would say, incarnational. His Arthur Fidelman stories, especially "Still Life," are unsurpassedly humorous allegory. Fidelman is Wandering Jew and Jesus Christ all wrapped up into one hapless but morally redeeming schlemiel. Fidelman's misadventures with his dark mistress, Annamaria, manage not only to convince the reader of the terrible burden of a true and committed artist in a sacred world turned cabalistic, and a secular world turned opportunistic, but to provide in Fidelman a sort of crucified Groucho Marx.

In *The Assistant, A New Life,* and in *The Fixer,* Malamud creates variations on the same picaresque saint figure. In *The New Life,* especially, he remains fascinated with the unlikely heroes of European (mostly Celtic) myth, romance, and legend. S. Levin, an untenured lecturer in English in Cascadia U (which must be Washington State University), has some of the qualities of the wandering prince running across sleeping beauty in the person of a restless and unrequited department head's wife, Pauline. In a stroke typical of modern writers' feelings about English professors, Malamud makes this one impotent at sex, but a master at English grammar.

As a relationship builds between Levin and Pauline, the young professor becomes a hapless Tristram trysting with an equally hapless Iseult — though they do manage a marvelous coupling in a forest glen, under a "welkin" sky, turned magical for a pregnant moment. In an unlikely ending the two, complete with coming child, take off like a Mary and Joseph, into a disquieting Egyptian future.

Malamud, has, I think, fallen on hard times among the critics, however, not because his stories are either boring or bumbling, but rather because they lack "meaning" in what presently passes for culture in our land. Even Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* will scarcely find applause in a culture where Burt Reynolds reigns as king of the fairy land. Only the Freudians, the Christians, and possibly a few middle-aged "new critics," will continue to enjoy Bellow's many variations upon the Holy Grail, the fisher king, Faust, Christ, and the wandering Jew in his astonishing novel.

Updike

Finally, Updike, like O'Connor, has striven to create a body of incarnational or even "hypostatic" fiction, believable on a literal level, but open to spiritual realities and resolutions. Some years ago, I wrote for this journal an extended review and reflection upon Updike's *A Month of Sundays,* and saw in a letter Updike sent to a mutual personal friend his words: "Rev. Mehl read the book I intended to write, and that I hope I did write." I feel, therefore, fairly confident

as I comment upon a number of his works — especially *The Centaur, Couples,* and *A Month of Sundays* — that Updike himself at least intended to write what I have read.

In *The Centaur,* both Updike and his former wife freely insist that he created an extended trope, functioning reasonably as a story on a literal level accessible to the modern reader, but also in the interior of the story as a play upon Greek myth.

Though the novel turns out to be, at best, a *tour de force,* Updike does manage to develop a teacher-father, Caldwell, who does double duty as the Centaur, Chiron, complete with an arrow in his heel, and a son, Peter, who functions as Prometheus doing battle against Zeus in the person of his high school principal named (heavy Germanism here) Zimmerman. Like Chiron of old, the selfless and sacrificial Caldwell, "descends," at times, into the underworld to seek wisdom and guidance for himself and his son.

In an overly complicated and frankly tedious story, Peter-Prometheus confronts Zeus successfully, comes of age through the good services of a Venus figure in the person of one of his teachers, of course, and finally leaves his father to take up art and a mistress in New York City. Though he misses his Chiron father, he has within the story tamed the gods, and heard the fortunate news that the "snake" of a cancer possibly affecting his father turns out to be a false alarm. With his father's blessing he prepares to take advantage of his awakening sense of sexual identity. What, precisely, his awakening will do for his art is unclear. Peter becomes, I suppose, a metaphor for the emerging Updike himself, though the outcome in his case remains also in doubt.

The entire centaur story takes place in a dream ambiance typical of a medieval romance. Half the time the reader has no idea where he is in the story, or where the major characters are either. Chiron, in particular, moves maddeningly, between the drab walls of the high school and the habitats of the gods, in a manner satisfying perhaps to enthusiasts of Sir Thomas Malory, but trying for the average reader. After plowing our way through the novel, however, we do gather that the former Pennsylvania Lutheran, Updike, struggles greatly with his original Lutheranism, leans toward Calvinism, and senses that sexual encounter may finally provide for him the battle ground for the forces of good and evil, of God and the devil. As one might expect, he is currently an Episcopalian, but remains on good terms with a variety of Eastern Lutherans.

In his famous best-seller, *Couples,* Updike continued his metaphorical or incarnational style, though with sex now as a completed vehicle for his metaphor. Updike sets his story in a Massachusetts town called Tarbox, and follows the post-pill adventures of ten middle-class, Kennedy-style couples, who set out to prove that "sex is the emergent religion, the only thing left." (John Updike, *Picked-Up Pieces* [New York: Knopf, 1975], p. 505.) The hero of the story, Piet Hanema, is both Adam and Tristram to various incarnations of an unhappy Eve, or Iseult. He becomes, almost against his will, the rough-hewn lover of practically every bored, restless housewife in the story, all of whom yearn to fulfill the J. F. Kennedy dream to do something "meaningful," as it were, for their country, but indulge in casual sexual liaisons as a vehicle for meaning. Updike has persistently stuck with this "theme" to the present.

Whereas the husbands of all these liberal, but unhappy, women, have

time-consuming, if not fulfilling five-day-a-week jobs, Piet works as a small business man, with hours of his own. Among the ten couples, Piet also alone retains vestiges of a New English Calvinism, symbolized rather heavily by the presence of a large, if almost unoccupied, Congregational church in the center of town. The empty church has on its steeple a phallic weather-cock, presumably flashing to the observant reader that Piet and the entire culture are moving from cassock to cock in the glorious new era of the pill.

I speak with intentional vulgarity to convey some of the intentional vulgarity of Updike himself, both in literal plot and in the tenor of the multitude of sexual metaphors he creates in this type of fiction. In a manner now typical of Updike, he bombards us with double-duty figures — to the point where we grow weary of sorting them out. He gives us the devil, or serpent, in a man named Freddy. Piet's wife Angela, has many of the qualities of a pre-lapsarian Eve. Piet's lover, Foxy, comes off as a combination of Venus and Lillith. Predictably, everything breaks down at the end. Piet, musing all the way like a disheveled Graham Greene Christian, has to leave Tarbox. And Updike even tells us gratuitiously that Piet is like "Lot, the man with two virgin daughters, who flees Sodom, and leaves his wife behind."

Piet, however, makes a poor Lot, though he has some of the qualities of an absent-minded, or clinically confused, Billy Budd. Regardless of Updike's efforts to render Piet innocent — almost victimized by all his lovers — he makes Piet seem at the end largely weak and indecisive, a victim not of Venus, but of lost faith and consequent sloth.

In all his sacramentally developed work on sex, Updike, I believe, tends to confuse depressive confusion with "spirituality," and just plain promiscuity with both the Incarnation, or with a hypostatic unity of divine and human experiences. Though I wrote some years ago, for instance, with considerable enthusiasm for *A Month of Sundays,* I confess I have by now lost that enthusiasm and find the book largely an exercise in Barthian and Tillichian "existentialist" theology, marginally worthy of theological comment — though certainly alive with many literary feasts for the reader-gourmet.

The hero of the novel, Rev. Thomas Marshfield, grows dry in a typically liberal northeastern parish, and finds his wife, Jane, nee Chillingworth, daughter of an ethics professor, chilling indeed in the nuptial bed. Since Marshfield seems to have no parish duties whatsoever — not a bad call for those clerics like myself who yearn for "time to read, write, and teach on the side" — he "finds himself" by cohabiting with the women of his parish: with the organist, of course, with the wife of the church president, and finally with the directress of a "treatment center" in the Southwest, where his bishop, presumably exasperated over Marshfield's Tillichian identity crisis, finally incarcerates him.

Tom prospers mightily, however, in the desert, writing with great *elan* about his sufferings and despair, and sounding altogether too happy over his rhetoric. Updike's serious fiction invariably suffers from his inability to hold back pungent language in favor of somber tones.

