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CURRENTS in theology and mission

Post-Modern Religion
A New "Luther" Letter

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Will the Real World Please Stand Up?

Moving from one city to another helps to distinguish illusion from reality. The house that was "always" ours now becomes theirs; and the house that was theirs becomes ours, or at least the bank's. Friends and colleagues who were taken for granted as integral parts of the daily scene continue to live — thank God! — but now in a separate and ever-receding orbit from our own. Still the family remains, as do our personalities, quirks, and styles. How different really are we? Perhaps in a year we will let you know.

Ted Peters, new colleague in Berkeley, points out that in 1983 we live in post-modern times. The modern world was characterized by science and a this-worldly secularity; post-modern thinking stresses integration and a renewed sense of the whole, even religion. Yet these religious tendencies fall under an umbrella we can name perennial gnosticism. Note the marks of this new consciousness: limitless human potential, reincarnation, an innate divine spark, cosmic oneness, Jesus as the one who developed his potential to the highest level. This real world needs real critique because we distinguish between creator and cosmos, because we believe that the essence of all things is not determined until God's eschatological future, because we confess the sin of failing to trust in a gracious God and an open future. The forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ promises the final unity of all things in the consummate unity of God.

How real is the letter edited by **Charles E. White** (a.k.a. Karl Weiss)? The voice is the voice of Martin Luther, but the hands are the hands of Charles White! This pseudo Martin speaks to a real issue — the presense among us of those who see themselves as the elite of the faith, too good for the real company of forgiven sinners. Any subjective surety in the faith invariably leads to spiritual pride and an exclusive spirit. The doctrine of justification sees us — totally and simultaneously — as saints and sinners. No one has the right to think of themselves as members of a higher category of Christians. And even if there were to be such elite, their vocation would be to meet with and support the weak.

Intimacy, **Paul Bauermeister** reminds us, is the highest expression of unity, and the quest for unity is *the* function of marriage. He outlines seven arenas in which intimacy-seeking takes place in marriage as we are roommates, playmates, friends, lovers, partners, priests, and husbands-wives. These arenas also form a good grid for taking stock and for changing, fixing, and strengthening existing or forthcoming marriages. The grand reality behind all the phenomena of our marriages is that we might come to know God better and build a better unity with him.

The ravages of war include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. Nearly 800,000 Vietnam vets suffer from this affliction, which was caused or exacerbated by the endless leavings and arrivals, battlefield incongruities, and the alienation between the soldier and the folks back home who rejected the war as evil and mistaken. **Mel Jacob** calls the church to minister to people with this disorder by helping them to face the facts and by reintegrating them into the community. The church can be a bridge to healing and greater wholeness. The Gospel does affirm persons adjusting from trauma, and we ministers — lay and ordained — manifest this affirmation and make it real.

We ministers are apt to teach in both senses of the word apt: we are skilled and trained; and it is very likely to be part of the daily pastoral reality. **Jean Bozeman,** new colleague in Chicago, re-views teaching through the lens of Mark's gospel. Jesus was the master teacher and took every opportunity to fulfill this calling. His disciples, then and now, are also called to "teach" that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom at hand. She challenges the church to pick up the privilege and responsibility of teaching, to select and train its teachers to relate to the (you guessed it) real world, and to be agents in the quest for unity, equality, and justice.

Stephen L. Theil helps us say good-bye to M*A*S*H. This glorious sit-com probed the meaning of human suffering in terms of its potential for change and growth. Through personal victories achieved

in relation to others sense was discovered in suffering. It was about friendship, compassion, understanding, growth, and the ability of the human spirit to rise above the circumstances and survive amid the preponderance of evil. Is this M*A*S*H or the church?

By the time you receive this issue our move will be ancient history. (Most of) the pictures will be hung, the boxes long since unpacked. Perhaps we will even know how to grope for the light switch in the dark. We *suspect* that through it all you and we will remain much the same, eager to grow and serve, all-too-prone to compromise and failure. We *know* that through it all our Lord is the same — always forgiving, prodding, calling, holding, promising.

This — in all our years — is most certainly true!

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Post-Modern Religion

Ted Peters

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Critics contend that the scientism and secularism of the last two centuries have broken and fragmented what should be whole: we have separated subjects and objects by abstract thinking, compartmentalized our knowledge through warring specialism, and sundered the bond between humanity and nature. Many voices are calling for a new postmodern consciousness. Rather than disintegration, the postmodernists want integration. In fact a renewed sense of the whole is the heart of the postmodern consciousness.

Theologians of this century have defined their task as making the Gospel relevant and meaningful to the *modern* world characterized by natural science and a this-worldly secularity. But what happens when this world of modernity changes? What happens when the world in which we live becomes less scientific and secular and more religious?

We intend to examine the specifically religious tendencies in post-modern thinking as a kind of "perennial Gnosticism," which teaches eight things: (1) cosmic unity; (2) the higher self; (3) the divine spark; (4) human potential; (5) reincarnation; (6) evolution and transformation; (7) gnosis; and (8) Jesus, sometimes. After describing each of these, we will offer a theological assessment.

Perennial Gnosticism

A trend already begun in the Renaissance continues to the present day and characterizes postmodern thinking as well: opposition to Christian orthodoxy and to the institutionalized church. Historically rebellion against ecclesiastical authority — political and intellectual — marked the advent of the modern world. That the postmodern movement would continue the anti-establishment tradition is probably to be expected. Strangely, the major emerging religious consciousness often denies that it is religious at all, preferring to identify itself as a science or as a personal growth enterprise. Whatever label practitioners give themselves, however, their religious structures can be clearly discerned.

This emerging religious consciousness is by no means limited to a single cult or to any single formal organization. In part or whole one might find it associated with TM, Hare Krishna, est, Lifespring, holistic health, the occult, astrology, Teilhardianism, UFO cults, articles in the *National Enquirer,* and Freemasonry.

This new age religiosity I call 'Perennial Gnosticism.' It is not identical to the Gnosticism of ancient Rome, of course. Nothing could be. I believe the term 'perennial' is helpful because it connotes that many new age teachings in fact are drawn from ancient wisdom although in many cases this is disguised. I settle on the term 'gnosticism' because the basic category for understanding the nature of the human predicament and for solving it is a form of knowledge. It is knowledge understood as experiential awareness or

consciousness. Carl Raschke uses the term 'modern Gnosticism' to refer to this set of perennial beliefs that stand in revolt against modernity.[1] Not everyone in the movement would embrace all eight of the doctrines I shall describe. But after allowing for differences in terminology and nuance in different quarters, we still find considerable consensus in the movement.

1. The Experiential Awareness of Cosmic Unity

What we are calling the Neo-Gnostic sensibility begins with religious wholism. It seeks to foster an immediate or direct knowledge of the whole of reality, an experiential connection with the infinite and the eternal, what Carl Jung calls the experience of 'at-one-ment.'[2]

This cosmic at-one-ment usually takes the form of an ecstatic experience, which may or may not be labeled 'religious' by the persons involved. Marilyn Ferguson quotes a testimony by a wealthy real estate entrepreneur to such an insight:

> It was at Esalen, my first trip there several years ago. I had just had a Rolfing session, and I walked outdoors. Suddenly I was overwhelmed by the beauty of everything I saw. This vivid, transcendent experience tore apart my limited outlook. I had never realized the emotional heights possible. In this half-hour solitary experience I felt unity with all, universal love, connectedness. This smashing time destroyed my old reality permanently.[3]

Reflection upon this experience in the higher religions often leads to the positing of monism, an underlying cosmic oneness that incorporates and unifies the apparent plurality of things existing on the surface of reality. Monism affirms a latent completeness or perfection of all things lying below the surface of the apparent incompleteness or imperfections we see. The multiplicity we perceive is either an illusion — that is, it is unreal — or, if real, its reality is subtly dependent on a principle of mutual complementarity or balance with the uniting whole.

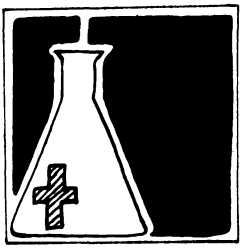
This position has probably been worked out most thoroughly by the eighth century Indian philosopher, Shankara, whose influence in contemporary India is overwhelming. According to Shankara there is an absolute reality, Brahman, and there is no other reality but Brahman. Only that is real which neither changes nor ceases to exist, he says, so Brahman is understood as absolute existence, without qualities or attributes,

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[1] Carl A. Raschke, *The Interruption of Eternity: Modern Gnosticism and the Origins of the New Religious Consciousness* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1980), xi.

[2] Carl Jung, *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, ed., by W. Y. Evans-Wentz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954, 1980) liii.

[3] Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1980), 98.



without distinctions within or outside, beyond the subject-object split and beyond the sense of "mine" and "yours," without change or process. Therefore, the distinction between the human self and the single cosmic reality is a false distinction. My self (my Atman) is identical with Brahman. If I fail in my consciousness to realize this at-one-ment, then I am living in ignorance. Marvin Henry Harper contends that Shankara has the most popular philosophy in India today, and in one form or another it pervades the cults that are making their way west.[4]

2. The Higher Self

The sense of cosmic unity seems to carry with it a notion of a higher or supra-individual self, an inclusive reality within which one's apparent or phenomenal self participates. The real-estate man quoted by Ferguson above says he discovered "multiple dimensions of self; a newly integrated sense of oneself as an individual . . . a linkage with others as if they are oneself . . . and the merger with a Self yet more universal and primary."[5] Personal integration here takes one beyond the ego, beyond the individual or phenomenal self. It connects us to a much larger self, which Ferguson describes as an invisible continent on which we all make our home. We live in a friendly universe, not one jostled from pillar to post by destructive forces. And this cosmic friendliness expresses itself in our lives through the higher self, through the god within.[6] Here as elsewhere in new age thinking we find a partnership between modern western and ancient Asian thought.

The doctrine of the higher self usually begins by acknowledging that life here on earth is darkness, a sleepy haze. We bumble through life in a sort of hypnotic sleep, not clear on what forces are governing the course of personal events. We feel that our life is a lonely combination of inconsistent decisions, random events, accidental happenings. At times things may appear to be meaningful, but overall there is no visible purpose or unity to life.

[4] Marvin Henry Harper, *Gurus, Swamis, and Avatars* (San Francisco: Harper, 1976) 10. One might at this point protest my use of the term 'perennial gnosticism' used to describe new age thinking on the grounds that ancient gnosticism has a reputation for being dualistic. In one sense this is correct, making new age thinkers a bit closer to someone such as Plotinus, for whom the phenomenal world is finally an emanation from the single source of being. However, there is a sense in which one could say that all mystical monisms are simultaneously dualistic in that they divide sharply between the truth of the whole and the illusion of multiplicity among the parts. The term 'gnostic' is chosen here because it is a general term communicating that salvation is gained via a form of transcendental yet personal knowledge.

[5] Ferguson, *Aquarian Conspiricy,* 98-99.

[6] Richard B. Miles, "What is Holistic Health?" in *Holistic Health Review* (Fall 1977) 10; cf. Brooks Alexander in "Holistic Health from the Inside," *SCP Journal* (August 1978) 9.

If we could penetrate the haze to apprehend the light of truth, we would realize that there is a hidden higher and eternal self directing us. Our life happenings are not simply a series of accidents or random events. There is purpose, direction, and influence from a source of which we are at best only dimly aware. Holistic health advocates describe the higher self as 'the healer inside us.' Occasionally the higher self will break through to the mundane level as a moment of inspiration. Harman quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The Oversoul," wherein Emerson writes, "When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love."[7]

It is our task as human beings to become aware of this metaphysical unifying reality that lies within us. The ancient imperative of Socrates, "know thyself!", is the starting point of post-modern gnostic consciousness. Those who have joined the "Aquarian conspiracy" — who are breathing now the spirit of the new age coming — believe they are in touch with their higher self and are vigorously pursuing deeper awareness of it.

3. The Divine Spark

According to the anthropology of ancient Gnosticism, the human being consists of three dimensions: body, soul, and spirit. The body represents the prison of darkness. The soul has seven built-in passions which correspond to the seven planes or spheres of reality that separate our mundane world from the transcendent realm of divine light and pure reality. The spirit represents the divine spark, a tiny piece of the eternal light smothered under layers of darkness and emotion. Restrained by the life of the flesh, the spirit within us is asleep, unconscious, ignorant of its true identity.

True knowledge consists in recognizing the divine within the human being. To know oneself at the deepest level, then, is simultaneously to know God. An ancient gnostic teacher, Monoimus, puts it this way:

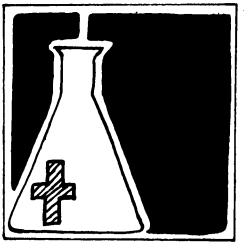
> Abandon the search for God and the creation and other matters of a similar sort. Look for him by taking yourself as the starting point. Learn who it is within you who makes everything his own and says, "My God, my mind, my thought, my soul, my body." . . . If you carefully investigate these matters you will find him in yourself."[8]

Wholeness is being sought in Gnosticism ancient and modern through a turn inward. If God is to be found, then it is said that he will be found on the inside. It appears that the divine spark doctrine is making a comeback.

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[7] Harman, *An Incomplete Guide to the Future*, p. 103.

[8] Quoted by Hippolytus and cited in Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1981) xix.



4. Potentiality

We are being told by some new age voices that human potential is limitless. All knowledge and power is ultimately accessible to the mind looking within itself, and all limitations are ultimately self-chosen. There are immense untapped resources lying within the dormant 90% of the brain. What we need is a technique for tapping those resources, and, once tapped, we will find we have powers to engage in activities such as esp, precognition, psychokinesis, telepathic communication, and astral travel.

The human potential movement, for example, teaches (1) that each of us has a great potential lying within us; (2) that this potential can be awakened through education and experimentation; (3) that the individual can change his or her situation dramatically, i.e., actual self-transformation is possible; (4) that self-realization and self-fulfillment are the proper ends of life.

Werner Erhard of est says that the self is the ground of all that is — in fact the self is all there is — that's it! To speak of the divine is to speak of one's self. A Theta seminar creedal statement reads: "The thinker in all of us is the creator of our universe and manifests whatever it believes to be true. Within the dominion of our minds we are surely God, for we can control what we think, and what we conceive to be true becomes the truth."[9]

5. Reincarnation

Reincarnation or metemphychosis, the doctrine that souls migrate from one body into another through death and rebirth, probably originated in ancient India. Repudiated in the west first by the Christian church, for whom reincarnation is incompatible with its belief in the resurrection of the body, and then by modern naturalism, for whom reincarnation is mere religious superstition, the doctrine is making a comeback. Each issue of that most widely read periodical, *The National Enquirer,* contains accounts of people discovering their identities in past lives.[10] Reincarnation therapy, whereby a client is helped to go back to a traumatic experience in a previous life, is being practiced within many religious cults as well as in more public new age circles.

The spiritually sterile culture of modernity has sent religious seekers to non-western sources of wisdom. Reincarnation is one of the alleged treasures which they have found. A bit ahead of the crowd and in large part responsible

[9] Cf. William Hulme, "Human Potential in the Lutheran Church," *Dialog,* 16:4 (Fall 1977) p. 264.

[10] Cf. Ian Stevenson, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2nd rev. ed., 1974) and a theological response by Hans Schwarz, *Beyond the Gates of Death* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981), Chap. 4.

for those who have followed, the great Tibetan scholar W. Y. Evans-Wentz has been seeking for a rapproachment between western science and eastern metaphysics. He believes the convergence of these two traditions will produce an atonement, an "at-one-ment", which will result in westerners accepting the notion of reincarnation. He writes enthusiastically in his preface to the first edition of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,*

> Then, when that long-awaited at-one-ment shall have been consummated, there will no longer be doubt, nor fallacious argumentation, nor unwise and unscientific Church-Council anathematizations directed against that paramount doctrine of pre-existence and rebirth, upon which the Bardo Thodol is based. Then, too, not only will Pythagoras and Plato and Plotinus and the Gnostic Christians, and Krishna and the Buddha be vindicated in their advocacy of the doctrine, but, equally, the Hierophants of the Ancient Mysteries of Egypt and Greece and Rome, and the Druids of the Celtic World. And Western man will awaken from that slumber of Ignorance which has been hypnotically induced by a mistaken Orthodoxy. He will greet with wide-open eyes his long unheeded brethren, the Wise Men of the East.[11]

As clearly reflected in the Evans-Wentz quotation, belief in reincarnation represents a modest rebellion against western science. It is modest because many advocates are in fact seeking scientific verification for this otherwise metaphysical belief. It is rebellion because it represents listening to a spiritual voice that speaks to the human soul on an issue about which science has been silent too long.

Evans-Wentz goes on to offer general praise for the mystical insights of Asia and expresses his hope that the coming new age in the west will be propelled by a renaissance of Indian philosophy.[12]

6. Evolution and Transformation

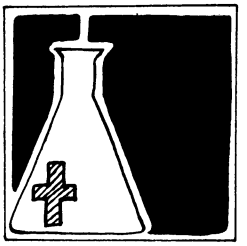
In the new age subculture "evolution" refers to change on an abbreviated time scale. It may refer to psychological change within an individual's lifetime as well as a revolutionary transformation in human consciousness that could occur within a single generation.

To achieve such transformation is the avowed goal of new age theorists. Willis Harman is pressing for a societal metamorphosis based on a fundamental transformation of the human mind which he describes as metanoia, or religious conversion. The new society

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[11] *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* ed. by W. Y. Evans-Wentz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Galaxy Book, 1960), x.

[12] Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation,* 19.



would live out of a new worldview in which the emphasis of science would be to understand rather than to manipulate through technology; in which an ecological ethic would reign; and in which a teleological view of life would organize human efforts around a single central purpose. What he appears to be describing here is a cultural transformation which in principle could occur within the span of a generation. But in Harman's view such a transformation is part and parcel of the cosmic evolutionary process in which we cooperate but which has a telos of its own.[13] The key elements for change are knowledge and choice. We have the power to choose to be something different than we presently are.

Marilyn Ferguson described four stages of personal transformation that lead finally to membership in her "aquarian conspiracy." First, there is the entry point, which consists in a shaking up of the old understanding of the world. It may occur as a spontaneous mystical experience or as a drug induced experience. The second stage is exploration. It is a deliberate step into a new paradigm for understanding the world and may involve participation in such things as Transcendental Meditation, est, Rolfing, etc. No one of these, however, is adequate; their limits are soon recognized. This leads to a third stage, integration, a sort of mopping-up operation in which the individual establishes his or her new identity and no longer seeks validation from some movement or group. This is followed by stage four, conspiracy. 'Conspiracy' literally means 'sharing the spirit.' What happens here is that transformed individuals seek one another out, joining minds and attempting to transform all of society.[14]

Ferguson speculates that God might be thought of as the evolutionary drive of consciousness in the universe. She reports that for aquarian conspirators God is experienced as flow, wholeness, the infinite kaleidoscope of life and death, ultimate cause, the ground of being, the organizing matrix that enlivens matter. God is the flowing silence out of which all sound comes. She quotes Buckminster Fuller, for whom God is to be understood as a verb, as a process.[15]

In ancient Gnosticism the god who fashioned the world is not the ultimate reality; the impersonal supra-temporal One or All is. At this point, however, it appears that western neo-gnostics still take the reality governed by time and space quite seriously. The new gnostics are not the world-denying pessimists that their ancient ancestors were.

Although the ancient gnostics believed in personal advance and development in consciousness, such advance carried with it renunciation of the material and ephemeral world. The attainment of sav-

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[13] Harman, *Incomplete Guide to the Future*, 104; cf. 32-33.

[14] Ferguson, *Aquarian Conspiracy*, pp. 89-83.

[15] Ibid., 383; cf. 49.

ing knowledge (gnosis) for the gnostic meant escape from the physical world of darkness into the intellectual or spiritual world of light. This antipathy toward the physical or natural world does not preoccupy contemporary new age thinkers. "There is no dualism" writes Ferguson, "no separation of mind and body, self and others."[16] Emphasis on personal and social transformation marks a decisive acceptance of temporality and progress on the part of the neo-gnostics. To the extent that integrative consciousness and wholism are pursued, the world of nature is included and even celebrated.

7. Gnosis

Transformation which is the functional equivalent of salvation, is to be gained through knowledge, through gnosis. For the ancient Gnostics this knowledge consisted in secret or esoteric wisdom, an insight into the workings of the world, and the opening of the transcendental gate so that the soul might pass from this ephemeral world of darkness into the eternal realm of light. Gnosis is saving knowledge.[17]

The kind of knowledge involved then is not the kind of objectivist or controlling knowledge characteristic of modern science and technology. It is rather an intensely personal form of knowledge, often dubbed 'new awareness' or 'higher consciousness.' Elaine Pagels explains that the ancient Greek language could distinguish between scientific or reflective knowledge ("He knows mathematics") and knowing through observation or experience ("He knows me"), which is gnosis. Gnosis involves an intuitive process of knowing oneself, and to know oneself is to know human nature in general and to know human destiny.[18] Stated this way, the term gnosis is also descriptive of much of new age thinking. For them the fundamental human problem is understood as ignorance, and the solution must then be some form of personal knowledge.

Literary critic Ihab Hassan uses the term "New Gnosticism' to refer to this personal form of knowledge. He perceives in western culture a growing insistence to apprehend reality immediately, i.e., without mediation by the scientific and critical disciplines. There is a "new sense of the im-mediacy of Mind, of complete gnosis or knowledge."[19]

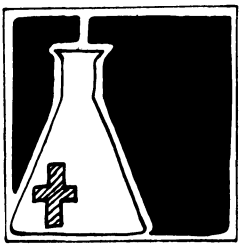
This is illustrated among other places in Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land.* The Martian in this science-fiction tries to *'grok'* his experiences of earth. *Grokking* means complete identification, total understanding, a participatory knowledge which requires a momentary fusion of two beings into a larger shared awareness. The New

[16] Ibid., 372.

[17] cf. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 2nd ed., 1963), p. 35.

[18] Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels,* pp. xviif.

[19] Ihab Hassan, *Paracriticisms* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1975), p. 144



Gnosticism presupposes that critical or scientific thinking is itself a form of ignorance from which we need to be liberated.

By 'direct knowledge' Ferguson means a mystical or quasi-mystical experience with the whole. It is not that the world of appearances which we study objectively and scientifically is wrong. It is rather that if you can penetrate through the system of *things,* you can communicate directly with the whole. "Direct knowledge gets us out of the system. It is the awakening. It reveals the context that generates our lesser reality. The new perspective alters our experience by changing our vision."[20]

With a new mind, a new consciousness, we can transform ourselves. We obtain this new mind by reinterpreting our world through new paradigms. "We live what we know," writes Ferguson. "If we believe the universe and ourselves to be mechanical, we will live mechanically. On the other hand, if we know that we are part of an open universe, and that our minds are a matrix of reality, we will live more creatively and powerfully."[21] If we draw upon the resources already lying deep within us, upon our potentialities, we can create a new vision of how the world should work.

8. Jesus, Sometimes

If and when Jesus appears, his role is that which he played in ancient Gnosticism, the teacher of gnosis. He represents the proto-human, the one who has developed his innate human potential to its fullest actualization. He has fanned his divine spark into a full flame.

In the Aquarian Gospel of Jesus[22] it is reported that in the missing years between Jesus' twelfth birthday and the beginning of his teaching career he went to India. There he studied mystical esoterica at the feet of Hindu gurus. The reason we normally do not associate such Hindu teachings with Jesus is that the established churches have conspired to keep this knowledge from the general public.

Theological Reflections

To raise the question of the whole of reality — as is done in post-modern speculation — is to ask about the divine. In Jewish and Christian tradition all that is real is the product of God's creative work, and this has led to a theological conviction commonly known as 'monotheism.' There is something beyond the being and value of all things. That 'One beyond all the many' Christians call 'God.'

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[20] Ferguson, *Aquarian Conspiracy,* p. 372; cf. pp. 97f, 350.

[21] Ibid., p. 146; cf. pp. 45f.

[22] Levi, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (Marina Del Rey, CA: DeVorss & Co., 1907, 1978); cf. David Spangler, *Towards a Planetary Vision* (The Park, Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Foundation, 1977), Chap. 6.

It is in principle possible to solve the problem of the relationship between the one and the many without recourse to the Christian God. The path taken by perennial Gnosticism is monism. Monism holds that the plurality of things in the phenomenal world is ultimately part of a single reality. The presocratic philosopher Thales held that everything was a form of water.

The problem with monism is that it denies the Christian belief in a radical distinction between God and creation. Our God transcends the world. This means, among other things, that the creature can never become fully like God. God *creates ex nihilo,* out of nothing, and the created realm is entirely dependent upon God as the source and power of its continued existence. We have a part in the universe not by some natural right, but only by the grace of God. The proper creaturely response is to be thankful.[23]

Another problem with monism is that it makes God less than ultimate. The One ultimate reality in religions such as Gnosticism and Buddhism, for example, is supra-divine. God is a creature among others and, as such, belongs to a whole that is greater than the divine. The divine belongs to the realm of the many, not to the One.

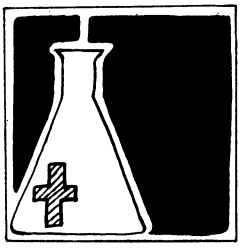
A variant on the above is pantheism, which makes divinity coextensive with the cosmos. This view offers support for the belief that each human being is essentially divine and that the task in life is to actualize the divine potential that lies within each of us.

In Christianity the relationship between God and the world is that of creator to creature. There is no ultimate dualism because the whole creation comes from the divine word. There is no ultimate monism because the creation is sufficiently distinct from God that a genuine relationship can develop. There is no ultimate pantheism because, although God is everywhere present to the creation, the creation does not exhaust God's being. He is still transcendent.

We come to know this God through his revelation in history. The transcendent creator God becomes present because of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Ismael Qulies writes in Rahner's *Sacramentum Mundi,*

> The solution attempted by pantheism leads to atheism, at least according to the Christian viewpoint. For the equation of God and the world means ultimately the reduction of God to the world and the denial of transcendence which goes beyond the world. The Christian notion of God is gained from historical revelation, but pantheism derives its idea of the God-world relationship from an a priori concept of being, and by equating

[23] Cf. John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2nd ed., 1973), p. 8.



God and the world eliminates the notion of God.[24]

Whole, Part, and the Eschaton

Postmodern speculations on perennial Gnosticism have a tendency to dissolve everything into a timeless unity. But we take history seriously, so that what is engaged in temporal passage is in fact real. We also believe in the possibility of a genuinely new reality coming into existence. Hence we deny that the whole of reality presently exists.

In isolated moments of meaningfulness, however, we anticipate the completed whole, the total reality which will finally put all things into their respective place. To see meaning in the present moment is an act of faith; it is an act of trust that the future will confirm the meaning we presently perceive and experience.

Wolfhart Pannenberg contends that the essence of all things will not be determined until the eschatological future. The meaning we find in the present moment is dependent upon an implicit faith that includes a fore-conception of what is to come.

> Only from such a fore-conception of a final future, and thus of the still unfinished wholeness of reality, is it possible to assign to an individual event or being — be it present or past — its definitive meaning by saying what it is. Thus, when someone names a thing and says, "This is a rose," or "This is a dog," he always does so from the standpoint of an implicit foreconception of the final future, and of the totality of reality that will first be constituted by the final future.[25]

To look toward this defining whole of reality is to look toward God. All events are moving ahead to meet a common future, a common future that is the reality of God. We must live by faith and by reason until the process is complete, at which time faith and reason will themselves be united. In the meantime, the idea of God is a paradigm for understanding and a hermeneutical principle for determining provisionally the meaning of the course of events.

Sin and Wholism

The anticipated eschatological unity of all things recognizes another factor totally overlooked by new age thinkers: sin. We are seeking wholism in large part because of our impatience with the division, fragmentation, loneliness, competition, and violence caused by the

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[24] *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi,* ed. by Karl Rahner (New York: Seabury, 1975), p. 1158.

[25] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* (2 Vols.: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970-71), II, 62; cf. I, 156f, 229f. Jürgen Moltmann takes the same position in developing the notion of transcendence in terms of the future. *The Future of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), Chap. 1.

modern way of life. What is assumed in the postmodern critique of modernity is that all these problems are caused by a form of ignorance, but the postmodern critique ignores a crucial key ingredient in this discussion, namely, sin.

The essence of sin is our refusal to place our trust in a gracious God and an open future. By nature we want to re-order the relationship of dependence. We want to re-orient everything so as to hide the gifted essence of who we are. We try to reestablish our relationship to the world on our own terms, that establish the human self as an independent source, as the creator.

We deny the truth by taking unto ourselves the powers of creativity and by creating history to suit our own designs, thereby shutting ourselves off from the open future. To trust God means that we face history squarely with all its ambiguity and its uncertainty. That terrifies us. When one chooses to center history not in the divine future but in the human present, the future becomes an extension of present potential. This denies to history the quality of advent, of newness. In modern technology the new we celebrate is the new gadgets produced by engineers, who calculate and remake the world according to their own designs.

Science and technology help to provide a hospitable mental framework for a consistent denial of divine grace. These modern forms of rational thought may represent the flowering of seeds sown by the ancient astrologers. In the fourth century Augustine reports with amazement the ability of ancient stargazers to predict eclipses. What a scientific achievement! Yet he proceeds immediately to note how the star calculators undergo an eclipse of the mind by writing God out of the picture. "So early can they foresee a coming eclipse of the sun, but their own present eclipse they do not see, for they do not seek with a devout mind . . . (they do not know) your Word, by which you made the things they number off, and themselves who number, and the sense by which they discern what they number, and the intellect by which they number." (Confessions, Book V, Chapter 3)

Sin is the production of darkness through willful division and fragmentation. It is choosing one realm of knowledge as absolute and consigning all other realms of knowing to untruth. The overcoming of ignorance — including the criticism of modernity by perennial gnostics — is laudable, to be sure; but it does not guarantee that people will choose to live synergistically instead of independently. Much of the fragmentation we experience is due not to Descartes' subject-object split but to Adam's God-human split. No amount of postmodern consciousness raising can bridge the chasm this split has caused. Only forgiveness can. The forgiveness accomplished in the atoning work of Jesus Christ is a "proleptogram," a message announcing the final unity of all things in the consummate future of God.

"Concerning Earnest Christians:" A Newly Discovered Letter of Martin Luther

Edited and Translated by Charles E. White

37 Harding Ave., Belmont, Massachusetts 02178

Introduction

The MS of this letter consisted of 20 sheets of parchment, each measuring 8 X 12 cm. It was dated April 1, 1529 and was addressed to an otherwise unknown Karl Weiss, who evidently had been one of Luther's students, and then was the priest at Coburg. The hand was exceedingly small, but it closely resembled the hand in the undisputedly genuine Luther autographs. The letter was found in a volume of Luther's writings acquired by the editor in September of 1982. Its transmission history is unknown, and probably unknowable, since the previous owner was a down-on-his-luck professor of church history who needed some quick cash for unknown purposes.