As a result, Updike has never created a convincingly tragic or even sad figure. All his Lears and Othellos sound oddly like George Carlin "agonizing" in high humor over life's vicissitudes, while calculating the next dirty joke. One imagines that Updike himself, for all his marital troubles, and struggles as a writer (like Beck) to survive, somehow loves

himself in the describing of it all. Mailer suffers from the same creative disease, though for all I know, this artistic malady, a continuing sense of humor and irony, saves both authors from the back wards. Salinger could have used half Updike's humor and remained a relatively happy citizen of the commonwealth.

While in treatment, Marshfield writes a sermon a Sunday, gradually building from total doubt to doubtful faith in a God who apparently *is,* if nothing else. As one might expect from a Tillichian parson, however, Marshfield "grows" dialectically, finding in the depths a glimmer of the heights. Treatment grows on him also. Thanks to posh surroundings, he is able to play golf regularly (one of Updike's own passions), and in a marvelously "sacramental" scene conquers a diabolical competitor by arching a 7-iron shot to the green: "Oh, with what a sublime comet's curve was that shot bending gently in, from the half-set sun's edge to the titled flagstick." Do you catch the flavor of both Edmund Spenser and Shakespeare in that diction and rhythm? Updike was surely born long after his time, and like Sartre's mournful Roquentin in *Nausea,* perhaps "outlived himself" before he was born.

Pastor Marshfield finally regains his vocation by means of the same action which landed him in treatment: intercourse, this time, with a Ms. Prynne, spiritual directress of this southwestern resort (truly *The Scarlet Letter* revisited). I do not mean to sound irreverent in the face of the Updike canon, but I find that the "climactic" scene of Updike's novel becomes sillier with each reading. Bluntly put, Prynne and Marshfield have sex, and she looks at him "with an expression without a name" (probably an allusion to Tillich's God above God who cannot be named). And Marshfield writes: "With the same unkillable intuition that leads me to laud the utterly *absconditus Deus,* I feel there is a place in you for me." Through verbal association in his diary, Marshfield thus makes contact with the hidden God vibrating somehow in that ground of being presumably rendered transparent by the acceptance of one human being by another — especially, Updike seems to insist, in coitus.

Well, what can one say? I would say that O'Connor manages to present in her fiction with infinitely more seriousness, formal control, and *skill,* the *deus* both present and absconded. She does not play with language, but always allows the spiritual realities to show through a modest arrangement of words. By comparison, Updike plays more than works at his themes. O'Connor suffered over the absence of God, and was in love with the Christ incarnate as God among a world of suffering human beings. Updike, I suspect, long ago lost his Christian faith, suffers little by comparison, but still dawdles for a living with the only materials he has in his workshop. He sometimes seems to me almost the doddering old ruined priest, still puttering about the sacristy, trying to find use for sacramental vessels gathering dust.

When T. S. Eliot once asked whether Shakespeare ever had a thought, he did not challenge his craftsmanship, but rather the depth of his metaphysics. We shall always enjoy certain writers — a W. C. Williams or a Nabokov — for their verbal skills and forgive them for their one-dimensional world perspective. When in real spiritual need, however, we shall turn to a higher order of artist.

With the development in the Vanderbilt Divinity School and elsewhere of theological (as well as continuing literary) interest in metaphor and incarnation as a method for doing honest poetry and

fiction in the "post-Christian" age, we may anticipate a continuing output of sacramental writing. The metaphoric manner of writing — always in our culture reminding us of the hypostatic union of natures in Christ, and therefore of the incarnation — will always remain the only way in our literature to counteract our secular urge toward "realism," "scientism," and that mere pursuit of objective data we associate with Descartes. It remains not only the literary way, but the human way, to embed reality within symbol, and make of the symbol, thereby, the ultimate reality. It remains the only therapeutic way to overcome the messy divorce between sense and sensibility.

And though we can look back and thank many writers for preserving the incarnational, the hypostatically (not simply paradoxically or dialectially) true, method for us to the present — Pascal, Dostoyevsky, Hawthorne, Melville, Rilke, Kafka, Eliot, Faulkner, and so many more — we may at the last trump discover we owe our greatest debt for preservation of the form to that crippled but so courageous lady from Milledgeville, Ga., Flannery O'Connor. *Requiescat in pacem.*

Remembered Spring

Maynard E. Stokka
Zion American Lutheran Churches, Granton — Pine Valley, Wisconsin

Her eyes opened wide like the blossoms
of the bitter almond tree when she
heard the stranger Gabriel say,
"Fear not, favored one! . . ."

One by one, white petals in her mind
said goodbye to wedding invitations,
the deep veil, the canopy, the wine.

How would Joseph know that the power
of the Most High had come upon her?
Who would speak to him?
Perhaps the Ark with its manna would return.
Perhaps Aaron's rod would bud again.
Perhaps Joseph would believe that she
was still the handmaid of the Lord.
Amen and Amen!

The roseate petals of the sweet almond tree
chastened the ground.
and the white, bitter blossoms
ran with the wind.

Broken Promises, Broken Circle, Broken People

Paul Bauermeister

Christ Seminary — Seminex Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

In the litany of human misery divorce ranks right up there with cancer and suicide. For a long time the church has imitated the world by either ignoring divorce or by punishing divorced people in the hope that divorces would diminish in number. No one can be sure if the church's efforts had the hoped-for effect, but one thing is clear: the church's efforts did add a load of guilt and shame to the people whose lives were marked by divorce.

Divorce has not gone away, and in many places today the church is recognizing that Christian people do get divorced and that a ministry to divorced people is no longer a luxury but has become a necessity.

Divorce is sin, but having said that our little white ball has not yet dropped into the cup of truth. In fact, we are barely off the tee of inquiry and between us and the green lie both logical and theological sand traps. The first is the sand trap of logical opposites. If divorce is sin, then logically considered, the opposite of divorce, namely to stay married, is *not* sin, right? Wrong! We have all seen a few of the hellish marriages that kind of thinking produces. True enough, the sin of divorce can be avoided by not divorcing, but by living out that line of logic other sin is committed, the sin of years of hateful living and spiteful action, decades of NIGYYSOB (Now I got you, . . .) games played over and over again, and in short, more burdensome, crippling, hurtful, grievious sin.

It is reasonable for Christians to think about sin in terms of making smart trade-offs. All sin alienates us from God, and his abundant grace in Jesus Christ is needed to restore our relationship with him. But some sin is more destructive to human beings than other sin. You may have heard divorced parents talk with surprise about the way the quality of their relationship with their children *improved* following the divorce. You may even have heard the children of divorced parents talk about that improved quality of relationship and about the improved emotional climate in the home they lived in after their parents divorced. I would say those decisions to divorce may have been good trade-offs in terms of human life.

A footnote on the sand trap of logical opposites is in order. If I realize my marriage is not working, and if I manage to never ask for divorce but instead manipulate my partner into explosively and publicly saying the words, then, of course, I am the "innocent party" and my partner is the "guilty party," right? Sorry, wrong again.

"But," says our ecclesiastical attorney, "if divorce is sin, then divorce simply *must* be avoided by Christian people." This one is a theological sand trap in that it appears to be declaring the sin of divorce to be of a different magnitude from other sins *in the sight of God.* Divorce may indeed be one of the bigger sins against human society, that is the rest of us, because divorce threatens the

foundations of society by tearing apart the nuclear family. *And* because divorce is so very public, it does cause scandal and people do bring negative social sanctions to bear on other people who break the big rules. But we are talking about sin before God, remember? Before God, all sin alienates. And all sin including divorce has a common remedy: grace in Jesus Christ. If you find yourself saying, "That is too easy a way for these terrible sinners to get off the hook with God," then it is probably time for you to remember that God's grace in Jesus Christ is the great leveler. It puts the happily married people on exactly the same level with the divorcing and the divorced.