Suspecting fraud, the editor subjected the MS to paleograpic analysis as well as to carbon-14 dating. Surprisingly enough, each dating method independently established that the document was penned on April 14, 1529 at 9 A.M. This thirteen day discrepancy is well within the margin of error for both manners of dating, which is 500 years. These analyses, along with echoes and adumbrations of Luther's other writings present in it, show that the work is undoubtedly genuine. Unfortunately, the original autograph no longer exists. It was eaten by the church mice which inhabit the editor's home.

The editor will confine his comments in this section to pointing out the similarities between this letter and other passages in Luther's works. A commentary will follow the document and assess its importance and influence.

The abbreviations used in the citations are:

D *Martin Luther,* John Dillenberger, editor (Garden City, New York, 1961).

K *Anabaptism in Outline,* Walter Klassen, editor (Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1981).

LCC *Luther: Lectures on Romans,* Wilhelm Pauck, editor, Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 15 (Philadelphia, 1961).

LW *Luther's Works,* American edition (Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1955-).

P *What Luther Says,* Ewald M. Plass, editor (St. Louis, 1959).

PE *Works of Martin Luther,* Philadelphia edition (Philadelphia, 1915-1943).

T *Selected Writings of Martin Luther,* Theodore G. Tappert, editor (Philadelphia, 1967).

WA *D. Martin Luthers Werke,* Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar, 1883 -).

Text

Martin Luther, to the worthy and beloved pastor in Coburg, Karl Weiss, my dear friend in Christ:

Grace and peace to you in Christ our Lord. How good it is to hear from my students, especially those who preach

God's free grace. Though I am no longer your professor, still I am your brother, and so I will give you my fraternal advice. I am glad you liked my German Mass, and are using it in your church. You must be careful, however, not just to ape what we do here in Wittenberg, or to let the people think that this service has some special merit just because I thought it up. We can not let the novelty of the service direct the people's attention to me, to you, or to any other person. The service must point not to persons, or even to itself, but to the Word of God. Some people could get so engrossed in the new order of service as to regard it as inherently useful and necessary for salvation. This would be the work of the Devil![1] Better that you and I were drowned in the Main (as the Pope no doubt prays) than to lead even one little one astray. (Matthew 18[:6])

You say in your letter that you have followed my suggestion and have established a group meeting for those who want to be Christians in earnest. Then you ask me to follow through on my promise to write an order of service for such a group.[2] Oh that I had kept my big mouth shut! As if I did not have enough work to do, now I go and offer to write services for groups I have never seen. I am hoist on my own petard.[3] But overwork is no excuse not to keep a promise. However, there are other reasons for me not to keep my promise. The main one is that I have changed my mind. Ha! How do you like that! The great doctor, the oracle of all Germany, thinks he was wrong. I can just hear the asses bray when they hear that. But, unlike the papal asses, this donkey turns aside when he sees the angel of the Lord blocking the path. They plod right on to their own destruction.[4]

I have changed my mind. I am sitting down right in the middle of the road. All the blows of your letters cannot induce me to take another step in that direction.

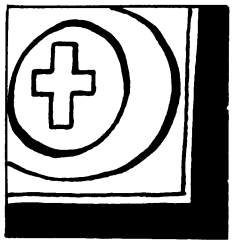
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[1] Note the similarity to Luther's comments in the *German Mass,* (T 3:398).

[2] In his Preface to the *German Mass* Luther had described three different kinds of services. The first was the Latin mass, which, besides promoting the worship of God, would teach youth and missionaries to speak Latin. The second was the German mass, arranged for unlearned lay folk. The third kind was to be "a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for all sorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works. . . . As yet I neither can nor desire to begin such a congregation or assembly or to make rules for it. For I have not yet the people or persons for it, nor do I see many who want it. But if I should be requested to do it and could not refuse with good conscience, I should gladly do my part and help as best I can." (*The German Mass,* T 3:400).

[3] Cf. Wander (ed.), *Deutsches Sprichworter Lexikon,* II, "Der Forsch," No. 6.

[4] Numbers 22. Luther had previously equated himself with Balaam's ass in his *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles.* See LW 32:9-10.



And now I pray that the Lord will open my mouth to tell you the danger that lies in the path I was taking.

The first danger is that people will fool themselves about who is an earnest Christian. So what if people profess themselves Christians in hand and mouth? Those who do are guilty of great presumption. How can they ever know what is in the heart? How and when can they know for certain? Have they now become gods so they can discern the hearts of men and know whether or not they believe?[5] Only God can see the heart. (1 Sam. 16(:7]) But you may say, "We judge no man. If a man confesses such an earnest faith, we accept him." Worse and worse! No one can discern his own heart.[6] You open the door both to hypocrisy and to despair. The fool lets both the hounds and the stag into his house![7] Some, who have never heard the voice of God, will think they are fine Christians because they have never felt guilty in all their lives. These hypocrites will fool you and maybe even themselves. Others, whose hearts God has made sensitive, are crushed by the law of God, and fear that they have no hope of pardon. For it happens, indeed it is so in this matter of faith, that often he who claims to believe does not at all believe; and on the other hand, he who does not think he believes, but is in despair, has the greatest faith. One must believe to be saved, but whether any one individual believes or not, no one can tell. We neither should nor can know it.[8]

There is a second danger, even greater than the first. This is the danger that such self-styled "earnest Christians" will start to think of themselves as the one, pure church. Here we see the Donatists coming back to life again. If we allow small groups of Christians to separate from the rest, to read the Word, to baptize, and to receive the sacrament, we will have established a new church. For the external marks by which one can perceive where the church is on earth are baptism, the sacrament, and the gospel.[9] All the elements would be there in these small groups and, as sure as Satan seeks to destroy our souls, some Pharisaicial spirit will conclude that his little group is the church, and that everyone outside is damned. Indeed, it has already happened, if I am to believe the rumors I hear. Certain false brethren rebaptize themselves and then sneak away from God's church to meet with other misled fools in various holes and corners. They claim that they are the only true Christians, and teach that they must separate from all iniquity. By "iniquity" they mean

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[5] Note the similarity to *Concerning Rebaptism* (LW 40:239).

[6] See *Ibid.*, p. 250.

[7] Cf. Wander (ed.), *Deutsches Sprichworter Lexikon*, II, "Der Hirsch," No. 35. The idea is that one foolish deed can have two opposite, yet equally disastrous, consequences.

[8] Note the similarity to *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[9] Note the similarity to *The Papacy in Rome*, (T 1:221).

Christendom.[10]

Such an argument is damned nonsense. Christ himself came upon the errors of the scribes and Pharisees among the Jewish people, but he did not on that account reject everything they had and thought. (Matthew 23[:3]) Nor did he separate himself from them. Instead he went to their Temple and taught in their synagogues. Anyway, if they were to separate from even the papacy, not to mention the reformed churches here in Germany and Switzerland, then they would have to separate themselves from everything that is Christian and good, for it came to them from the papal church. For instance we confess that in the papal church there are the true holy Scriptures, true baptism, the true sacrament of the altar, the true keys to the forgiveness of sins, the true office of the ministry, the true catechism in the form of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the articles of the Creed.[11] They themselves do not reject all of these, as they must if they really want to separate from all iniquity.

Not only would they have to separate from everything that came from what they call the iniquitous church, they who thought themselves pure would have to fight against God's Word. They who are so keen to cry, "The Word! The Word!" let them see how they disobey it. St. Paul himself says in Thessalonians [2 Thessalonians 2:4] "The Anti-Christ takes his seat in the Temple of God." If now the pope is (and I cannot believe otherwise) the veritable Antichrist, he will not sit or reign in the Devil's stall, but in the temple of God. Therefore, wherever the Antichrist is, there is the one true church! God's Word! God's Word! He is the one who says it, not I.[12]

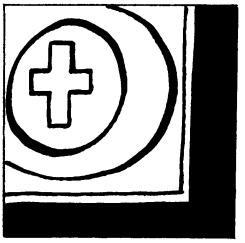
Here is another reason it is wrong to separate from the church to set up a pure group of earnest Christians: it has never been done before. If we are going to do away with customs that are traditional, then it is necessary to prove convincingly that these are contrary to the Word of God. We have indeed overthrown monasteries, mass-priests, and clerical celibacy, but only by showing the clear and certain scriptural arguments against them. Had we not done this, we should truly have let them stand as they previously existed.[13] Now the only ones who have tried to set up a so-called "pure church" have been the heretics. The Donatists and the Catheri, whose very

[10] The Anabaptists showed that they thought they were the true church by refusing to recognize Rome's baptism. The implicit rejection of the Roman and Zwinglian churches was made explicit in Michael Sattler's Scheitheim Confession of 1527. Whether Luther had read the Confession or not we do not know, but it is certain that he had heard of the Anabaptist's beliefs. Cf. **LW** 13:89-90.

[11] Note the similarity to *Concerning Rebaptism*, (**LW** 40:231-232).

[12] See *Ibid.*, pp. 232 and 257 for other instances of this astonishing argument.

[13] Note the similarity to *Ibid.*, p. 241.



name means heretic, are the only ones.[14] No godly person ever left the church or told others to leave because it was not pure enough.

When St. Paul faced the problem of an impure church (1 Corinthians), he rebuked the wrong doers, and even put one of them out. That is the way to have a pure church. But now people are trying to clean the church in a new way. They leave it. I must admit that their going does purify the church, but not in the way they think! (1 John 2[:9]) Can you imagine Paul treating the church at Corinth so? These Cathari act as if he had written: "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. So you who have not been involved withdraw and quit meeting with these sinners. Choose someone from among yourselves to replace Stephanas and his household as your leaders, because Stephanas has wrongly tolerated the man who took his father's wife." But did Paul write that? No! Instead he exhorted them to humility and unity. He told them to exercise the keys and to put the man out, and then to exercise the key of forgiveness and to let him back in. In it all, he urged them to submit to their appointed leaders.[15]

I could go on and give you many other reasons why it is wrong to withdraw from God's church and to try to do his job better by recreating it. I could argue that heresy does not long endure, that God has produced many saints through his church, and that, if these purifiers are right, the Creed, which says, "I believe in one holy Christian church," is wrong. Or at least it has been over the last thousand years until our friends arrived on the scene.[16] But I must not let my argument run away with me. I am beginning to sound as if I feared that you yourself were thinking of forming a new church, when all you have done is follow my advice by establishing a separate group for earnest Christians. But now that I have had some time to think about it, I see how easily one could lead to the other.

I see one further danger in the way of establishing these bands of earnest Christians. Even if we were to figure out some way to make sure that no hypocrite was included and no true Christian excluded, and even if we were able to keep the group from breaking away from the real church, we would still have this problem. This is the worst problem of all: spiritual pride. Satan would like nothing better than to have us do his job for him. He could cut our throats with Ockham's razor! Why scare us with an elephant

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[14] Luther is making a play on words here. *Cather* originally meant "cleansed," but *Cathar* pronounced in High German comes out *Ketzer,* Luther's word for heretic. See Verduin, p. 97.

[15] Luther had previously used this form of argument from a mock-Scripture in the Admonition to Peace (T 3:337).

[16] Luther had made all these arguments against rebaptism. See *Concerning Rebaptism* (LW 40:255-257).

when a mouse will do?[17] He would be able to get us to isolate all the strongest Christians, and keep them from the weak. Then the strong would grow proud, the weak would give up, and all would go to hell in a handbasket.

If we encourage people to think of themselves as earnest Christians, and somehow different from those Christians who are not earnest, we will be encouraging them to the most damnable kind of spiritual pride. We would be teaching them to judge and condemn their neighbors. We would be making them into Pharisees. These Pharisees have one occupation: it is to revile, judge, defame, accuse, and despise others. They have no compassion on others, but they are filled with indignation against them. They alone are clean. Isaiah has them in mind when he says, "That say: Depart from me, come not near me, because you are unclean: these shall be smoke in my anger, a fire burning all the day" (Isaiah 65:5). Such a fellow was also that Pharisee in the Gospel (Luke 18:10ff.) who with so much vanity took delight in his own righteousness and could only revile, accuse, and condemn the publicans and all other men.[18]

Not only would we run the risk of making people into Pharisees, but we would also be denying the unity of the Body of Christ. Christ makes us righteous not so that we can strut our personal holiness, but so that we can serve our neighbor. He clothes us with his alien righteousness, and then produces our own proper righteousness in us. This second kind of righteousness does not say, "How holy I am!" Rather it hates itself and loves its neighbor; it does not seek its own good, but that of another, and in this its whole way of living consists. For in that it hates itself and does not seek after its own, it crucifies the flesh. Because it seeks the good of another, it works love.[19]

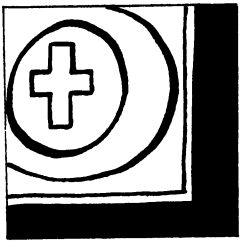
You see, in dying for us Christ fulfilled the whole law [Romans 8:4]. So we need no works of the law for our own righteousness and salvation. Instead, we can turn our every effort and all our energy (which the papists vainly apply toward self-salvation) to the service of our neighbor. The earnest Christian should not devote himself to straightening his halo with a group of like-minded saints. Rather he will be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, con-

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[17] Ockham's razor refers to the idea which William of Ockham (ca. 1290-1349) implied, but never stated, "Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity." The sense of the razor is to cut away useless or gratuitous ideas and to accept the simplest hypothesis which can explain the data. Luther means that Weiss should not cut down impediments for the Devil, that he should not give the Devil an easy way to do a hard job.

[18] Note the similarity to what Luther had said on this topic in his *Lectures on Romans* (LCC 405).

[19] Here Luther is echoing what he said in a 1519 sermon *Two Kinds of Righteousness.* See D 89.



sidering nothing except the need and advantage of his neighbor. This is a true Christian life. Here faith is truly active through love [Galatians 5:6], that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith.[20]

If he is really an earnest Christian, he should think, "Although I am an unworthy and condemned man, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy, so that from now on I need nothing except faith which believes that this is true. Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable riches? I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ."[21]

Thus if we are to be true Christians we will not withdraw from our weaker brother to form little groups. No, we will associate with him all the more! We will share our goods to care for his body, and we will share our time as we instruct, console, and intercede for him.[22] Beyond this we cannot allow our righteousness to serve the sinner. This is the greatest thing of all, that the highest does not withdraw itself from the sinner but rather appears to be just as poor as the greatest sinner.[23]

Indeed, if you really are an earnest Christian, this is what you must do: the virgin must put her wreath [the symbol of virginity] upon a prostitute; a virtuous wife must give her veil to an adulteress, and we must let everything we have become a covering for the sinners. For every man will have his own sheep and every woman will have her own coin [Luke 15:3-10]. All of our gifts however must become the property of someone else.[24]

The final way in which meeting in small groups of earnest Christians might engender spiritual pride is that it could give people a false idea of their true nature. The papists follow Augustine and teach that the Christian is partly righteous and partly sinful.[25] If this is true, then groups for earnest Christians make sense. In fact, they have such groups right now. That is what all the

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[20] Luther had earlier expressed these same ideas in *The Freedom of a Christian*. See T 2:41.

[21] Note the similarity to *Ibid*. See T 2:43.

[22] See WA 14:499. Cited in Althaus, p. 309.

[23] WA 10 iii:238. Quoted in Althaus, p. 309.

[24] See *Ibid*.

[25] I have been unable to locate this reference in Augustine, but last night Karlstadt appeared to me in a dream and told me the Holy Ghost said it was so.

orders are. These orders are for those who would be perfect [Matthew 19:21]. The monastery is the perfect place to follow the counsels of perfection.[26] If the papists are right, and Christians are partly righteous and partly sinful, then it ought to be possible to compare people to figure out how relatively righteous each one is. If I am half righteous, and you are only one-third righteous, then I am ahead of you on God's sanctification scale. Thus a pastor could take the eight or ten most righteous people and form them into a little holy club. Or, if he did not want to be exclusive, he could say that anyone who attains two-thirds righteousness could be in the group. (How the papists would measure things I do not know, but that is their problem, not mine!)

Do you see how silly the whole thing is? This righteousness calculus all breaks down when we come to the Bible. For there it says that we are both righteous and sinful at the same time. We are not one-third righteous and two-thirds sinful. No, we are three-thirds righteous and three-thirds sinful.[27] Yet by encouraging people to wonder whether they are earnest Christians or not we encourage just this kind of proud, papist thinking.

And even if our people were not misled into thinking they could grow from one-tenth righteous to nine-tenths righteous, still all comparison among Christians breaks down. How can you tell who is the most righteous in your parish if everyone is totally righteous? How can you set a certain standard for being in the group of earnest Christians if everyone is totally sinful?

Thus there is no way for you to form your group of earnest Christians. If you want to compare people and select only the best, you find that they all have the perfect righteousness of Christ. If you want to establish some absolute scale of attainment as a prerequisite for belonging, you find that they are all utterly corrupt. Either way, you can have no select group.

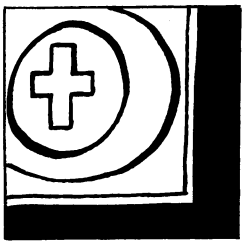
So now, brother Karl, have I brayed enough? Do you see why I have changed my mind? For all these reasons I can not write you an order of service for your little group with a good conscience. You will note that in my little book I said I would write such an order only if I could do it with a good conscience. And I cannot. Therefore I am not breaking my promise. (Oh, I should have been a canon lawyer. How clever I am at turning white to black and black to white!)

Finally, I realize that you now have a problem on your hands. You have that little group of super-saints who is expecting a special favor from me. Here is what you must do. Tell them you have made a

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[26] The counsels of perfection usually refers to Matthew 19:21. The idea is that while all Christians are required to attain certain moral standards, some may choose the option of attaining perfection. They will embrace poverty, chastity, and obedience.

[27] Luther had developed this idea in his *Lectures on Romans*. See LCC 127.



mistake by following an old ass. Then tell them the reasons why you have changed your mind. If they see the light and agree, then your problem is solved. You might even let them go on meeting with you, without the sacraments however, on the condition that the purpose of the meeting is to assist you in caring for the parish. But if they resist your wisdom, and proudly insist upon their right to special treatment, then your problem is also solved. They have hard hearts which will not receive the Word or submit to the admonition of an elder. That is a sure sign of unbelief. Tell them that you will give in to them and have a group of super-saints. But then tell them that none of them can come because their hearts are hard. That should shut their mouths!

I will pray for you and your flock. God grant that they really are earnest Christians. Amen.

1 April 1529

Commentary

The chief value of this letter is to show why Luther never followed through on his suggestion about earnest Christians made in the *German Mass*. Scholars such as Verduin and Littel had speculated that the change came as a result of the excesses of the Anabaptists, but neither could cite any documentary evidence for his claims.[28] Verduin, along with Avis, notes that in 1526 Luther had given some thought to church discipline, but when given the chance to implement his ideas in Hesse he backed down.[29]

After that date the specific idea of little groups for earnest Christians disappears, and the larger idea of church discipline rarely occurs. With the discovery of this letter the reasons for the change in Luther become clear. There are two main factors. First is the thinking Luther did about Anabaptism in response to the letter of the two Catholic pastors.[30] Many of his arguments against Anabaptism also work against those who would set up groups of earnest Christians. The second factor is Luther's doctrine of justification by faith. This doctrine makes nonsense of the idea that some Christians have the right to consider themselves in a higher category than their fellow believers. And even if they had that right, justification by faith obligates them not to meet by themselves for their own edification, but to give their lives away in service to their weaker brothers.

So now we may confidently see the assured results of this study. As late as 1526 there were two elements contending in Luther's mind when he thought about church discipline. One was the

[28] See Verduin, pp. 126-130, and Littell, pp. 1-11.

[29] Both note his comments in the *German Mass*. See Verduin, *Ibid.*, and Avis, pp. 22-23.

[30] *Concerning Rebaptism* (**LW** 40:229-262).

desire for a pure church. This desire was expressed in his plan for small groups of earnest christians meeting as he outlined in the *German Mass* and the conversation with Schwenkfeld. The other was his fear that discipline would not be tolerated, and his disappointment that no one seemed to want to form the holy clubs which he envisioned. This element was also present in the *German Mass* and the conversation, as well as in the letter to Philip. When he had to think about Anabaptism in 1528, it prepared him to see church discipline in a different light. When he saw that Anabaptism rested on the subjective surety of belief, he could more easily see that the gathering of earnest Christians also depended on such an inward certainty. He was consistent with his earlier theology to reject Anabaptism, and he followed that consistency to disallow Christian elitism.

Faced with the questions about Anabaptism, the questions of discipline also crystalized in his mind. And, just as one needs a string in the jar to make rock candy, so the core of Luther's doctrine, justification by faith, formed the center for the solidification of his rejection of the separation of earnest Christians.

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Anatomy of Intimacy: Marriage for Christians

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Next to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the gift the western world needs most from the church is its understanding of marriage. For centuries the western world has bombarded itself with ideas about marriage and the relationship between the sexes that are inadequate, inaccurate and often misleading. During these same centuries the church has directed its considerable power toward the repressive control of sexual impulses and toward the external, legalistic enforcement of the marriage contract. The world has heard the church saying "No" loudly, clearly and frequently. It has not heard much else from the church.

The world has now heard from Dr. Freud, Dr. Kinsey, Dr. Masters and Dr. Johnson, and many other doctors. It has also heard from Hugh Hefner and a host of his genre. The time has come for the world to hear more clearly from the church which, wonder of wonders, really does have something to say besides "No."

Unity

Let us begin at the beginning with God and the Book of Genesis. Remember the first time you read "Let us make man in our image" and noticed with delight the plural pronouns "us" and "our" and thought you had managed to listen in on a conversation between the members of the Trinity? Examine those same plurals once more and this time notice something about God. God seeks unity. God seeks unity both within himself and with human beings.

Recall Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17 where he prays again and again for unity between people and God, and places himself as the mediator and actualizer of that unity. Reflect on the repeated Old Testament prophetic analogy of Israel as the (often adulterous) wife of Yahweh. St. Paul extended that analogy a bit further with his discussion of the church as the Bride of Christ. God seeks unity with people.

Since we are made "in God's image," we too seek unity. We seek unity with other people, and never stop seeking unity. We even seek unity with God. We are unity seekers for as long as we live. Our search for unity with others moves us to risk and sometimes lose important things, to endure every kind of suffering. Our successes at achieving unity lift us to the heights; our failures plunge us to the depths. Unity seeking is central to our being, a basic integral part of each of us, just as it is a basic integral part of God.

Intimacy

The word unity has been used so far because it is a word that does not carry much extra meaning for most people. The title of this article uses the word intimacy, a word that is badly contaminated. For many people its only referent is sexual and usually then in the narrow, genital meaning of sexual. In common

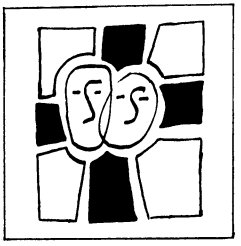
usage, for a man and a woman to be intimate means they have sexual intercourse. The word intimacy needs to be rescued from this narrow connotation and restored to its wider meaning, which is very close to the meaning of the word unity. We seek intimacy with other people because we are basically unity seekers. In fact, when we seek unity and get only sexual intimacy we have been shortchanged!

If that last sentence made sense, you probably know already what is coming next. People get married for all kinds of reasons, everything from "love" to licit sex, to legitimate child birth, to security, to happiness, to companionship, to getting the farm work done. The highest reason for marriage is the fullest seeking of intimacy or unity that one will ever engage in with another person. If we remember our finite nature, that we are confined by rigid boundaries of time and space and capacity, the old churchly ideas of permanence and exclusivity in marriage suddenly make sense. Permanence and exclusivity are part of the marriage covenant for Christians because if we intend to make the most of our unity with our partner, we do not have time or capacity to do it with someone else. To seek unity with just one person requires a lifetime of effort, no less.

The high intimacy sought in marriage is not to be mistaken for fusion. Two may become "one flesh" by means of sexual union or by means of offspring, or by achieving a psychological oneness, but even with the highest degree of intimacy they are still two separate persons, each capable of separate and independent action and existence. Their unity is an act of will, something they choose to do with each other. For an elaboration of this concept of the unity of separate persons, read the Athanasian Creed (*LBW* p. 54) and notice how often it repeats, "one, not three: three, not one" in its effort to define the unity and separateness of the Trinity.

There are marriages where a degree of fusion has occurred between the spouses. To the extent that this has happened, they are no longer capable of independent personal action. In such a pair one spouse often moves from a dependent relationship with a nurturant, over-involved parent to a similarly dependent relationship with a nurturant, over-involved spouse. Even though such marriages may be stable, close and enduring, they do not represent the ideal of unity because of the personal incompleteness and diminished growth potential of one or both of the pair.

We are unity seekers, as God is, and because God created us that way. Since this is our nature we seek the highest expression of that unity in the intimacy of marriage. The other functions of marriage are important: providing of a secure base, a "safe harbor" for the pair, providing a stable unit for the lengthy human process of reproduction and parenting, providing stable building blocks for the larger human society. But



the function which reaches across them all is the seeking of the highest, most extravagant, most penetrating, most enduring unity possible.

The Arenas of Marriage

There are seven discernible arenas in which intimacy-seeking takes place in marriage:

Roommates
Playmates
Friends
Lovers
Partners
Priests
Husband/Wife

These modes are arenas in which intimacy is developed and experienced. Think of the first six, roommates to priests, as the six spokes of an old-fashioned wooden wagon wheel. If one spoke is weak or too short there will be a bump every time the wheel turns around. If the bump is hard enough, pretty soon the whole wheel will be pushed out of shape, cracked, busted and headed for the scrap heap.

The seventh arena is different. It is not another spoke. The seventh mode is like the iron rim or tire of an old wagon wheel. This circle of steel is heated red hot so that it expands. Then it is placed on the wooden wheel with its six sturdy spokes. As the rim cools it contracts and pulls the whole wheel tightly together, making a wheel that will last a lifetime and withstand a bumpy road, a heavy load, and even some short spokes.

The word "mutual" will have a special meaning in what follows. "Mutual" usually means only that you do something with somebody else. For us it means more. The word mutual means a meshing and an interlocking of needs and resources in order to establish an interdependence between two or more people. It is not just that one partner has needs which are met by the other's resources. It is *interactive.* "Mutual" means that one person has needs and that they get uniquely met by another person, just as the first person uniquely meets the second person's needs. In establishing such a mutual relationship each person risks.

The seven modes, the six spokes and the rim, can be described in terms of commitment. The word commitment is a modern counterpart of an old biblical word, faithfulness. Commitment implies the intention to be faithful, and it also implies risk. We will look at the commitment and the risks involved in each of the seven arenas of marriage.

Roommates are committed to mutual comfort and convenience. That is all. Roommates share the same space and facilities, the same bathroom, and kitchen equipment and appliances. The commitment is to share this space and facilities as amicably and comfortably as possible. It is a very limited commitment, with small risks. As a consequence, not much intimacy happens.

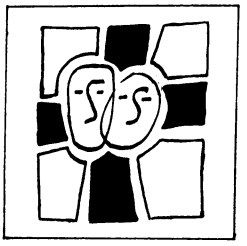
Playmates are committed to mutual enjoyment. Skiing, camping, tennis,

rowdy nights on the town, the symphony, picnics in the park are all included. Playing together can be an important part of building a unity. Who cannot remember with pleasure the day spent fishing or at the botanical gardens or at the beach with somebody special? But the commitment of playmates is limited to enjoyment and the risks are easily controlled by the plans the playmates make. If you are beginning to get the impression that the amount of intimacy achieved is somehow related to the magnitude of the risk taken, you are getting an accurate impression.

Friends are committed to a mutual care for persons, the self and the other. Friendship has to do with feelings and ideas and plans and the future and the past as well as the present. Being friends requires more commitment and risk than roommates or playmates ever dreamed of. To be friends, each must reach out and open oneself and take the chance of getting hurt. Friendship involves empathy, striving to feel what the other person feels. A fragment of a poem by Ann Hill says it well, "Bless you, my friend, for caring. Thank you, my friend, for knowing. The sunshine of life is shining in your eyes and gives my soul a reason for being." *That* is friendship, but watch out! It is expensive. Nouns like loyalty and adjectives like lifelong begin to appear now. Being friends requires much greater commitment and much greater risk, but it also builds a lot of intimacy.

Lovers have a mutual commitment to pleasure and passion. The desires of the flesh get exercised here and they are considerable. Of course, sex can be fun. Everybody knows that. And everybody also knows that sex makes babies. Lest we forget, the lover arena is one in which great creativity happens. We say artists create, and indeed they do, but we ordinary mortals, non-artists, create in a far more powerful way when we reproduce. Reproduction is creation as God creates. Reproduction includes everything from the first arousal between lovers, through all the vicissitudes of child bearing and rearing. It includes the struggles and joys of our offspring from infancy through the teen years all the way to the relationship with adult independent children. This is as close as we ever get to God's great action of creation, and we do get very close. Human sexuality is strong stuff! And the risks are high. The full expression of human sexuality demands that one make oneself very vulnerable to one's lover. New lovers experience this risking with great intensity. Their hearts beat fast because they are aroused and because they are afraid. "What if she's only teasing?" "What if he doesn't mean it?" "What if . . ."

Small wonder the tradition said, "No sex before marriage." The socially validated and legally acknowledged state of matrimony makes the risky business of being lovers less dangerous for everybody. Just as sacraments express the unity that already exists between God and people and at the same time strengthen



and deepen that unity, so the human sexual union can be understood as a sign of the unity that exists between two people and as a profound strengthener of that unity. Mutual, faithful lovers bond to each other.

Partners have a mutual care for and commitment to tasks. Working together is an important builder of intimacy. Partners plan and then carry out their plans. Having seen the outcome of their plans, they plan again, only this time a bit differently. In marriage this ranges from planning vacations, to painting the house, to raising children, to careers, to mountain hide-aways, to dinner parties, to . . . You can fill out the rest of the list because your list is going to be different from mine. Partners are people working together. Once more, commitment and risk is controlled by the planning.

Priests have a mutual commitment to God and the things of God. Because they realize that their unity building with each other goes on inside their unity building with God, Christian people are careful to include this priestly part of their commitment to each other. This part of the relationship, more than the others, may require thoughtful attention. It does not "just happen" the way playmate or lover or partner relationships do.

If you have a careful eye on commitment you might have noticed that something new just happened when we got to priests. The total commitment that the marital pair has to each other can now be compared to another commitment that each one has, namely the commitment to God. And the total commitment of the marital pair comes off second best this time. In marriage we commit ourselves for "as long as we both shall live." In Baptism God commits himself to us forever and we spend whatever lifetime we have trying to comprehend his commitment and somehow respond to it. Our efforts to match his commitment usually turn out to be stumbling, partial and occasional, but the contrast has been drawn between life and forever, and we are reminded that there is something more important than the commitment made in marriage.