One more sand trap to go and this one is also theological and the most important one for it lies at the heart of our definition of church. Is the church the assembly of those who no longer sin? This definition can be very tempting, and it appears to be the greatest possible display of the power of God active in the lives of people. What a witness the church could make to the world! The world would say, "See how they do absolutely nothing wrong, ever! How powerful is this God of theirs when he wages war against Satan!" But we know better than that. The church is *not* the community of the perfected. The church is the community of the forgiven, those who rejoice not in their own perfection but in God's grace in Jesus Christ. And by the way, such a church shows a much more powerful God to the world than any "community of the perfect" could ever show. God's Grace is what this world needs to hear. Perfectability is only a fragment of human imagination, an illusion which has no future.

Of course, divorce is sin, but thanks be to God, we Christians know what to do about sin. We forgive sin in the name of Jesus Christ! "Plunk!" Our little white ball just dropped into the cup.

People considering divorce carry a heavy sense of failure. In part, this is the result of social conditioning which tells them that they have failed themselves, their families, and society in general by their inability to remain married. Christian people are made to feel that they have failed in their sense of responsibility to God as well: they asked God's blessing on a relationship they themselves can no longer bless. The effects of their lifelong conditioning process cannot be taken lightly, nor should the sense of having failed God be lightly regarded. With few exceptions, however, church people who are divorcing are pained people, much in need of support, not of judgment. As a rule they have tried everything they could think of before moving towards divorce. They have tried to change; they have talked to friends; they made their misery known to family; they may even have discussed their private lives extensively with a professional counselor. No couple has a failed marriage because they planned it that way. People considering divorce are people who hurt inside.

Frequently, they are also confused. Here they are, trying to make one of the most important and difficult decisions of their lives, and they are doing it at a time when they are bent out of shape emotionally and cannot even think straight. The sense of profound pain and helpless desperation in people considering divorce is well known and needs no further documentation.

The implication of all this for those who would minister to people considering divorce is clear. Divorcing people should be handled carefully, gently and supportively. Because they see much of their world turning to ashes in their hands, they need the reassuring word

that God does not reject them, nor will God abandon them. Such a simple Gospel communicated by word and action in this context of agony can be very powerful.

Because of the confusion and emotional turmoil which accompanies divorce, people considering divorce are helped best if the helping contract is clear. The first task of the counselor is to determine with the person(s) considering divorce what the goal of the counseling is to be. The counselor can offer three different kinds of counseling. The counselor offers *marriage counseling* to those whose intent is to stay married and work toward improving their relationship. The counselor offers *decision counseling* to those who need to make a decision regarding their future together. Or the counselor offers *divorce counseling* if one or both has made a firm decision to terminate the marriage. Since sizable libraries have been written on marriage counseling, the subject will not be discussed here. We will concentrate on decision counseling and divorce counseling.

Decision Counseling

Few people make many decisions that are as intensely personal and as far reaching as the decision to divorce. People considering divorce sense the enormity of the decision and feel poorly equipped and inexperienced for such a task. Most people have not made any personal decisions of such magnitude before.

A good decision is one made after giving careful consideration to all the factors involved, one made with minimal influence from fantasy or misperceived reality. A good decision must be made by the people who will live with the consequences of the decision, not by others, whatever their opinion or wisdom.

Therefore, the counselor's task in decision counseling is clear: 1) Assist the people considering divorce in examining *all* their options and the consequences of those options; and 2) See to it that no one else, including the counselor, makes the decision for them; and 3) See to it that the ones who make the decision also take responsibility for that decision.

The magnitude of the decision and the painfulness of the marriage itself lead some people to decide to divorce just to end the pain. The flaw in such a decision is obvious. The pain of the marriage may end, but a host of new pains arrive in its wake, often including the pain of needing to continue to relate to the former spouse in some way because of the continuing interest in the children. If living in the same household is producing enormous stress and/or strife for the couple, they may wish to consider a separate living arrangement for a time rather than a divorce. The purpose of such a separation needs to be clearly agreed upon in advance: to reduce stress so that a better decision can be made. In this case separation is not step one in a two step process of which step two is divorce. Some good learning about the realities of a potential divorce may be acquired while living apart.

Another way in which poor decisions get made is when one partner poses some kind of test that the other is sure to fail. The test could be anything, from fixing liver and onions again or cutting her hair short, or his taking his secretary to lunch or leaving the basement a mess and watching football all weekend. When the test has been failed the response is always the same, "That's it! It's over! I'm getting a divorce!" The implication is that it is the other person's fault because the other person added "the straw that broke the camel's back." What is actually happening here is that the responsibility for a decision is being

avoided by means of a failed, and often unannounced, test.

A slight variation is to "explode" the decision. The person using this method comes with a long list of grievances which have been patiently endured without complaint for many years. Then when the partner finally commits the 491st sin [(70 X 7) + 1], a flood of angry emotion breaks through, overwhelming the long-suffering partner and moving him or her to a non-negotiable position, which, of course, the whole world will support. Again the responsibility for the decision to divorce is being avoided.

Recently-divorced friends and acquaintances can be helpful in letting people who are considering divorce learn about the personal, emotional, and social effects of divorce. Several such conversations would be best, followed by a discussion with the counselor regarding the new learnings produced by these conversations.

Learning the legal facts regarding what each spouse can expect in a divorce settlement is also an important piece of information for people to have when considering divorce. This is best done with an attorney after the couple has carefully calculated their income and the net worth of jointly-held property.

A next step in facing the realities of divorce is to examine the housing possiblities for each person following divorce. Can the present family house be kept? If the husband is planning to live in an apartment, what can he afford after he has paid the child support payment and his other bills? What kind of quarters can he get in his new budget? The counselor should not settle for imagination, but insist that future housing be visited.

And finally, the children will need to be considered. They will need to be told how the divorce will affect their future. They need to be reassured of the love of each parent and that the parental care and contact will continue into the future. They need to be repeatedly reassured that their parents' divorce is not the children's fault in any way. Part of the reality of divorce is telling the children. A much bigger reality is living out the new relationship brought about by divorce with the children, no matter who has the primary custody.

The importance of the decision to divorce, the number of people it affects, its public irrevocable nature, the difficulties in making such a decision, and the emotional turmoil which accompanies considering it indicate that this decision should be made carefully, slowly, and, if possible, with the help of a skilled, supporting, non-judgmental third party.

The decision to divorce is not always a mutual one. The move to divorce can be made preemptively by either party, even when an opposite decision is made by the spouse. Such a situation leaves strong feelings of rejection, helplessness and anger which require careful ventilation and understanding if healing is to take place.

Divorce Counseling

A different kind of counseling is in order when a clear, final decision to divorce has already been made. Often this is the point at which the professional minister is first contacted. Having heard the decision and allowed the decision maker(s) to reflect on the quality of the decision, the counselor can offer something many people never thought of: divorce counseling.

One goal of this counseling is to prepare the couple for the upheaval that accompanies divorce and to be a sounding board and a support for them as they live through the experience.

When the couple needs to continue to

cooperate with each other, especially in parenting the same children, a second goal of divorce counseling is to produce as amicable a post-divorce relationship as possible. The goal of the counselor is not just amicability for its own sake, but to enhance cooperation and mutuality for the tasks ahead. Though difficult to achieve, the amicable divorce is in the best interest of both parents and children.

For the Christian counselor of Christian people a third goal is to produce the kind of post-divorce relationship that will allow each person to see the ex-spouse as a full-fledged child of God and a brother or sister in Christ, able to be members of the same congregation, worship in the same sanctuary, and commune at the same table, even elbow-to-elbow, without rancor. Knowing the intensity of feelings generated by some divorcing people and their desire not to encounter each other ever again, this third goal will not always be achieved and may not even be pursued. Nevertheless it is the task of Christian ministers to help divorcing people to achieve it if they will. The understanding of God's grace formed in such an intense human crucible is a deep and lasting one.

The changes that divorce brings are surprising to many people, even well-educated and sophisticated people. Even though recent interactions have been spiteful and tense, divorce brings a decisive end to a relationship. Regular daily encounters no longer happen. A grief process begins and involves a time of denial *and* a time of preoccupation with the events of the relationship, both pleasant and unpleasant. The decision maker may feel remorse and self-blame regarding the decision. "I knew I couldn't continue to live with him, but now I keep wondering if I did the right thing. Was I just being selfish?" If the decision was made preemptively by one's partner, there may be vacillating feelings of hurt and helplessness — and anger at the rejection. "She wanted out. I can understand that, I guess. But I feel so ripped off! I really am better off without someone who acts that way!" A faithful friend or minister or counselor, who will allow such expression and encourage it by patient listening, will be a great help with this part of the emotional adjustment to divorce.

Divorced Socializing

An equally difficult adjustment is social. Couples socialize with couples. Singles bring imbalance to many gatherings and are not welcome, or at least not nearly as welcome as they were when they came with a partner. Much of the divorced person's social life needs rebuilding. For many newly-divorced people, this social need confronts them with something they have never faced before. They now must become thoughtful and intentional in their socializing. Earlier in life socializing "just happened." In school they were thrown together with large groups of peers and had only to find those with similar interests in order for friendships to begin to blossom. It seemed authentic. The entry into a new job or a new residence may have not been as easy socially as the entries at school had been, but the social part of living never required much attention or planning.

But the newly-divorced person needs to make plans, set goals and even strategize regarding social life. A continuing relationship with some couples may be possible, but the divorced person may need to take the initiative, issue invitations, and clarify the relationship by a frank conversation about it.

New relationships may also be sought,

but again the initiation will have to be done by the divorced person. This kind of initiative is new and different and difficult for many people. A patient friend, counselor, or minister can assist the divorced person in setting reasonable, attainable goals, and in patiently discussing their success and failure.

The newly divorced person also wears a new label: *Divorced.* Feelings about the label are ambivalent at best, and it calls for a new social identity. An unfortunate social impasse may occur when a person describes himself or herself as divorced. The announcement is followed by an embarrassing silence because the person receiving this information does not know how to react to it. This impasse can be avoided if the divorced person will add a sentence or two to the announcement, giving an indication regarding their feelings about the divorce. For example a newly-divorced person might say, "Jeff and I were divorced three weeks ago. It had been coming on for a long time, and I am pretty comfortable with it." Or "Marilyn and I have been divorced for four months now. I'm still getting used to the idea, but I'm doing all right." An acquaintance having heard only "I'm divorced" must guess about the speaker's present state and feelings regarding the matter, and most people are not willing to base a response on such a guess, therefore the silence, followed by a change in subject.

Divorced Parenting

Next to marriage, the most challenging and difficult thing human beings ever try is parenting. A divorce can reduce certain kinds of tensions people experience as parents, but divorce brings other new tensions to the parenting task.

The standard child custody arrangements give major custody to one parent and visitation rights to the other. It seems to be the optimal settlement of a difficult situation since children have some security and parents know what their rights and responsibilities are. The system also has some built-in problems.

Father, feeling badly about his diminished interaction with his children, makes every effort to please them during his weekend with them. He may even feel guilty about the way the divorce has affected the lives of his children. Friday night they watch the late-late show, pig out on pizza and cola, and end up sleeping on air mattresses in front of the TV on the living room floor. The next day offers a sleepy breakfast — "*anything* you want" at 11 a.m., an afternoon at the skating rink, and an evening at the movies. Sunday morning is Sunday School and church, as usual, followed by lunch out and a leisurely afternoon. When the children return to mother they are full of stories about their wonderful weekend with their wonderful father.

Needless to say, mother is not delighted with this recital. Mother hears about 1) no rules; 2) no concern for nutrition, 3) no bedtime, 4) no chores, 5) no homework. Mother also now must deal with children whose routines have been seriously interrupted. They are no longer interested in cooperating or in rules or in doing as they are instructed. Mother hears children wish out loud that they could live with father because he "really understands kids." What we have here is a Santa Claus and the Old Witch syndrome in full bloom.

Mother, who is employed and trying hard to make it in a competitive system, must keep house and be a parent with her remaining energy. She is also struggling with her new identity as a divorcee and trying to integrate her many feelings about the divorce and her former husband. He now has become, so she

believes, a happy, care-free bachelor with time and money to burn.

He, on the other hand, sees her as harried and hassled, shortchanging in time and affection the children he misses so much. He also faces the very hard fact that he cannot give anything of real substance to his children without putting money into his ex-wife's hands, a necessity he finds galling. He is right, too. A common pattern for divorced parents is to vent the frustrations generated by the above situation by fighting each other *through their children.* This may have been a pattern established before the divorce, or one arising following the divorce. Either way it is a bad pattern, one harmful to the children they both love.

When married, divorced, or divorcing parents fight each other through their children, they are doing one of the most harmful things parents can do. In essence, they are asking the child to choose between father and mother. In most situations, the child strongly wishes to be loyal to *both* parents. A child quickly senses the polarized situation between parents and picks up any attempt by parents to align the child on one side or the other because such an alignment always means being *for* one parent and *against* the other. The child is psychologically torn in two by this process.

Disrupting the pattern of fighting through the children will not be simple. It takes self-control and an intention to interpret the realities of the other's actions. Mother and Father know how to "sock it to each other," but they have a more important goal of parenting and loving their children the best way possible.

In order to foster the parenting task, some divorced parents find it helpful to schedule regular "parenting conferences," in which divorced parents meet regularly to discuss parenting tasks and issues. The agenda allows for a discussion *only* of parenting issues and begins with each parent's "statements." A statement is an uninterrupted expression of impressions, feelings, intentions and wishes regarding the children. Following the statement by one parent the other may ask questions, but only to clarify. Then a similar statement is made by the remaining partner, again followed by clarification. The remainder of the period can be spent in negotiations regarding differences, but the total time is not to exceed the time originally set. The final issue is the setting of a time and place for the next parenting session.

Such sessions are scheduled at a mutually agreeable time and place and for a mutually agreeable duration. Ideally the time would be one that is genuinely free, a time when both people are relaxed and refreshed. The place should be a neutral one, free from distrctions. Initially a third party in the person of the minister or counselor might be helpful.

Without such structure, the communication between divorced parents all too often sinks to fighting through the children or to late-night, explosive telephone calls when something has gone wrong. With regular parenting sessions, some of these negative, disruptive and hurtful actions can be avoided. Even when a divorce is amicable or when the parents are ready to acknowledge each other as brother and sister in Christ, the parenting session can be very helpful for the difficult task of parenting when divorced.

Broken promises? Surely. Broken circle? If they decide. Broken people? There are things that can be done to minimize the breaking of people and to heal the people who get broken.

The Rite

Kenn Storck

Trinity Lutheran Church, Rockford, Illinois; The occasion of this poem was hearing a report on world hunger at the Illinois Synod Convention the first week-end in June of 1983.

In a small town in South America
the children conduct the funeral
rite for their dead siblings
because the parents cannot withstand
the grief of yet another child
dying.

. . . a conversation overheard . . .

"Little brother, little brother
Why does mommy cry?
Little brother, little brother
Pale against the sky.

Yesterday we played together
Or was it just a dream?
Today we carry on your coffin
Flowers lush and green.

Why so tiny hands and broken
Hearts and eyes with tears?
Why such sudden loss of vision?
Why our parents fears?

Father gave his life blood to you.
Mother gave you milk.
Sister dried your tears and fever.
I just sat and sulked.

When this morning's dew and darkness
Broke against the sky
Sister and I marched with your coffin.
Why did you have to die?

Little brother, little brother
We add you to the five.
This has become our walk in
childhood.
Why are we alive?

Just Friends

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

How many times have you heard the phrase? Or used it yourself? It's usually part of a formula such as, "No, we don't have a permanent relationship, we're just friends." Only the other day I caught myself asking a student who had stopped by my office, "Are you and Karen roommates or just friends?"

Most of us have friends. Most of us need friends, want friends, and try to make and keep friends. Yet many of us in our language distinguish between friends and other types of relationships, relationships which we consciously or unconsciously deem more important. This is to say that the relationship of friendship is important to everyone, but it somehow lacks the status, or often does, of a permanent union, of a contract not to be entered into lightly. Friendship is no longer the "sacred covenant" it was for David and Jonathan (I Samuel 20).