Praying for each other is a good way to keep this truth in view. When we pray for another we approach the Heavenly Father on his or her behalf. A more loving and liberating act is difficult to imagine!

The final arena for intimacy building is *Husband/Wife.* Everything mentioned so far is included here, but now with the clause added "so long as we both shall live." It is an almost open-ended commitment, with time as part of the contract. We commit as much time as we have together, and during that time we commit ourselves to be *roommates, playmates, friends, lovers, partners,* and *priests.* The *husband/wife* commitment is public. By making a public commitment we are asking the help of those about us. We are saying, "help us if we falter, strengthen us, support us, and if

necessary, hold our feet to the fire!"

Unfortunately, the titles husband and wife have become bad words. They ought to be honorific titles, better than "Reverend," or "Doctor," or "Your Honor." When I say "my wife" I am not talking about a ball and chain about my ankles. I am talking about the most important and honored person in my world. And she, when she says "my husband" is doing the same. A lot has been lost here. The glory of these words needs to be recovered, so use them carefully, please.

Taking Stock

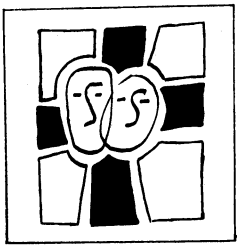
You can use the arenas of marriage to assist you in analyzing your own marriage, or someone else's marriage. With a good grasp of strengths and weaknesses you are in a better position to think about changing and fixing things, strengthening the weak spoke, lengthening the short one, building better intimacy, growing into a more complete unity. They can also be used to help people contemplating marriage to grasp some of the possibilities that lie before them.

Sometimes marriage relationships get badly deteriorated, all the way to the point where the two people are barely *roommates.* Everything else in the marriage has been washed away by floods of neglect and the tides of change. Some couples never get beyond being roommates in the first place.

Friendship is frequently the part most conspicuous by its absence in such a relationship. They were pursuer and pursued during their courtship. The wedding day ended that game and they found themselves married but with no place to go and with little substance to their relationship. Most of their exchanges are bickering over roommate issues. "*When* will you get the car back here after your haircut?" "*When* will the laundry be done and my shirt be ready to wear?" They share very little except the same quarters and automobiles and washing machine and credit cards, if that. *Roommates,* barely roommates with a lot of marital work to do.

Or burned-out *partners.* The couple who does a first rate job of parenting four out of five or six kids. When only one child is left in the nest, they get nervous. They begin to sense the emptiness of *their* relationship, and look for meaning in their marriage and find none. When the last child leaves, they crash. They were great *partners* while they had the sizable task of parenting confronting them. When it is over they have nothing else to do. It is time for them to rediscover each other.

Another variation of burned out *partners* is those whose major life energies go into some common project, a profession, a business, a mission, a single all-consuming task — that somehow hits the skids. One partner may lose interest, or get squeezed out by more aggressive people in the organization, or one partner



may not be able to keep up any more. Again, it is time to rebuild.

A form of an incomplete marriage is characterized by dutiful lovers. Somehow the passion and pleasure business just never got off the ground. Love making is done on schedule, by the numbers, and amounts to the production of orgasms, "so we can quit." These people might still be good *partners,* excellent *friends* and good *priests* for each other. One sector can be missing and the wheel still holds together.

A married couple may be silent *priests,* the kind of Christians who "don't talk about their faith or their spiritual experience."

The Ideal

This is enough of bad examples. Growth in marriage is also possible. A couple can begin their relationship as playmates who have fun together. Then they discover each other as friends. This delightful discovery of each other is expressed by the words, "He cares!" "She understands me!" A delight in their friendship carries them into long extended conversations far into the night, and finally to the exciting discoveries of physical rapport and mutual pleasure. Friends have become lovers.

Somewhere along the line they planned a picnic, then a party, then an open house or a dinner. Finally they planned their wedding, to suit themselves and their families and friends. It said what they wanted to say to the world about their love and ther intentions. At about the same time they planned their first home. Lovers became partners.

They began the marriage with a solid, gratifying friendship, as beginning lovers and beginning partners. They may have some roommate issues to work out, like how high to turn the electric blanket or where to squeeze the tooth paste tube or what kind of greeting to give each other at the beginning or end of the day. With a strong and growing base of friendship, they become partners in planning and producing and raising a family, turning a house into a home, developing a career or maybe two careers. They stay lovers, practicing at it, experiencing together the waiting and pressure and thrill of child bearing. Because they are friends and partners, they share as much of life as possible. The pleasure and passion of being lovers does not begin and end with somebody's orgasms.

And somewhere, probably way back when they were first learning to be friends they began being priests for each other, tentatively, by holding hands during a devotion by a campfire on a youth outing, or by "accidentally" communing side by side. When the children are young their priestly function gets exercised in bedtime prayers and mealtime songs. Later there will be serious discussions about God and life with the same children.

For our ideal couple the exit of the children from the home brings mixed re-

actions, relief that child rearing is now over and a feeling of loss and uselessness which pushes them out of themselves more strongly, both toward each other and toward interests and people outside their mariage. Partnership now begins to mean planning the vacations and trips and remodeling that could not be done earlier. And planning where and how to spend the remaining years. Being friends begins to mean supporting one another during weak moments of indigestion, shortness of breath, stiff joints, fatigue or forgetfulness. As lovers they amaze one another in the way in which the antique equipment still works, and how tender and relaxed and giving it can be now that the high pressure drives have diminished. As priests for each other this stage is marked by new openness and depth of caring and sharing.

The final stage of such intimacy is the ending. Here too, thanks to years of caring experience, we find them ready to be partners in the task of growing old, however the final cards may fall. Lovers, too, as the flesh will allow. Priests, more than ever now as they together approach the High Priest. Friends, as always, sharing the many meanings of life together.

Bless you, my friend, for caring.
Thank you, my friend, for knowing.
The sunshine of life is shining
in your eyes,
And gives my soul a reason for being.

Is that all there is?

God knows we are not very good at unity building. We regularly fail to honor our commitments, and faithfulness is hard to produce even with the best of intentions. There must be some other reason for marriage. As you might have suspected, it has to do with God. The grand scheme behind it all is that we might come to know God better and build a better unity with him.

As married people we are constantly engaged in learning, by first hand experience, about the longing for unity and the risk and cost of building that unity. In both our successes and our failures we are learning about God. God's unity-seeking with us cost him enormously. Because God sought unity with us, he risked everything and put his infant Son into the inexperienced hands of a new mother. Count up the hazards for Jesus sometime. Mary could have miscarried during the trip to Bethlehem, or the child could have become sick in those nice sterile birthing conditions. And how would you like to take your new born son on a donkey ride across the Sinai to Egypt? After his first sermon in his home town synagogue they wanted to throw Jesus over a cliff. The list goes on and on and God's Son ends up hanging on a Roman imperial cross and laid in a borrowed grave. The Christian story of salvation is one of honored commitments combined with sacrificial risks. Said in a single word, it is a story of faithfulness, a primary attribute of the God made known to us most clearly through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our efforts at faithfulness in marriage are puny by comparison, but we do commit ourselves, and struggle, and live it out somehow. All the while we are struggling, we are learning. We learn about our own weaknesses and strengths, such as they are. But we also learn about God and his strength, his commitment to us, and his acceptance of us with all our weaknesses and failures.

In the final analysis, marriage is an important, major arena for our personal theological education.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Facing Futility In and After Vietnam

Mel Jacob, Chaplain

Veterans Administration, Augusta, Georgia

An Updated Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 1

These are the words of a Vietnam combat veteran, son of America, who carried the aspirations of a nation. the aspirations of a nation.

Emptiness, emptiness, he says emptiness, all is empty.

What was the purpose of the endless wounding, maiming, and killing with its unforgettable fears and horrors?

Fresh, aspiring soldiers would come, and worn, depleted soldiers would go, while the "search and destroy missions" of the new soldier continued over the same stretches fought for and taken but, then, strangely left by the old, only to be retaken again.

And, the cycle repeated itself over and over.

The struggle was futile, taking and retreating, only to take again; villages peaceful by day but deadly at night or at the turn of the back — and then alarmingly peaceful again; frustrated fulfillment in aimlessly changing action with an enemy who sneaked silently and so resembled the villagers. Round and round it goes.

The voices of purpose were lost in a mountain of indecision and excessive ambition. The sense of duty, honor, prestige were lost in simply surviving and the desire to return back to the place from whence one came.

The emptiness of the endeavor was overwhelmed by the broken, hurting, dying, and dead buddies. Fear and weariness were strange motivators to deadly, atrocious acts. War is hell! No one can describe it all. The eye has seen too much, and the ear cared no longer to hear; the heart became separated from feeling.

Upon return home, I learned my pain and sorrow should be forgotten, but it would not go away. Why am I forgotten among those living in peace and security? If only we would have been allowed to do our job and not be forgotten warriors. The valor, the wounds, and the sorrow were lost in the struggle of conflicting forces, most of which were not on the battlefield.

The toll of laughter was high. Substance abuse allowed some forgetting, but parades of joy were not to be, as the home folks could not or would not understand. Acceptance was hard, and emptiness grew. There were struggle and futility even in empty pleasure.

I grew old too fast and too soon. The discovery of youth was replaced by the horror of repeated death and constant surviving. Cold and callous, I became. Survival instincts and intense feelings do not leave just because one wants them

to leave. Futility challenged hope, and loss edged in front of gain. Chasing the wind is useless. My sense of balance has been lost.

The Issue — Lest We Forget

So much water has passed under the bridge since the last United States troops were pulled from Vietnam, since we regularly saw on the nightly news the stories of that unpopular war on a distant land. We now only hear an occasional reference to the rallies and protests generated by the war; with the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington a few may say these veterans are finally getting some public recognition and some due.

What do we do with those who continue to hurt as a result of their experience in the Vietnam War? How do we care for those adjusting from a traumatic life experience? These individuals are in our parishes and our daily lives. A significant number, especially combat veterans of the Vietnam War, carry a unique pain that time has not yet healed.

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) provides a clinical perspective from which to understand the malady and its futility. Our God touches the depth of this human sorrow and pain through his mercy, love, and peace.

The Malady — In Our Midst

The etiology of combat-related stress disorders did not begin in Vietnam. War has been hell for a long time.

PTSD is a form of survivor reaction to catastrophic stresses, personal and natural disasters, and war experiences. It has a prolonged effect on personality development, patterns of adjustment, coping styles and interpersonal functioning. The onset of symptoms of delayed stress reactions varies from a few months to over ten years. The essential features of PTSD is the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event that is outside the range of usual human experience.[1]

It was not until World War I that specific clinical symptoms were associated with combat duty. The trench warfare and the relentless barrages of exploding shells precipitated "shell shock." Soon, this became known clinically as "war neurosis." Similarly, diagnosis of "battle fatigue" was given to veterans of World War II and the Koren conflict who showed similar symptoms.

For both World War II and the Korean War the incidences of psychiatric disorders among combatants increased as the intensity of the wars increased. As these wars wore down, there was a corresponding decrease in these disorders until the number of occurrences resembled those of the prewar periods.

The American people were faced with a surprise in the returning Vietnam veteran. Strangely, the psychological problems from this war began to *grow* as the war moved into a distant horizon. We sought to forget, but adjustment difficulties increased and remained among many of those who returned from Vietnam.

During the Vietnam war itself, there had been no great increase in psychiatric casualties. This was partially due to rapid evacuation procedures, more frequent R-n-r's (rest and relaxation periods), and a ready supply of quick highs to reduce the stress. In the early 1970's, when the war was winding down, emotional disorders among the returning warriors

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[1] *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Third Edition) (Washington, D.C.: The American Psychiatric Association, 1980), p. 236.

began to increase. This number increased dramatically after 1973 and the end of direct troop involvement in Vietnam.

There were many reasons that contributed to post-Vietnam stress disorders. There was the common misconception for the individual soldier that the war would last for only a year. If the soldier could hold together for his year tour (some stayed for 13 months), he would be rotated to the United States where he could forget the war. This myth ignored what previous wars had taught — the need for therapeutic buffers against the overwhelming stresses of combat. It ignored need for unit morale, unit cohesion and unit identification in coping and adjusting to combat. With the endless leavings and arrivals there was an inherent depersonalization of the members of the fighting unit. In contrast, many of the surviving veterans of World War II fought the war with one unit, spending weeks or months or years with their never-to-be-forgotten buddies. Even the extended trip home, often on troopships, provided them opportunity to rework the traumatic events they had experienced over the previous years together and to take pride in their accomplishments. The epitaph for the Vietnam veteran was a solitary plane ride home with complete strangers and a head full of grief, conflict, joy and confusion. Once back home, the folks seemed either not to appreciate or did not care about what the Vietnam soldier experienced in combat.

There had been many battlefield incongruities. Conventionally, a sense of rightness/wrongness, was hard to find. Some Vietnamese friends by day became deadly, booby-trapping enemies at night or when the back was turned. A block of land might be secured but the unit would withdraw and engage in other nearby conflicts, only to be ordered to return to the intial block of land and retake it. A production of maimed, crippled bodies and corpses, piling one on top of the other, in ugly bags, seemed interminable and countless. Headlines in hometown papers described attempts of well-known Americans to aid and support the enemy. Rage created by such incongruent conditions was widespread among American troops. This rage manifested itself in mistrust and sometimes in withdrawal, but often in violence, toward the Vietnamese, toward the authorities, and toward the institutions and society that sent them to war but did not support them.

Alcohol and other drugs afforded a way to cope. The possibility of pain from addiction was chosen over the pain of the reality that was seen and felt. Substance abuse covered a multitude of ailments; it served as a prophylactic to buffer against the internal and external stresses of war, thus submerging and delaying the full psychological effects.

The veteran who survived became a stranger at home. Psychologically isolated, many made the transition from rice paddy to California in less than 36 hours, which was not much time to prepare for a confused or hostile reception. Many still speak of people spitting at them as they again walked on American soil. The populace, riven by conflict, was tired and numb to the divisive war. Anti-war and pro-war factions attacked each other, and often both attacked the veteran as a symbol of the war. The returning Vietnam veteran became an immigrant in his native land and his private war of survival continued.

Internal Insights on the Individual

In the *Forgotten Warrior Project* John

P. Wilson presents the psychological impact of a war on a Vietnam soldier whose average age was 19.5 years.[2] He used Erickson's developmental stages to gauge what happened psychologically to the veteran having symptoms of PTSD and focused on the fifth stage of development, identity vs. role confusion. Instead of ego synthesis and integration into a coherent whole, a particular individual experienced negative identity and a sense of role confusion.

Wilson identified eight existentially absurd situations that prevented the soldier from fulfilling the role for which he was trained or establishing his identity: the limited military operation, the lack of positive commitment from the South Vietnamese, the intricacies of guerilla war, the black market operations, the limited tour of duty in a depersonalized war, difficulty and helplessness in distinguishing the enemy, the seemingly meaningless death of friends, and faulty reentry. It was so easy to cope with these absurdities by becoming numb to their emotional impact and warped in integrating them to one's own time, space, and person.