True, some people claim not to need close friends; they say, "I've never had close friends the way some people do" or "I've been hurt too often and now I just don't even try to make friends," which is probably to say, "I too want and need friends," or "I too see the importance of friendship, but I do not have the personality or do not want to take the risks involved in building friendships." Hence, while most of us desire and cultivate friendship, we simultaneously denigrate the relationship with our language and perhaps with an attitude toward the relationship itself.

Moreover, we live in a world somewhat antithetical to friendship. To be sure, barriers exist in any age or culture to friendship, but in 20th-century America, where competition sets the pace for all institutions including the church and where studying psychological motivations is a national pasttime, friendship seems an orchid among weeds — rare and short-lived. Surveys indicate that few men in our culture have close friends at all; married men apparently have even fewer. Few men or women have honest-to-goodness buddies.

Nor is friendship engendered in our society. Our society encourages competition and competitiveness. Many school philosophies treat children as "little adults," especially by cultivating a futuristic what-you-will-become attitude. Many times families are so loosely-knit that care facilities or schools provide most socializing, rather than the family or home.

Even under adverse conditions strong friendships can and do form, however. Children manage strong attachments until competition becomes a way of life and subtly, but often surely, dissipates genuine, selfless friendship. Adults can, with effort, hang onto friends via telephone or letter. But it's hard.

In essence, our language and our behavior betray our cultural memory. Deep within, our voices remind us that from our beginnings friendship has been held in high esteem and has been prized

by the great and lowly alike. In ancient civilizations, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Epicurus extolled the virtues of friendship and prized it as the highest of relationships. St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas both wrote in complimentary terms of friendship in the early and high Middle Ages. Ailred of Rivaulx saw friendship as a road to God, through Christ, from whom all friendship proceeds. In the Renaissance, Montaigne and Bacon wrote essays on friendship; in the mid-seventeenth century in England the anonymous author of *The Whole Duty of Man,* a very popular Christian handbook, devoted an entire section to friendship; and Anglican divine, Jeremy Taylor, wrote a "Discourse on Friendship" in response to a question on the subject from Katherine Philips, a poet of the times who herself wrote almost exclusively on the subject of friendship. The subject has continued to be a popular one throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, especially so with psychologists and social historians; less so, with theologians. Margaret Mead wrote an essay following the tradition of Montaigne, Bacon and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and recently theologian Martin Marty has written a monograph, *Friendship,* thus joining a line of Christian apologists who have written on the topic.

Yet, as most of us know, friendship hardly remains a topic for literature; it is a relationship many of us enjoy and most of us long for, despite our casual denigrations and societal hurdles.

Perhaps an attitude based on this simple observation would lead us to a more-persistent nourishing of the friendships we have, a more consistent thanksgiving for our friends, and a more insistent understanding of the sacramental nature of friendship.

Friendship, like marriage, which Jeremy Taylor calls the "green of friendship," is an outward, visible sign of an invisible bond — a bond between two people as well as the bond between God and humanity. Friends signify the Christian's desire to show charity to all, naturally, affectionately. Friendship, as well, signifies the bonds between men and women in a civilized society.

In times of joy, in moments of sadness, in hours of need, in days of refreshment, friends aid, listen, learn, hold, uplift, clarify, perhaps even inspire. Again, as Taylor puts it, a true and virtuous friend acts "instead of God to me." And a real friend is a friend forever. After a friend's death, a friend continues to serve his friend's memory through acts of kindness.

Perhaps by holding in mind the many benefits and joys of friendship and by recognizing its primacy among relationships, we can accept our friendships as blessings from God and begin to bless God in return for them.

Christmas Eve On Wilshire

Karl E. Kniseley, II

First Lutheran Church of Los Angeles

In the midst of traffic sounds
  The joy of promise fulfilled
In silent hope the city awaits
  Revelation proclaimed
For broken spirit, body, community
  In eucharist and word
The Christ-Mass —

Perhaps I'm tired
  Words seem so trite
In proclaiming life and faith tonight
  Maybe sounds of music
And word as read is sufficient
  Oh Christ for the grace to proclaim
Your incarnation, life, death and
resurrection
  Oremus —

The song of angels praise
  The light in darkness shines
On bended knee before the child
  For you, me, humanity
Lord, have mercy —

Go in peace, serve the Lord
  Thanks be to God
My grace is sufficient
  For you
In the midst of traffic sounds
  The joy —

Village Creche

Ruth Ressmeyer

Long Island, New York

"See?
    Real sheep!"
Visibly
    a three year old's eager face
        clouds,
        turns away.
"They're not clean —
    and they smell."
Yes . . . love . . .
    I know.
    And muse
All we . . . like sheep . . .
    YET he came
    STILL God comes.
        CHRISTMAS!

Madonna Alone

Samuel Zumwalt

Lord of Life Lutheran, Lancaster, Texas

It wasn't Christmas Eve; it wasn't Advent. All creation groans ceaselessly without regard for the choreographed directions of the liturgical year.

No, it was a muggy Monday morning, just after dawn in Family Room I, down the hall from the pediatric emergency area. Nurses and aides moved slowly past the door, hangovers apparent; just another Monday morning coming down. There were trauma-hall supplies to be restocked. Violent blood had been antiseptically purged from floors and walls. Cadavers were on ice in the ME's office. It was the bloodshot eye of the storm. And broken needles had to be replaced.

Yet she was there. Sixteen going on forty. Snotty nose and puffy eyes, stringy hair and dirty feet. Like an old grandfather, nicotine-stained fingers. Her K-Mart sweatshirt appropriately complementing the ragged-hemmed jeans. And her pimpled cheeks bore the tracks of her tears.

The son was dead. Crib death. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

A righteous family had abandoned her. After all, spiritual retreats make for proper penitence. The disgrace of a curious teen must have been too big a cross. Her one night of pleasure had distorted their focus on the family. Oh, how an abortion on the sly could have kept the sin a musty secret! But no. The strong-willed ingrate had donned her scarlet letter. It had been too much.

They must have been right. Certainly the wrath of God was upon her — she said. He was in bed with me. The cheap efficiency apartment was not much — hardly a place to lay your head. Her older brother had dropped by to check on her. She stumbled to the door. He came in. Oh-my-God-the-baby's-not-breathing! A futile mad dash in the back of the Mobile Intensive Care vehicle. Paramedics gently but firmly tapping the lifeless chest. Finally, the unmitigated hell of waiting for the "pedi-team" to say what she dreaded.

The son was dead. Crib death. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

He wasn't baptized — she sobbed. Will he go to hell? My preacher won't talk to me. I haven't confessed my sin before the church. And they don't baptize babies anyway. What's gonna happen to him? What's gonna happen to me? Will you pray with me? Would you . . . ?

We stood over the dead baby. He looked like the Teutonic baby Jesus on an old Concordia Christmas pageant cover. He didn't cry. He didn't awake.

It wasn't the river Jordan or a proper font. Just a Dixie cup of water and some familiar words. Why?

Whenever creation groans, the Father who lost an only Son listens. A madonna stands weeping at the cross. And those who are called to be "little Christs" struggle with the mystery of the incarnation. Indeed, the mystery of faith.

Conception

Joyce S. Otten

Battle Creek, Michigan

What does it mean to conceive (in God's eye)?
Implant and impregnate a seed that will die
When alien soil's unwelcoming, sere,
How bring to fruition the life so dear?

Choose a young woman, not one much deceived,
Trusting, still open, whose membranes yet bleed,
Eagerly waiting for purpose to fill,
Longing to give and to live in your will.

Too soon will be shattered her hopes, her dreams,
Too quickly the blood from the anguished brow streams;
The womb too soon empty, rent heart torn with pain
The child of great promise suddenly slain.

Bring life to the woman in whom you conceived,
Balm for the heartbreak of her who believed,
Trusted your promise and hopes still to see
The love born of you live eternally.

What does it mean to conceive (in God's eye)?
Implant and impregnate a seed that will die?
From death of a seed comes life that is new
Fulfillment of promise, eternally true.

Book Reviews

PARABLES AND PRESENCE. By Robert W. Funk. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982. xiii and 206 pages. Cloth. $15.95.