Recent research indicates that as many as 800,000 Vietnamese veterans, about 20% of those stationed in Vietnam, may have PTSD at some level. It has further been estimated that as many as 5% are suffering highly disorganized lives.[3] With even greater impact Charles Figley noted that a majority of Vietnam veterans appear to experience a subclinical malaise that is not clinically diagnosable but hampers adjustment.[4]

Signs of PTSD are: specific psychological symptoms, major alterations in life course, difficulties in relating to others, profound destruction of concepts of self and reality; and a sense of spiritual futility and death.

Specific Psychological Symptoms

There are intense feelings of anxiety, insomnia, depression, irritability, rage, numbed affect, flashbacks, and nightmares. Underlying these is a sense of helplessness. Recently, a veteran told me, "It's like being backed against a ledge with absolutely nowhere to turn." A sense of futility came from the perception that regardless of how well one worked, sweated, bled and even died, the outcome was the same. Men still have nightmares about trying to escape the enemy and death or in a flashback they dive to the ground at the sound of a car's backfire and instinctively scan the tree tops looking for "gooks" on hearing a helicopter in the air. Some are able to handle these thoughts and functions very well, others do not.

Survival guilt can be intense, "Why wasn't it me?" is a readily asked question. Another veteran recently described how he moved his truck's position in a convoy, and the replacement truck and its two inhabitants were "blown away" moments later by a mortar. "They died in my place," he grieved.

Impacted grief arises from so many losses — including, loss of innocence, faith in government, and so many buddies. It is not uncommon to hear, "I've

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[2] John P. Wilson, *Forgotten Warrior Project* (Funded under Grant of the Disabled American Veterans, 1977).

[3] J. O. Lipkin, A. S. Bland, E. R. Parson, J. Smith, "Vietnam Veterans and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Hospital and Community Psychiatry* Vol. 33, No. 11 (November 1982), p. 910.

[4] Charles R. Figley, "Psychological Adjustment among Vietnam Veterans: An Overview of the Research," *Stress Disorders Among Vietnam Veterans* (Theory, Research, and Treatment), ed. Charles R. Figley (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Publishers, 1978), p. 57f.

never been able to cry." After all, crying on the battlefield is an extreme liability and threat to survival.

Psychosomatic complaints like headaches, ulcers, bowel problems, and hypertension surface frequently. Medication alleviates the symptoms and ignores the cause. Suspicion, irritability, hostility, and violence can be projected and exhibited toward family, friends, and strangers as if war zone survival instincts were still applicable to one's current life situation. The introjection of feelings often ends in substance abuse and dependency on alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, or harder drugs.

Ultimately, the final act of rage and frustration may result in attempted suicide. A recent group in which I was involved had a dozen combat veterans in it; to a man, each had attempted to take his own life at least once. PTSD is, indeed, debilitating and deadly.

Alterations in Life Course

The inability to cope with stress may create major harmful and destructive changes in the course of life. There is the tendency toward chronic underachieving and instability in education or work endeavors. A "born to lose" attitude develops with the behavioral style of settling for less and settling for dullness. Recent studies in prior military develope nt and conditioning are giving greater clarity to how the war experience affected an individual's post-war course of life. There is the tendency of continual lateral or backward movement exemplified by movement from job to job, school to school, drifting without progressing toward any goal. This life style may eventually evolve into antisocial and criminal acts.

Relating to Significant Others

Noted difficulties are observed in the person's ability to achieve intimacy of any kind. Little wonder that marriages are often strained, and that there are a high number of divorces and remarriages. The home atmosphere is tense and filled with insecurity. Child and spouse abuse, both emotional and physical, are well documented. Some have seemed "frozen at age 20", not having learned skills for living in a mature fashion.

Concepts of Self and Reality ... Futility

With the failure to integrate the stress of war many Vietnam veterans experience a profound shattering of basic concepts of self and humanity. Life seems to lose its purpose, and survivors tend to lose some of their faith in the capacity of humanity for remaking into good that which was bad. Alienation replaces commitment; cynicism and suspicion remove trust; hurt and pain establish themselves over peace and security; and brokenness of mind, body and spirit seem to be the order of the day.

> It has been our observation over the past decade that mental health professionals as a group have been sadly unable to provide reliable therapeutic assistance to Vietnam veterans with post traumatic stress disorders.[5]

These words may appear harsh and accusatory; yet, they also provide incentive to transform the care and intervention given these individuals.

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[5] Arthur S. Blank, "Apocalypse Terminable and Interminable: Operation Outreach for Vietnam Veterans," *Hospital and Community Psychiatry* Vol. 33, No. 11 (November 1982), p. 916.

Sensitive Searching

With this goal we come back to where we began — the words of seeming futility about life drawn from Ecclesiastes. How is the message of hope to be lifted up amidst all the circumstances, symptoms, and failures surrounding the person experiencing the effects of PTSD?

It would appear that ignoring reality and finding easy explanations to either Ecclesiastes' existence in the canon or life's futilities do not satisfy the quest for good news and hope, or aid in the quest for appropriate pastoral intervention.

There is a disarming freshness to a clearer, more honest statement that acknowledges the reality of any malady. In the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* Ronald E. Murphy notes the wisdom writer's honesty in conceding that the mystery of injustice and futility will stand. The hurting Vietnam veteran does not have the advantage of the total life perspective enjoyed by the wisdom writer that prompted him to affirm "for everything there is a season." (Eccl. 3) How can a pastor more effectively offer the redemptive touch and proclamation?

THE GOAL — Because We Remember

There are goals for life amidst its futility. R. B. Y. Scott notes that one must be ready to face the facts of life's uncertainties and perplexities and accept one's own finiteness. Secondly, one must learn to accept the inevitable and live with what cannot be changed, or, in other words, to realize the good of life is the living of it. Thus, a positive response becomes an expression of faith.[6]

There is much ambiguity as to what is meant by facing the facts, accepting the unchangeable, and responding positively. For the Vietnam veteran with PTSD these could be translated therapeutically into behavioral events — a peaceful night of rest, a ceasing of substance abuse, a stable work history, or an active membership in a congregation. Thus, a clarification of this ambiguity accompanies the goals for adjustment of the person experiencing a stress malaise or disorder.

Adequate treatment also involves our own personal and pastoral perceptions. Max Cleland, triple amputee from the war and current Secretary of State in Georgia, distinguishes between the "bad war" and the "good soldier." Are we able to distinguish between the war and those who fought in that war and, thus, be a therapeutic and redemptive force in the healing and continual adjustment of the Vietnam veteran?

We also need to cease the oversimplification of public and professional portrayals of the veteran and recognize, instead, individual uniqueness. Diagnosable systems occur only among a minority, while more than two million, a majority of those who served, are affected with subclinical malaise.

Berman, Price, and Gusman believe that the primary treatment for combat veterans is their reintegration into a community and the establishment of a regimen

> . . . that enables veterans to rebuild the bridge between adolescence and adulthood . . . (This regimen begins with) 'starting where the patient (parishioner) is' (which) means starting with the Vietnam experience.[7]

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[6] R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971, p. 187.

[7] S. Berman, S. Price, F. Gusman, "An Inpatient Program for Vietnam Combat Veterans in a Veterans Administration Hospital," *Hospital and Community Psychiatry* Vol. 33, No. 11 (November 1982), pp. 920 & 21.

A major casualty of the war was the wounding of a collective sense of national purpose. Healing this wound occurs ever so slowly. This condition will be surmounted only through efforts that bring people together from different sides of the rifts associated with the war in activities that enhance a sense of community and shared purpose.

THE MEANS — As We Receive

The 1982 dedication of the black rock memorial in Washington, D.C., etched with the names of the slain, gives vivid evidence of the great length of time it has taken for public recognition of the sacrifices made.

What has occurred on a national level is also noted in a large number of individuals when therapeutic changes have occurred slowly. So often one's best attempts at insight, pastoral diagnosis, careful confrontation, and sensitive care appear swallowed up in the power of the hurt and debilitation. Patience, forebearance, and long suffering appear to take on new and deeper meanings in the context of PTSD. It is so easy to conclude with the wisdom writer that all is futile and forget the word of grace that there is "a time" for healing, mending and peace.

A recent experience revealed again for me the ever new meaning and application of the Gospel. This experience occurred within the context of a stress adjustment group, composed of four to six core members, all Vietnam veterans, with whom I have worked for a number of months. A few months ago one of the more regular members came down with a terminal illness and could no longer attend the group. Initially, the group could not deal with his absence and illness; his loss was ignored like so many other losses from their Vietnam history. A few weeks later the group's denial began to crack as one member gingerly initiated a routine that has become a group rubric — bringing weekly a carefully selected greeting card which the group signs and mails. Overcoming of denial continued as they began to deal with deeper thoughts and feelings surrounding this loss and their general sense of futility. "It's o.k. to have these feelings," one vet reflected for the group. Certain individuals have been able to make linkages between the reality of their combat experience and the reality of their present loss. They have identified parallel feelings of helplessness, anger, rage, and futility; they have verbalized a therapeutic acceptance of self within the depth of their emotion and loss; they have shown renewed signs of positive feelings toward self and others where numbness and rage had existed; and they have asked ontological questions pertaining to the human condition and God's answer to it. Can not these signs of creative and hopeful change be seen as the receiving of good news within life experience?

In attempting to give a biblical perspective to similar pastoral experiences, Donald Capps supplied the term "Parabolic," or "indirective". The pastor takes the information at hand and indirectly reshapes perception within his/her pastoring[8] in order to give structure and clarity to therapeutic and redemptive change and growth. The information at hand becomes a mutual experience, where mystery, power and grace are integrated and healing and greater wholeness occur. That which appeared so futile is reshaped in parabolic fashion to ex-

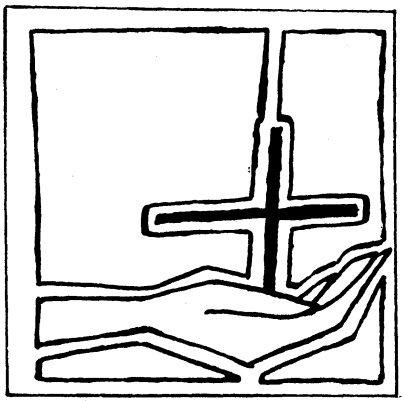
[8] Donald Capps, "Biblical Models in Pastoral Counseling," *Pastoral Psychology* (Summer 1980).

hibit the futility/hope dynamic.

The parish pastor is in a unique context that enables a mutual experience of the human condition within the pastor/parishioner relationship. In establishing redemptive contact with the hurting Vietnam veteran, or with any person experiencing pain from a traumatic stress event, there exists the opportunity to give manifestation to forgiveness, acceptance, self-worth, and love within the congregational life, the pastoral relationship, and the means of grace in Word and Sacrament. The church becomes a reconstructive bridge to healing and greater wholeness; the pastor provides vital affirmation for the journey; and the Spirit continues his work of sanctification in this special parishioner.

This process of affirmation entails the building up of that which has been broken down, and it begins and ends with care and compassion for the one pastored and the condition in life encountered. Superficiality and fear of closeness and intimacy are foreign to such an encounter as reentry into the traumatic experience and renewal from it need to occur. This reentry and renewal often involve both repetition and silence, acceptance and rejection, fear and love, and other ambivalences that challenge and extend a pastor's ability at therapeutic and redemptive encounter. The creative and hope-filled power of the Gospel affirms the person adjusting from the trauma in the experience of reentry and renewal, and the pastor gives manifestation to this affirmation. The therapeutic reduction of the symptoms in a stress disorder surely occurs in and through the renewing power of the Gospel received within life experience.

The Vietnam veteran, especially the combat veteran, may show frustrating wounds and scars to which the Gospel offers its hope. As one who gives manifestation to this Gospel, the pastor must reveal a clarity of understanding of the malady at hand, a goal that is redemptive and therapeutic, and the means unique to his/her proclamation. In this ministry amidst life's futilities there exists the possibility to expand appreciation of the subject matter of the wisdom writer and of the futility/hope dynamic.



Teaching in the Church: Privilege and Responsibility

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Mark introduces us to a person who had a mission *through his teaching* to bring people into an understanding and experience of the Kingdom. The forms and styles that Jesus used in teaching correspond to the context of the gospel. Practically every encounter with Jesus was an opportunity for teaching about some facet of the gospel. It is not accidental that when a paralytic was healed (2:1-12), Jesus gave instruction regarding his authority, or that when demons were cast out (3:19b-30), he expounded on power, or that when an epileptic child was healed (9:14-29), the disciples received a lesson from him on faith and prayer. Every situation was an opportunity for Jesus to speak of faith or give a glimpse of the Kingdom, to correct false doctrines or to provide an insight into his authority.

Preparation

Mark says nothing about the early years of Jesus' life and preparation. From Mark we know only that Jesus stood on common ground with other Jews of his time in accepting the Scriptures as containing divine revelation and in teaching that God is one. He knew and respected the traditions but he used them as opportunities to teach a new understanding of the kingdom. Early in the gospel narrative we see the Teacher pictured as needing and taking time to prepare himself through prayer and private time. (1:35; 6:46; 14:32-42)

Settings

Jesus was a teacher who stepped outside what we today would consider typical settings for teaching though he did teach in the synagogue on several occasions.

We find him taking advantage of every possible situation and locale where the people were in daily life. He went into homes (2:1-12; 3:19), he taught beside the sea (2:13, 4:1, 5:2), at table (2:15, 14:30), in the fields (2:23), in a boat (3:7; 4:1; 4:36), on the mountains (3:13) and throughout the villages (6:6).

We see a teacher whose concern was directly related to the situations in which people found themselves. He used the world of nature and the experiences of the people in order to speak of profound concepts and relate them to ordinary people. He used a household item like a lamp or the daily occupation of planting, he took a child in his arms, he talked about a millstone, salt and parts of the body. Jesus did not call people to an abstract consideration of God, themselves and the world, but he entered into their situation and experience.

In many conflict situations he used a questioning technique — either being open to questions, posing questions or answering a question with a question, thus forcing his opponent either to answer his own question or to answer it in a new way.

Authority

A distinctive feature of Jesus' teaching lies in his authority with which he proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is near and calls for repentance. The background for his authority is established in chapters 1:16-3:6. His is an authority that can call people out of one lifestyle into another (1:16-21; 2:14). In the synagogue "he taught them as one who had authority" (1:22). Then, when a man with an unclean spirit appeared, Jesus publicly rebuked the spirit so that the people acclaimed, "With authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him" (1:23-28). Jesus used his authority to challenge the sabbath laws (2:23-3:6).

Disciples and Discipleship

Mark gives prominence to the role of disciples and the challenge of discipleship if one is to follow Jesus. It is necessary to explore the dimensions of disciples and discipleship if one is to fully understand the depth of this gospel.

There is a unique characteristic to this process of becoming a disciple which sets it apart from other voluntary decisions one makes in life. The first step is that the Teacher calls (1:17; 2:14). Only then can a closer relationship develop. This relationship is not one that is obtained in any manner except that of a gift.

The disciples quickly learned that not only are the initial demands for discipleship heavy, but they were continually reminded of the demands of discipleship. Disciples have to deny themselves, take up the cross and lose their life for Jesus and the gospel (8:34-38) — this is the only way to gain. We should note that these words of Jesus are directed to *all* who will live out his words, not just the inner circle of disciples (8:34).

The disciples move from moments of intense faith and loyalty as when Peter affirms, "You are the Christ" (8:29), to times when "they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him" (9:32) or even to outright denial, "I do not know this man of whom you speak" (14:71). The paradox of faith and unbelief is perhaps best expressed in the words of the father with the epileptic child, who said, "I believe; help my unbelief." (9:24)

Teaching is an integral part of the total relationship disciples share with Jesus. When the disciples are sent out on their own mission (6:7-13), which did not explicitly include teaching, the reader is told that they returned to Jesus "and told him all that they had done and taught" (6:30). Mark apparently thought it was impossible for them to carry out their assigned mission without teaching.