This latest volume by Robert Funk gives another illustration of how linguistic studies are enriching biblical criticism, even when they do not follow the "hard structuralism" of an A. J. Greimas or Daniel Patte. *Parables and Presence* gathers together nine previously published articles (1967-81) and brackets them with two chapters written specifically for this book. Funk continues in this volume the two areas he explored in his first book, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (1966): the parable and the NT epistle.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the volume by suggesting that language is "perception, problem, and promise." Funk creatively describes tradition as layers of talk in which each generation builds on the language of preceeding traditions. Thus, Galatians 1-2 is "the community talking about itself talking about the first disciples thinking about Jesus talking about the kingdom of God." Throughout the chapter, Funk continues to illuminate with sudden bursts of light and insight. It is necessary in tradition, he says, that there should be both definition and yet a lack of absolute definition so that the tradition does not become ossified. "A single voice must not be permitted to tyrannize memory. It is necessary, not that the gospels should agree, but that they should disagree (p. 8)."

Chapters 2-6 cover "Parables and Presence." Funk suggests that the parables, composed as they are for the ear, were almost certainly composed in Greek, perhaps by Jesus himself; the evidence does not permit us to either refute or insist upon Jesus' original authorship. Funk does a structural analysis of the plots and participants of ten narrative parables, appealing to Greimas where appropriate yet not doing, for example, a full-blown actantial analysis. Funk's method yields some excellent insights. He identifies three possible readings of the Prodigal Son: 1) as a story of how two sons respond to their father's love; 2) as a test of how the older son responds to the father's forgiveness of the prodigal; or 3) as a story of how the father and older brother respond to a test, the return of the prodigal. Funk suggests the parable's success as story is based on the complexity of these potential ways of reading it.

In chapters 7-8, Funk analyzes the apostolic presence through the medium of the epistles of Paul and John. Usually we read *parousia* as a technical term for Jesus' return at the judgment. In the epistles, *parousia* also refers to Paul's wish to be present in the community, if not in person then through an emissary or by means of a letter. Funk traces how Johannine use of the Hellenistic private letter form parallels this apostolic *parousia.*

The final three chapters give us a glimpse into Funk's thoughts since *Jesus as Precursor* (1975), and return us again to the theme of language and tradition. It is the burden of our secularistic age to be engrossed by the literal, and thereby blinded to the truth of how things really are. Word of God (that is, Word *from* God rather than *about* God) may happen where comic irony cracks open the world to possibility for new language, thus recapitulating the language event of the parable.

Albert Huck
Synopsis of the First Three Gospels

with the Addition of the Johannine Parallels. 13th edition, fundamentally revised by Heinrich Greeven.
Synopse der drei ersten Evangelien mit Beigabe der johanneischen Parallelstellen. 13. Auflage, völlig neu bearbeitet von Heinrich Greeven. 1981. XLI, 298 pages. With 1 insert. ISBN 3-16-143032-8 Clothbound DM 45.–

Generations of theologians have used Huck to familiarize themselves with the first three Gospels and the Synoptic Problem. A completely new revision of this tried and tested tool is now before us.
The new recension of the Greek text of the Gospels is independent. It presents many well-founded variations from the current editions of the text, and so sharpens and keeps alert our perception of its radically hypothetical character.
Alongside the Synoptic Gospels the corresponding passages of St. John's Gospel are printed in a distinctive black frame. Side by side with the continuous text parallel passages which appear earlier or later, in the other Gospels, are printed in cursive type. Old Testament quotations are distinguished by thick type.
With few exceptions pericopes, logia etc. are printed in full beside the text once only. A comprehensive system is provided whereby references can easily be found. The complete body of material is printed alongside for comparison, but not in the apparatus or appendixes. Particular importance is given to the placing of corresponding words as close as possible in parallel columns. In this way gaps in the lines of the text indicate immediately a relationship with the corresponding texts. The three columns are continuous though sometimes differing in breadth. The textual apparatus contains (1) all variants regarded as original and (2) all variants recognised as harmonistic. (1) enables the user to make independent textual decisions: (2) brings to our notice the instances of harmonisation, the dominant factor of distortion in the tradition of the text of the Synoptic Gospels. In contrast to previous manual editions, the data of the witnesses for the text are given fully and precisely. Entirely new is the inclusion of all the witnesses from the Gospel Harmonies. A second apparatus introduces the apocryphal material so far as it indicates a connexion with the Synoptic tradition. As much of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas as is relevant has been translated into Greek. (Otherwise, apart from a few Latin Patristic texts in the introduction and the second apparatus, only a knowledge of Greek is assumed in the user.) We have renounced the use of Patristic material when it is only of exegetic and not text-critical significance.
The Synopsis is, above all else, constructed for that use in classes and Seminars from which it has been developed. The arrangement of the printed text and the quality of the paper are adapted to work with coloured pencils. The insert is composed so that it is adequate for the average passages but, at the same time, leads the reader on to the detailed introduction. This contains everything that is necessary for an initiation into the textual criticism of the Synoptic Gospels.
An 8-paged prospectus in a reduced format with sample pages can be obtained upon request from the publisher.



J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck)
P.O.B. 2040 · D-7400 Tübingen

In the final chapter, Funk wrestles with the New Testament as language, tradition and canon, again drawing many of the book's themes together.

Funk uses a Wittgensteinian *Tractatus* notation for numbering paragraphs, which makes the book, its bibliography and four indexes easy to follow and use. Robert Funk continues to be one of the most creative of exegetes, illuminating biblical prose by language which is itself filled with light.

Ronald W. Roschke
Pastor, Peace Lutheran Church
Manhattan, Kansas

THE PROPHETS. I: THE ASSYRIAN PERIOD. By Klaus Koch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. 182 pages. Paper. $10.95.

This book is an excellent *general* account of the prophets and might be read profitably in addition to the treatment of the prophets by G. von Rad (*Old Testament Theology*. Vol. II, 1965) and A. Heschel (Harper Torchbooks, 1969), but it is not a replacement of the thorough account of the prophetic literature in G. Fohrer's *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1968).

Koch succeeds in showing that the prophets were not simply charismatically endowed visionaries, nor merely writers of splended Hebrew poetry or preachers, but that they were independent thinkers "who, in a process of what I should like to term 'subsequent insight,' give rational form to what they have already become certain of intuitively. They demand similar reflection from their listeners, too. They maintain that the evidence for what they put forward is convincing if it is seen against the background of the traditions and the historical experiences which they share with their listeners." (p. vii)

Koch proceeds then to work out the distinctive intellectual profiles of the prophets in a *systematic* way. The major analytical category is *metahistory* as an aid to systematizing the thoughts of the prophets. According to him "*Metahistory* is a term for what Isaiah calls 'Yahweh's work' and Jeremiah 'Yahweh's way.' It covers a multiplicity of interactions between God, human beings and the course of the world. Theoretical elements play their part, although the prophets are not particularly interested in the theory. What they are concerned about is that people should recognize the meaning of history and should comprehend and apprehend their future in that light."

Koch does not intend to force Israelite thought into Western categories nor to make the prophets into systematic theologians. He adopts the term *metahistory* in order to try to clarify certain ancient concepts which are foreign to modern readers. I am not so sure that *any* attempt to 'systematize' the message of the prophets can be successful. We must meet each one of them on his own ground, in his own time, and understand his endeavors as much as scholarly and humanly possible. Koch's consideration for the prophets and their message, though *is* victorious over some of his 'systematizing' tendencies. His book is not filled with as much passion as Heschel's, but Koch has given us an excellent insight into some of the central themes of the prophets. He is well aware of the sensitivities of the modern reader, especially the Christian, and is very helpful when explaining some of the (to us) cruel aspects of Israelite religion. He also tries to be sensitive to feminist concerns when explaining some of the masculine imagery used for God.

I recommend the book without any hesitation and I will use it in my teaching.

Walter L. Michel
Lutheran School of Theology
at Chicago

BOOKS FOR THE BIBLICAL SCHOLAR

EERDMANS' HANDBOOK TO CHRISTIANITY IN AMERICA
Edited by Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, George M. Marsden, David F. Wells, and John D. Woodbridge
A richly illustrated, popular reference book that presents a comprehensive, authoritative and stimulating introduction and guide to the development of American Christianity.
Cloth, $24.95

CONVERSIONS
Edited by Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder
This first collection of personal conversion accounts to span all of Christian history is a careful selection of writings in which 50 well-known Christians tell about their own conversion experiences.
Cloth, $12.95

MIRACLES AND THE CRITICAL MIND ***by Colin Brown***
A new work by a leading evangelical scholar which offers a comprehensive account of the debate on the miracles of Jesus from the early church to the present time and a fresh examination of the place of miracles in faith today.
Cloth, $18.95

UNTIL JUSTICE AND PEACE EMBRACE ***by Nicholas Wolterstorff***
Difficult questions about the individual Christian's response to the world's social order are here addressed in terms of the biblical concept of shalom.
Cloth, $13.95

HOLINESS AND POLITICS
by Peter Hinchliff
An examination of the meaning of "holiness" and its implications for Christian involvement in politics.
Paper, $7.95

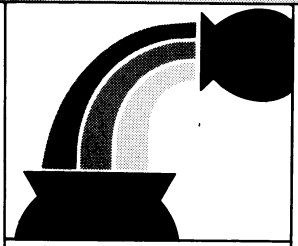
INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY
General Editors, Frederick Holmgren and George A.F. Knight
International in its scope and theological in its approach, this new commentary aims to develop the theological significance of the Old Testament and to emphasize the relevance of each book for the life of the Church. The following volumes are scheduled for release in 1983:

INHERITING THE LAND: Joshua
by E.J. Hamlin Paper, $5.95

SERVANT THEOLOGY: Isaiah 40-55
by G.A.F. Knight Paper, $5.95

SIGNS AND WONDERS: Daniel
by R.A. Anderson Paper, $5.95

GOD'S PEOPLE IN CRISIS: Amos and Lamentations
by R. Martin-Achard and P. Re'emi
Paper, $5.95



WHEN THE KINGS COME MARCHING IN
Isaiah and the New Jerusalem
by Richard Mouw
An important contribution to the ongoing discussion about the relationship between Christ and culture based on the vision of the Holy City as it is recorded in Isaiah 60.
Paper, $3.95

THE ECUMENICAL MOMENT
Crisis and Opportunity for the Church
by Geoffrey Wainwright
In this profoundly theological, sacramental, and doxological work, noted theologian Geoffrey Wainwright makes a plea for full Christian unity. Paper, $8.95

MARTIN LUTHER
Prophet to the Church Catholic
by James Atkinson
Viewing Martin Luther as a prophet to the whole Christian Church, the author demonstrates Luther's influence on the Roman Catholic Church as well as on Protestantism. Paper, $7.95

THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR IN THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION
by E. Harris Harbison
A re-issue of a classic which serves as a timely reminder that there is historically an honorable tradition of genuine Christian humanism. Paper, $6.95

THE COMPULSION OF THE SPIRIT
A Roland Allen Reader
Edited by David Paton and Charles H. Long
Selections taken from Allen's own writings which include his visionary and prophetic views on missionary methods and church growth. Paper, $4.50

GENESIS, WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO NARRATIVE
Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Volume I
by George W. Coats
After discussing narrative in general and the principal Old Testament narratives in particular, Coats sets the book of Genesis in its larger context and analyzes its major sections and subsections. Paper, $19.95

CITIES OF THE BIBLICAL WORLD
Graham I. Davies, General Editor
This new series provides an introduction to archaeological methods, descriptions of the excavations and finds of particular sites, and an explanation of the way archaeological evidence can help our understanding of the Bible. The following volumes are scheduled for publication in 1983:

EXCAVATION IN PALESTINE
by Roger Moorey Paper, $6.95

JERICHO
by John A. Bartlett Paper, $6.95

QUMRAN
by Philip R. Davies Paper, $6.95

VATICAN II, MORE POSTCONCILIAR DOCUMENTS
Volume II
Edited by Austin P. Flannery
In this continuing series, the author provides a lucid, perceptive translation of significant official documents relating to Vatican II.
Paper, $9.95

YESTERDAY AND TODAY
by Colin Gunton
In this study of the relation of form, content, and method in Christology, Gunton argues for the continuity of modern times with the patristic era. Paper, $7.95

TRANSFORMATION AND CONVERGENCE IN THE FRAME OF KNOWLEDGE
by Thomas F. Torrance
Arising out of the author's sustained engagement with the tension between Christian theology and the general frame of thought prevalent in European culture, the essays in this volume call for an alliance of scientific and theological enterprise.
Cloth, $24.95.

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

375A

At your bookstore, or write:

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503

PSALMS 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary, 19. By Peter C. Craigie. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983. 378 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

This is the first Old Testament volume in a major, 52 volume commentary series on the entire Bible, written by an international team from the "evangelical critical" tradition. Craigie, author of previous books on Deuteronomy and Holy War, is also the editor of the Newsletter for Ugaritic Studies.

For each psalm the author provides a bibliography, a new translation, philological and text critical notes, an analysis of the psalm's form, structure, and setting, a verse-by-verse commentary entitled Comment, and a final "Explanation," offering general theological reflections and correlations with the New Testament.

Since Craigie recognizes that form criticism sometimes emphasizes too much the typical, his discussion blends accurate form critical observations with an analysis of the distinctive literary structure of the psalm — most people would call his method rhetorical criticism. He never is content to say that the Psalm is a lament or hymn for this or that reason. Rather, he shows how the individual sections of the psalm relate to the whole and comprise a unique poem. While others have done this for individual psalms, no other English commentary compares with the insights provided in his section "Form/Structure/Setting."

Philological studies of the Psalter have been dominated in the last twenty years by the publications of Mitchell Dahood, including his three volume commentary in the Anchor Bible series. Craigie is appreciative of Dahood, but recognizes that he often paid insufficient attention to the traditional vocalization or to the semantic or poetic context. This commentary, therefore, contains the best of Dahood's contributions from comparative philology, but avoids the excesses that made Dahood so controversial in the academic community and so puzzling to the person not trained in Northwest Semitic epigraphy.

At times Craigie is too cautious on philological and other matters. His metrical analysis, of the "3 + 3" type, adds almost nothing to our understanding of Hebrew poetry. Questions of authorship rightly play little role in the commentary itself though Craigie holds to the "strong possibility" and even "probability" (within one paragraph) that David wrote some of the Psalms.

Those who dismiss evangelicalism as fundamentalism will have their eyes opened by this commentary and by the projected series. In my judgment, this is now the best available commentary in English for the psalms it treats. Pastors and lay people will use it with ease and with enormous profit. The other two volumes on Psalms in the Word Biblical Commentary will be written by Marvin E. Tate and Leslie C. Allen.

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

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

VOLUME 10 INDEX

Asen, Bernhard A. "The Electronic Church: Its Vision of the Kingdom," 10:1 (February 1983) 31-37.

Aune, Michael B. " 'To Move the Heart': Word and Rite in Contemporary American Lutheranism," 10:4 (August 1983) 210-221.

Bauermeister, Paul. "Anatomy of Intimacy: Marriage for Christians," 10:5 (October 1983) 283-290.

_____. "Broken Promises, Broken Circle, Broken People," 10:6 (December 1983) 365-372.

Blobaum, Gary. "Rainbows," 10:2 (April 1983) 106.

Bozeman, Jean. "Teaching in the Church: Privilege and Responsibility," 10:5 (October 1983) 299-303.

Braaten, Carl E. "Jesus Among Jews and Gentiles," 10:4 (August 1983) 197-209.

Brent, John S. — see Chismar

Chismar, Douglas E. and John S. Brent. "The Empathic Apologist: Pastoral Counseling Insights into Christian Apologetics," 10:2 (April 1983) 87-94.

Coiner, Harry. "Ministry to the Aging — Touching the Theological Bases," 10:2 (August 1983) 100-104.

Dake, Norman P. "Who Deserves to Live? Who Deserves to Die?" 10:2 (April 1983) 67-77.

Dickson, Charles. "The Lutheran Name Dilemma," 10:1 (February 1983) 47-49.