The Mission of Today's Church

Mark wrote his narrative to instruct the community in a correct understanding of Christology and the meaning of discipleship, as well as to offer hope in the midst of doubt and despair. As we seek to undertake the demands of discipleship and understand Christology, we can hear Mark's message of instruction as our story and quest. One example of this shared quest appears when we ask "When will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are accomplished?" (13:4) The universal message for Mark's reader bridges the centuries:

> Of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (13:32) Watch therefore — for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at

> cockcrow, or in the morning — lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch. (13:35-37)

Mark's Jesus engaged in conflict, and not everyone responded to his call. He believed so totally in his mission, however, that the audience always knew who he was and what he was about. The gospel can be difficult, offensive, challenging, and confusing to us, but Mark challenges us to know that the time has in fact come. Jesus never asked people to wait until another time, nor did he "just make friends" so that he could later confront them with the gospel.

Our teaching objective becomes no less than that which Mark lays out for Jesus' ministry: to understand for ourselves and to share with others the news that the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; that we are to repent and to believe in the gospel. (1:15) That gospel message is the foundation for the church's teaching, identity, focus and mission. It does matter what we believe and the urgent message of Jesus must be kept foremost and shape the communicator, the process, and structure and the settings for the teaching task of the church.

The Place of Teaching in the Church

Through "teaching" Jesus is able to challenge his opponents, correct misunderstandings, offer new insights, call people to direct encounter and invite followers to discipleship.

The church is called to teach just as it is to worship or it will not be the church. Teaching is at the very heart of who we are and to whom we belong. Teaching is our mission.

Teaching and learning belong to all in the church for we are all — through our baptism and life of discipleship — lifelong learners. The *Shema* says this eloquently:

> "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deut. 6:4-9)

Not only is one to teach the commandments to one's children but the Word becomes a continual call to study, think and reflect.

Christology and Discipleship

To understand Mark's perspective on Christology one must see Jesus as the one who suffered. He "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (10:45) Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ (8:29), but shortly thereafter we realize that his Christology does not include a suffering Christ and for this he is rebuked. (8:31-33) The widow (12:42-44) who gave all she had for Jesus and the centurion (15:39) who affirmed Jesus as the Son of God as he *died,* are Markan examples of "correct Christology."

Jesus did not downplay the cost of discipleship. There is the responsibility to be a servant, to follow, to be ready to give up one's life, to be continually the child of faith, to enter a life of prayer

and devotion, and to teach in this life style the gospel. This calls for experiencing the Kingdom and speaking from belief. It means "mountain top" experiences in the midst of which one's frailty and lack of perception also intrude (9:2-8).

Challenges for Today

Somehow we have come today to a point where teaching is something done primarily in a classroom, usually for one hour on a Sunday morning, and predominantly to children. As Jesus used all situations, so too, the church has a theological task to equip people to understand the message of the gospel and the responsibilities of discipleship.

1. We must communicate the gospel as privilege and responsibility. This message of good news is to be presented in such a way that each individual has an opportunity to be confronted and make his or her own decision. In the power of the gospel an individual is equipped to take up the cross and follow Jesus.

2. Literally shouting for recovery is that function of teaching which helps people to examine essential questions of life, to discuss the gifts of the Spirit, and to see the gospel's action in the activities and experiences of their daily life. Jesus belongs to the world of everyday people and everyday situations and experiences. The community of believers are the people by the sea, in the houses, on the mountain; they are the sick, the outcasts, the young and the old. They are the disciples the Markan Jesus invites to take up the cross and to wait and hope. They need to be taught in a way that enables them to take up the cross in the daily encounters where they spend most of their time, for it is there that they feel most inadequate to correlate faith and life, and there that they have the greatest challenge to faith. Teaching prepares us to experience the Kingdom in the present.

In this light, we need to examine the content of our teaching and preaching to see what direct correlations they have to daily life. The people of God are gathered for worship, education, refreshment, nurture and corporate acts of service, and from this context they are sent or scattered to be the church in the world. We are challenged to make sure that the gathered truly become the scattered.

3. Paul reminds us that within the body some are appointed for particular responsibilities, one of which is to teach. Teaching calls for women and men who have a contagious vision, excitement and joy that shapes and directs their teaching. They know that their task is to present the gospel in a way that their students can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, understand, articulate, and act out God's activity in their life.

The nature of the teaching task requires the church to select carefully and train thoroughly its teaching leaders. No one should ever be expected to teach because "it's their turn" or "no one else will take the class," nor should they be asked to add this responsibility to a whole host of other leadership positions. Reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit must never become an excuse for sloppiness. Teaching does require training, time, and careful preparation.

4. At a Lutheran ordination service the candidate is asked, "Will you therefore preach and teach in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and these creeds and confessions?" However, it is cause for concern that outside of confirmation classes (which for many is duty lacking in enthusiasm or joy) and new members' classes, many clergy have abdicated the teaching function of their ministry. In

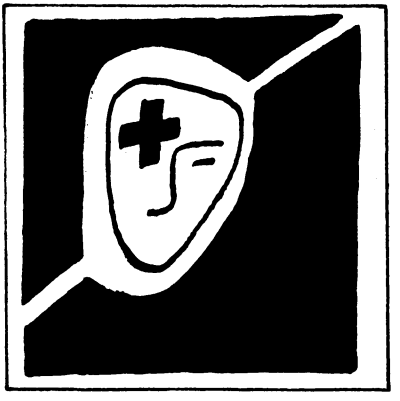
these days of increasing parish activities, generalist pastors, and clergy "burnout," it is imperative that we renew the communal teaching responsibility of pastors.

The pastor is to be a theological resource of the parish, to be the teacher of teachers and leaders, and to take seriously the teaching that happens through worship, visitation, counseling and administration. But the pastor is also to continue teaching in the traditional places and to train and prepare for these events with scholarship, sound methodology, enthusiasm, and care.

5. Teaching and learning must not be limited to parish or classroom settings. How do we encourage parishioners to do individual and corporate study and reflection in the home and other non-parish settings? How do we teach that the learning process does not stop when the class ends? In addition to providing adequate study materials, the pastor should, like the rabbi, model a lifestyle of teaching and learning.

6. The gospel message requires that our teachings and materials be inclusive for women and men, ethnic persons, various cultures and races. Our task is to open ourselves to the new implications of God's revelation for today in terms of unity, equality, reciprocity, and justice.

The privilege and the responsibility of teaching within the community of faith begins with the ultimate experience of God as revealed through Jesus the Christ. It proceeds with people who are joyfully captured by their call to be God's chosen people. These teachers share the good news and equip people to be the church wherever they find themselves. Teaching is joy!



An Epilogue for M*A*S*H — A Prologue for Human Suffering

Stephen L. Theil

King of Kings Lutheran Church, Mountain Lakes, New Jersey

Probably the most significant recent event in popular American culture was the conclusion of the television series M*A*S*H. For eleven years and over two hundred fifty episodes, M*A*S*H entertained us with the antics of Captain Hawkeye Pierce, Major "Hot Lips" Houghlihan, Corporal Klinger, and the rest of the gang from the 4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital on the front lines of the Korean War. People across the country bade farewell to this great American saga with "M*A*S*H bashes" that rivaled those of New Years' Eve and St. Patrick's Day.

"Hawkeye martinis," for example, were poured from a still at the Nugget Casino in Nevada. A Providence, R.I. radio station served vodka in intravenous bottles to about three hundred winners of a M*A*S*H trivia contest. The city of Passaic, New Jersey declared a Loretta Swit Day in honor of the home-town woman who grew up there. And students at Fordham University in New York City took over dormitory Suite E-6, the room occupied by Alan Alda when he was a student there twenty-seven years ago. The concluding episode of the series, a two and one half hour extravaganza and one of the most watched television programs ever, had thirty-second commercials costing some $450,000.

But all this hoopla and huckstering were far from a momentary distraction, America's way of finding an excuse to party no matter what the reason. Granted, true M*A*S*H-aholics would welcome the opportunity to celebrate just about anything, but there was more to it than that. M*A*S*H touched us at a deeper level than merely tickling our funny bones, though it did its share of that. M*A*S*H tickled our hearts; it tugged and tore at them; it laid them bare to the genuine pathos of the human predicament with all the skill and finesse of a surgical operation and then it sewed them back up again with all the love and care of a concerned physician. M*A*S*H was about war and fighting and killing and bloodshed and inhumanity. But it was also about friendship and compassion and understanding and growth and the ability of the human spirit to rise above the circumstances and survive amid the preponderance of evil. Like a modern parable, M*A*S*H gave us a brief glimpse of the fact that the kingdom of God has broken into our troubled world. For in the midst of all the evil and the suffering there was a recurring glimmer of healing and hope. It wasn't much. But it was enough to capture the attention of millions of TV viewers for a half hour every Monday night.

Hope in Suffering

But the need for hope amid conflict is more than the stuff of which a successful TV series is made. Our lives too, like those of the characters in M*A*S*H, cry out for hope in this shell-shocked world. Everywhere we turn we see pain and suffering, agony and death. We don't have

to be on the front lines in Korea to experience the plight of the human condition. All we have to do is read the newspaper, whose pages are filled every day with stories of war and rumors of war, crime, violence, tragedy and catastrophe. Still, we don't even have to look that far. All we have to do is look inward upon ourselves and our own lives in the world. We've all done a tour of duty on the battlefields of life. We have wounds that need to be bandaged, scars that need to be healed. What are we to make of this carnage that we see all around, in ourselves and in others?

A story from the Gospels of the life of Jesus comes to mind.

> There were some present at that very time who told him (Jesus) of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. (Luke 13:1-5)

This pericope confronts us with the age-old question of why people suffer, a problem that has confronted us since the Fall. It is helpful to note that Jesus was not oblivious to the sufferings of his day nor ignorant of the problem of evil. He kept his ear to the ground and listened to the sad events of the daily news as it traveled by grapevine over the hillsides of first-century Palestine. But in this case he did not provide a ready answer to the question of suffering. He simply and categorically said that natural or human-made catastrophes are not caused by the greater culpability or guilt of those who suffer them. They are no worse sinners than the rest of us. Rather, they are signs for us to repent and return to the God who calls us. They are warnings for us to seek the Lord while he may be found. In other words, God's judgments are not punitive but redemptive. They are not intended to bring about our total destruction, but to bring us to repentance and faith.

The "Gospel" of M*A*S*H

In its own secular way, M*A*S*H captured this vision of life in the kingdom. M*A*S*H never answered the question of human suffering either, but it probed through it. Without pointing the finger of guilt at anyone in particular, M*A*S*H interpreted the meaning of human suffering in terms of its potential for change and growth. Surely a biblical word like "repentance" was far from the minds and lips of everyone in the M*A*S*H unit (except for Father Mulcahy), but the substance of their experience amounted to the same thing. War is hell. There are no winners, only losers. The only sense that can be made of such suffering is to be found in the personal victories that each of us achieves in relation to others. These victories are imperceptible and unintelligible to a world hell-bent on destruction. They are known only to the eye of faith, comprehended only by the heart of love.

The success of M*A*S*H, with all due respect to its outstanding cast of characters, writers, and producers, lay in large part in its uncanny way of bringing this touch of humor and humility — and a lot of God-blessed humanity — to an otherwise unbearable situation. It was a story of "conversion" or "regeneration" at its best. For above and beyond all the

pain and suffering, there was always the element of faith, of hope, and of love. There was the vision not only to see things as they are, but to see them as they were meant to be. There was, above all, the wisdom to comprehend the true meaning of life amid the absurdity of death. In sum, there was the hope that hopes *against* hope. It was not at all unlike the living hope to which Christians have been born anew through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Perhaps this hope, the vision of life made new, is best expressed in the inimitable humor of Hawkeye himself in a letter which he wrote to his father.

Dear Dad,

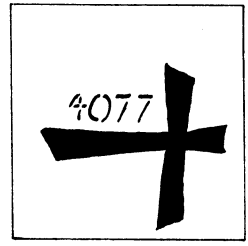
A year in Korea and no end in sight. Last week we suffered a visitation by some brigadier general who tried to boost morale by telling us that we are bringing democracy to this green and pleasant land. That was the most ridiculous thing I ever heard. I felt like telling His Belligerence that what this country needs is a good five-cent czar. My tentmate, Major Frank Burns, is even more amusing, if you get your laughs from psychotic paranoics complicated by a spine-wide streak of yellow. He thinks we're here to save Korea for the Koreans, and that when the war is over Seoul will be colonized by the Fort Wayne Kiwanis Club. I couldn't help breaking into a chorus of the Ethel Merman song: "There's no vinism like chauvinism like no vinism I know." But I guess Frank is just the carrier. The disease, the bubonic plague, is knowing that our O.R. is just a three-day pass that wounded kids are given before being shipped back to the front. We knit and purl and offer kind words and jokes so bad even Milton Berle wouldn't steal them. For me, joking is therapeutic. It's the only way I have of opening my mouth without screaming.

Here I am babbling, Dad, and I know you brook no babble. But what can you expect of a barefoot surgeon from Crabapple Cove, ME? I can't wait to come home, hug you, and then log six or seven months' sleep.

Love,
Hawkeye

May this same unquenchable spirit (Spirit?) carry us through the battlefields of our lives until the day comes when the war is over, and with the rest of the church militant, we can pack up our tents and go home!

(Hawkeye's quotation from *Time,* Vol. 121, No. 9, February 28, 1983, "M*A*S*H, You Were A Smash", pp. 64-66.



Book Reviews



THE PHILOSOPHY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT. By Lawrence Kohlberg. Essays on Moral Development, Vol. I. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981. 441 pages. $22.95.

Kohlberg says that the first virtue of a person, school, or society is justice — interpreted in a democratic way as equality or equal respect for all people. He claims that his conception of culturally universal stages of moral development and the idea of justice the stages embody are a solution to the problem of the relativity of values.

In Part One he deals with the relativity of values in educational philosophy and argues that human develompent is the universal aim of education. Part Two begins with the assumption that value relativity is central to the issue of moral philosophy and conlcudes that Kohlberg's highest stage of moral judgment, Stage 6, is philosophically adequate and solves the problem of the relativity of values. Part Three applies moral principles to issues in political and legal philosophy. The Fourth and final part deals with questions that the idea of justice cannot answer, e.g., "Why be moral?"

There are three levels of moral thought, according to Kohlberg, each with two stages. The first level is preconventional moral thought in which people do not take the thought of larger social structures into account. In this level's first stage a person obeys in order to avoid punishment. The second stage involves serving one's own need and the needs of others on the basis of fair deals. This stage can be typified with the phrase, "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

The second level is conventional thought in which the expectations of others in the social structure are taken into account. The first stage of conventional thought, Stage 3, involves being good to family and friends in order to be liked. In Stage Four the social structure is enlarged beyond friends and family to the whole society. The "law and order" of society becomes paramount.

Some move beyond conventional thought into post-conventional or principled moral thought. The first of the post-conventional stages, Stage 5, is moral thought that upholds basic human rights, values and legal contracts even when they conflict with the concrete rules and laws of the group. This is the stage, says Kohlberg, at which the U.S. Constitution is written. The sixth and final stage is characterized by moral thought guided by universal ethical principles that all humanity should follow. For Kohlberg, the most universal ethical principle is that of justice.