DuPriest, Travis. "Just Friends," 10:6 (December 1983) 373-374.

Fjeld, Roger. "In Transit," 10:6 (December 1983) Inside Back Cover.

Gallagher, Jan. "Inside Updike's Rabbit Trilogy," 10:1 (February 1983) 38-40.

Graesser, Carl, Jr. "Righteousness: Human and Divine," 10:3 (June 1983) 134-141.

Habel, Norman C. "Of Things Beyond Me: Wisdom in the Book of Job," 10:3 (June 1983) 142-154.

Herzfeld, Will. "What's Goin' On?" 10:6 (December 1983) 346-350.

Hillers, Delbert R. "History and Poetry in Lamentations," 10:3 (June 1983) 155-161.

Hohenstein, Herbert E. "Oh Blessed Rage," 10:3 (June 1983) 162-168.

Jacob, Mel. "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Facing Futility In and After Vietnam," 10:5 (October 1983) 291-298.

Kelly, Robert A. "The Theology of the Cross," 10:3 (April 1983) 95-99.

Klein, Ralph W. "Beginning Again," 10:4 (August 1983) 194-196.

_____. "The Glad Sound: Jesus is a Real Comer," 10:6 (December 1983) 322-324.

_____. "Ministry 'To The Max,' " 10:2 (April 1983) 65-66.

_____. "Our Tenth Year," 10:1 (February 1983) 1-3.

_____. "To Von," 10:3 (June 1983) 130-133.

_____. "Will the Real World Please Stand Up?" 10:5 (October 1983) 258-260.

Kniseley, Karl E. II. "Christmas Eve on Wilshire," 10:6 (December 1983) 375.

Krentz, Edgar. "None Greater Among Those Born From Women: John the Baptist in the Gospel of Matthew," 10:6 (December 1983) 333-338.

Lesher, William E. "Church Union as Mission," 10:4 (August 1983) Inside Back Cover.

Liechti, Steve. "I Too Shall Bloom," 10:1 (February 1983) 20-21.

Mayer, Herbert T. "The Poor and the Church: A Review Article," 10:1 (February 1983) 41-46.

Mehl, Duane P. "Sex and Sacrament in Contemporary Literature: The Incarnation as Method," 10:6 (December 1983) 351-364.

Modras, Ronald. "An Immigrant Church Coming of Age: The Present Situation of Catholic Theology in the U.S.A.," 10:1 (February 1983) 22-30.

Moellering, Ralph. "Ancient and Modern Gnosticism," 10:4 (August 1983) 222-232.

Olson, Steven D. "Silence: Forming and Transforming Ministry," 10:1 (February 1983) 14-19.

Otten, Joyce S. "Conception," 10:6 (December 1983) 377.

Peters, Ted. "Post-Modern Religion," 10:5 (October 1983) 261-272.

Philip, T. M. "What Do You Make of Indian Theology?" 10:2 (April 1983) 78-86.

Prange, Don. "Discipleship and Economic Justice," 10:6 (December 1983) 339-345.

Rast, Walter E. "Habakkuk and Justification by Faith," 10:3 (June 1983) 169-175.

Ressmeyer, Ruth. "Village Creche," 10:6 (December 1983) 375.

Rochelle, Jay C. "Probing Toward Ecclesial Discipline in a Pluralistic Age," 10:4 (August 1983) 243-246.

Rolfe, David J. "Toward Better Preparation for Marriage," 10:4 (August 1983) 238-242.

Stokka. Maynard E. "Remembered Spring," 10:6 (December 1983) 364.

_____. "The Third Felon," 10:2 (April 1983) 105.

Storck, Kenn. "The Rite," 10:6 (December 1983) 372.

Stuhr, Walter. "Can Seminaries Really Change?" 10:5 (October 1983) Inside Back Cover.
Theil, Stephen L. "An Epilogue for M*A*S*H — A Prologue for Human Suffering," 10:5 (October 1983) 304-306.
Viviano, Benedict. "Matthew, Master of Ecumenical Healing," 10:6 (December 1983) 325-332.
White, Charles E. " 'Concerning Earnest Christians:' A Newly Discovered Letter of Martin Luther," 10:5 (October 1983) 273-282.
Wifall, Walter. "Bone of My Bones and Flesh of My Flesh: The Politics of the Yahwist," 10:3 (June 1983) 176-183.
Wolff, D. Hans Walter. "The Irresistible Word (Amos)," 10:1 (February 1983) 4-13.
Wurster, David F. C. "The Family Feud: The Battle for Righteousness," 10:4 (August 1983) 233-237.
Zumwalt, Samuel. "Madonna Alone," 10:6 (December 1983) 376.

BOOKS WORTH DISCUSSING

Danker, Frederick W. *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field.* Reviewed by A. T. Kraabel. 10:2 (April 1983) 107-110.
Occasional Services: A Companion to Lutheran Book of Worship. Reviewed by Marion J. Hatchett. 10:3 (June 1983) 184-185.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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

PASTE MAILING LABEL HERE

IN TRANSIT

Roger W. Fjeld

President-Elect, Wartburg Theological Seminary

Two things prompt me to choose this title for my first contribution to this page. The first is that our churches are in transit. The second is that our seminaries are therefore in transit. The title may also speak to a personal matter, since our family is now in transit, moving soon to Dubuque to rejoin the Wartburg Seminary family.

OUR CHURCHES ARE IN TRANSIT. That is another way of approaching the matters to which LSTC President William Lesher addressed his words in the August issue. As these words are written the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) is completing its third meeting. In just one year the Commission has moved from a difficult beginning to complex studies to some clear recommendations about the foundations for our new church. Statements about theology and purpose will soon be in the hands of the constituency for study and response. Processes are now in place for determining the mission, polity and structures for the new church. The Commission is on schedule! We could well be meeting in constituting convention during the Pentecost cycle in 1987!

As one who has been an observer and liaison between the ALC and the Commission, I want to offer some observations. One is to celebrate the fact that the Commission does not have to negotiate doctrine for us. The work of uniting our churches proceeds with the confidence that no doctrinal differences divide us; that our tasks are to give adequate statement of a shared theology and to apply that theology to the mission of the new church. A prime symbol of that basic unity is the fact that our churches are already conducting seminary education and continuing theological education together. The creative decision of Christ Seminary — Seminex to disperse its faculty, students and resources to other seminaries of the uniting churches well illustrates the confidence that unity already exists; unification is in process.

It is also apparent that the phrase "a new Lutheran Church" is more than a euphemism for merger. The Commission takes seriously that the three uniting churches want the successor church to be "new" wherever that has the potential for greater effectiveness in mission. This is not a mandate to ignore what the present churches do well. But it is the freedom to explore a range of possibilities before settling on a particular set of recommendations for the life and mission of the new church. There is a certain vulnerability about this approach to designing a new church. Where the potential exists for greatly strengthening a particular facet of the work of the church there also exists the possibility of substantial mistake. But I believe the potential for gain is worth the risk of loss.

OUR SEMINARIES ARE THEREFORE IN TRANSIT. Some elements of uncertainty are obvious: Change in ownership and governance of seminaries, change in support base, changes in location. We could not and should not expect to escape the vulnerability that marks the move to a new Lutheran church. What we can and should do is to function as advocates for particular seminaries and for the whole network of seminaries. We can be open to new possibilities for and guard against unintended damage to the institutions we serve.

Some other elements of uncertainty for the seminaries are less obvious.

How will the several seminaries of the new church relate to each other? How can we concentrate on our own tasks, specialize as needed, yet function as partners in a single theological enterprise? How can we contribute to the life of the new church and how will the new church use us? The Commission is just beginning to address such questions. Task forces have just been appointed to develop design proposals. The Commission expects to consider these, share them in revised form with the constituency for discussion and response, and then to further revise them for convention in 1984. With that sort of process we will have opportunity to contribute to the way the new church will answer these questions.

To be in transit is unsettling. But being settled is not one of the marks of the church. The time of transit is a time to contribute, to respond rather than to react, to anticipate as the new church comes into being.

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

Second Class Postage Paid at Paxton, IL