The sequence of the stages of moral thought is reflected to the sequence of cognitive thought as set forth by Jean Piaget. Stages in moral development are invariant and universal in sequence and represent "structured wholes" or total ways of thinking. Development through the stages until Stage 6 is reached shows increasing *differentiation* between "is" and "ought," i.e., morality is increasingly seen as based on internal principles rather than external events or forces. Development also shows increasing *integration,* i.e., moral thought is integrated around basic principles that apply in all cases.

Kohlberg says that the highest stage of moral development, Stage 6, in-

volves a principle of justice that is characterized by reversibility, i.e., the ability to put oneself in another's place in order to see how the moral decision affects that person. Kohlberg calls it "moral musical chairs"; let everyone trade places before choosing and let them be willing to choose the worst-off chair.

But ultimately even the highest stage of moral thought does not answer the question, "Why be moral?" Only religious thought can answer it. Many religious writers point to a stage that centers on agape or responsible love that goes beyond justice. For Kohlberg, agape does not *compete* with Stage 6 justice, but *confirms* it while going beyond it. He posits a metaphorical Seventh Stage in which religious thought affirms life and morality by relating life to the transcendant or cosmic whole.

There is a rough approximation, Kohlberg says, between his "Seventh Stage" and James Fowler's Sixth Stage of Universalizing Faith. But Kohlberg is critical of Fowler's statement that moral action comes out of faith. People first attain a certain moral stage of thought and then develop a parallel stage of religious thought. Because of this Kohlberg insists on maintaining the precedence and autonomy of the moral. Religious thought serves moral thought in that it affirms moral judgments and actions as purposeful human activities. At the "Seventh Stage," then, individuals construct a "natural theology" based on reason, a theology which relates moral thought to a sense of the whole. Theology, though rationally derived, is supported by mystical experiences of union with the whole of reality. His point of view still leaves no place for revelation, an experience which Craig Dykstra (note the following review) says is vital to the transformation of individual thought and action.

Robert Conrad
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VISION AND CHARACTER. By Craig Dykstra. New York: Paulist Press, 1981. 160 pages. Paper. $5.95.

In this book Craig Dykstra tackles Lawrence Kohlberg of Harvard, the man whose thought has dominated studies of moral development for the past two decades. Dykstra attacks Kohlberg's "juridicial" ethics and replaces it with his own "visional ethics." Juridicial ethics focuses on making judgments about the rightness or wrongness of particular acts, just as a judge in a law court might do. Visional ethics focuses on the way one sees reality and the way one responds to reality in the light of that vision.

The philosophical claim of juridicial ethics is that the essence of virtue is the idea of justice, but Dykstra states that virtue cannot be reduced to justice alone. He also insists that one cannot simply define justice in the conventional sense of equal consideration of every person's claims in a situation where claims conflict. Situations calling for moral judgment are not objective but inter-subjective. One does not simply encounter problems to be solved but inter-subjective mysteries that transcend the individual.

Kohlberg maintains that morality is autonomous and does not depend on a religious point of view. Religious thought only affirms moral reasoning by placing it into the context of a larger and more cohesive worldview. Dykstra objects to this subordination of faith to moral reasoning. He claims that faith relates people to a transcendant center of power and reality that helps them in new ways of seeing, knowing, feeling and relating rather than simply confirming them in what they already know.

Juridicial ethics eschews the transcendent whereas visional ethics posits a transcendent Good as well as transcendent powers of evil. Visional ethics includes an acknowledgement of sin as the inability to see things rightly. For juridicial ethics, there is neither sin nor grace. Visional ethics includes a God who notices and loves his people and thus overcomes their

egocentricity and enables them to be open to God, themselves and others.

Dykstra says that Christian education for the moral life is the introduction of people to and their incorporation into the repenting, praying, serving community of the church. The teacher is a conduit into the community experience. The teacher's tasks are: 1) the discovery of the conflicts learners have with others; 2) the provision of resources that help learners explore the dimensions of their struggles; 3) the stimulation of encounters between persons in conflict; 4) the provision of time and space for students to struggle on their own; and 5) the opportunity to interpret their insights.

Moral growth, then, is not dependent solely on cognitive ability, according to Dykstra. Acts of repentance, prayer, and service can be done even by young children in a way appropriate to their age. Cognitive development does play a part in that it increases the range and complexity of repentance, prayer and service as well as increasing intentionality and responsibility. Kohlberg would insist that moral reasoning is cognitive, not imaginal, and that even theology is rationally arrived at rather than being the result of revelation. This reviewer, as a Christian Educator, finds that Dykstra's theory of visional ethics is much more adequate than Kohlberg's juridicial ethics.

Robert Conrad

HOMOSEXUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE A Report of the Task Force on Gay/Lesbian issues of the Commission on Social Justice of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, 584 Castro Street 341, San Francisco, CA 94414. $14 by first class mail, $12 by fourth class mail.

The report is not an official statement of the archdiocese but only a "working document" of the semi-autonomous commission designed to "responsibly encourage a creative process of dialogue and reflection."

The task force was established by the Commission of Social Justice in May, 1981, as a response to a large increase in anti-Gay and Lesbian assaults in San Francisco and to rising tensions between the Latino Community and the Gay and Lesbian Castro District. Fourteen people ranging from the mother of a Gay son to psychological, theological and pastoral professionals were assigned the tasks of investigating and assessing the situation of the Gay and Lesbian community in the archdiocese, targeting problematic areas, identifying issues to be addressed, and developing concrete recommendations for policy and action.

The report underscores the continuing violence committed against the Gay and Lesbian community including graphic accounts of physical attacks. But the report goes on to include an examination and indictment of the psychological, emotional and spiritual violence oppressing Gays and Lesbians and suggests these are rooted in the theological perspectives of the church which give credence to the view of homosexuals as "sick, sinful, and criminal." Such teaching encourages those less sophisticated in the delicacies of theological discourse to attack and discriminate against Gays and Lesbians.

The task force suggests the complicity of the church in such violence: "Against the background of the New Right's rhetorical hysteria, and within this bewildering maze of conflicting and scholarly research (on the family), it is particularly disconcerting to have the local 'Pastoral Letter on Homosexuality' (by Archbishop Quinn of San Francisco) gratuitously assert, without any development of the point, discussion, or references to pertinent research or documentation that 'A normalization of homosexuality could only too easily foster and make more public homosexual behavior with the result of eroding the meaning of family.' "

The task force continues by questioning the legitimacy of the currently used distinction between homosexuality orientation and homosexual acts. Such a distinction, the report con-

cludes, is a disembodied, abstract approach which does not account for the interplay between the psychological and the physical in a homosexual person's wholeness. To demand celibacy of millions of Gay men and Lesbian women "flies in the face of the centuries long tradition that celibacy is a rare and beautiful charism, given to the few, and given by God alone."

The educational effort proposed throughout the task force report is a large scale consciousness-raising and self-examination of attitudes and actions towards Gays and Lesbians. Particular emphasis is placed on the recognition of the pain and oppression suffered by the Gay and Lesbian community and the church's role in eliminating of abusive myths about homosexuals, training of pastors and other church professionals to enable accepting ministry, using media and pulpits to combat the tactics of the Moral Majority, and offering educational support for young Gay and Lesbian adolescents who are in the midst of discovering their own sexual orientation.

Repeatedly, the task force makes clear that the process of producing the report included listening to the voices of Gay men and Lesbian women. The task force learned that the real experiences of these men and women must be included in the theological re-evaluation of homosexuality and that the results of such reflection cannot deny the integrity and witness of those whose lives hang in the balance. Particularly poignant are the excerpts of personal spiritual lives of Gay and Lesbian Roman Catholics. It should be noted that Archbishop Quinn, who is pointedly criticized in the report and who read the report before it was published, allowed the publication to proceed.

The final test of the church's credibility in supporting Gay and Lesbian civil rights hinges on her ability to examine herself when these same issues return to her own portal and raise questions about theological justification and institutional collaboration.

Jeffrey Bessler
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JUDE, 2 PETER. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 50. By Richard J. Bauckham. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983. xix and 357 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

Exegetical pyramid-building goes on without abatement. To change the figure, two documents that occupy less than nine small pages in many editions of the Greek New Testament are here inflated at a rate of 5,000%. This fact is not in itself a cause for alarm, but the publishers of this volume project a total of 52 for this new series. Yet Genesis, which in its totality as a literary work appears more important than Jude and 2 Peter, and which bristles with infinitely more problems than do these two documents, is to have 85 pages of Masoretic text discussed in only two volumes. Further cause for regret is the allocation of but one volume for the treatment of the Book of Revelation by David Aune, whose discriminating understanding of the Greco-Roman world can do so much to broaden our knowledge of factors that went into the preparation of that wondrous series of visions. Both of St. Luke's works will be short-changed. The editors of the Anchor Bible Series have tried to make some amends for past discourtesies that the Third Evangelist has endured at the hands of his expositors (Joseph Fitzmyer did vicarious penance by using up over 800 pages without getting past chapter nine in his first volume.) If the space spent on Galatians in *Hermeneia* is transmitting any editorial signals, they must be to the effect that Luke's Gospel deserves at least four volumes; but "Word Biblical Commentary" anticipates only one for this vastly important document. And how will the editor of our journal compress all that he knows about 1 Samuel into a one-inch-thick book?

This series is designed for students who can read Greek with profit, but for those who are rusty the pain is lessened through liberal parenthetical renderings in English. Such editorial courtesy also makes the voluminous resources of the present work avail-

able to those (I refrain from using the patronizing term "laity") who do not classify themselves as clergy or specialists.

The commentary is arranged according to the following format: a bibliography, especially pertinent to the unit of text (one or more verses) under discussion; a translation, supported with textual-critical information; discussion under the heading "Form/Structure/Setting"; detailed "Comment" on the Greek text, with emphasis on relative probability of scholars' viewpoints; and summary "Explanation" of the unit.

Well-informed historical-critical methodology, with no discernible interest in the newer types of criticism, has entered into the production of this massive repository of learning. Bauckham endorses the "literary fiction of Petrine authorship" for 2 Peter, and argues well for authorship of "Jude" by the brother of Jesus.

The weakest aspect of the commentary is the author's failure to account adequately for notable formal-stylistic contrasts betwen 2 Peter 1 and the balance of the epistle. On the other hand, Bauckham has certainly succeeded in focusing renewed attention on two documents that have been honored more by specialists in esoteric lore than by proclaimers of the Good News that is contained in them. Many publishers require chiding for pricing their books out of the reach of students. Such is not the case here. At less than six cents per page (with Greek font!) this book is a bargain.

Frederick W. Danker
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LONELINESS: THE SEARCH FOR INTIMACY. By Craig W. Ellison. Chappaqua, New York: Christian Herald Books, 1980. 240 pages. Cloth. $8.95.

This is a good introduction to a rapidly growing problem among people of all social levels and backgrounds. More than 17,000,000 adults live by themselves and so are prime targets for loneliness that can so rapidly and thoroughly cripple the body and the spirit of those affected. In a growing measure, psychologists are pinpointing loneliness as the number one mental health problem in the United States today.

The author touches many major points and brings to bear his understanding of scriptural and psychological principles that relate to loneliness. The book would be a good thought starter for Bible classes, Christian service groups, and so forth, although it does not purport to be a profound diagnosis of the problem. The result is that at several crucial points the author offers joltingly superficial solutions to very complex problems. In other words, the book lends itself well to introductory purposes and should not be used as a final solution to all the problems that are discussed.

Herbert T. Mayer
Christ Seminary — Seminex

DER BRIEF AN DIE RÖMER. 1. Tielband: Röm 1-5. Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum neuen Testament Vi,1. By Ulrich Wilckens. Zürich: Benziger. x and 337 pages. Paper. DM 58.00.

This first volume of an unusually significant commentary deals with a central biblical text that has had theological significance in the division of, debate between, and growing mutual appreciation of Roman Catholics and Protestants. It is part of a project by a team of German speaking Catholics and scholars of the Reformation traditions to produce a joint commentary. All the writers are committed to the use of critical methods, to the significance of the Old Testament for the understanding of the New, and to the use of this commentary to foster the conversation between the confessions and between scholars of different theological directions or schools.

The present volume is one of three projected as necessary to cover Romans. Wilckens is a scholar of acumen and bibliographical competence, one who argues his own position coherently. He views the critical method as compelling him to deal with the history of interpretation and the effect of the theology of Romans at every step of the way (he calls this the *Wirkungsgeschichte*).

Wilckens hopes that his commentary will make a contribution to the use of Romans as an instrument to call Christians back into unity. That is the function it served originally in the first century, where Paul was dealing with a situation that had arisen in the eastern Mediterranean church. Paul was convinced that the Judaistic Christianity of the east was ruining the missionary opportunity of the gospel. Paul wards off this threat in the west and prepares a defense for his coming trip to Jerusalem in the letter.

If Christians today will recall the function that Romans played in the earlier church, then it can become a means of unity. Today both sides of the sixteenth century schism read the Bible critically — with a resultant convergence in interpretation. Both sides also still use the Scriptures as authority in matters of the faith. The renewal of interest in Romans can lead to renewed vitality in the quest for unity.

The commentary proper for each section of the book presents extensive bibliography, Wilcken's translation, and then an analysis (rhetorical, logical, literary), interpretation, and summary statement of the signifiance of the text. The second of these (interpretation) is where technical exegesis, learned and extensive, is given. In the summary statement the history of interpretation comes to extensive expression and evaluation. It deserves wide reading — and, one hopes, translation.

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NEW TESTAMENT ESSAYS. By Raymond E. Brown. New York: Paulist Press, 1965. 280 pages. Paper. $4.95.

Collections of essays usually die young. What does it mean when a collection of essays originally published in various journals between 20 and 30 years ago is now in a third edition? The contents of those essays must be recognized as possessing clearly superior inherent worth, or the author must be an especially important or intriguing figure, or the essays must have some other historical significance. Maybe the price is just so pleasantly low as to be irresistible!

The essays are valuable in and of themselves. The bulk of them treat aspects of John's Gospel and the results are incorporated in Brown's well known commentary. Brown is certainly an interesting individual, working quite consciously both as modern scholar and devoted churchman. His scholarly production is impressive both in quality and quantity. His four big fat books on the Gospel of John, the Epistles of John, and the Birth and Infancy Narratives standing side by side weigh several pounds and take up a good six or seven inches of shelf space. And that does not even include his three volumes of collected essays and other books.

Brown himself presents his book not merely as a study of texts and not as a record of personal accomplishment, but as a sounding in the history of modern Roman Catholic scholarship. He is a representative of a broad movement, and he is apologist for that movement.

Elsewhere he speaks about the vigilantes on the Roman Catholic right who fear modern biblical scholarship, and about the extremists on the Roman Catholic left who in the name of biblical scholarship deny the physical reality of the virginal conception or bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Brown is the very model of a Roman Catholic who is simultaneously both critical scholar and devout churchman.

Robert Smith
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SINAI. By Kazuyoshi Nomachi. New York: Everest House, 1981. 128 pages. Cloth. $24.95.

This is a collection of stunningly beautiful photographs, mostly in full color. The format is large (9½ x 13) and some photos are spread across two pages, rendering their statement all the more impressive.

The text, prepared with F. V. Johannes, and the photographs of Nomachi, an internationally renowned artist with the camera, together constitute far more than a mere decoration for the coffee table, set on display for easy browsing.

The photographs are works of art with an iconic or mandalic quality. We have here a loving meditation on a harsh land and an isolated people, produced by an artist who has gazed upon faces and landscapes until they yielded up unexpected secrets to his camera.

Robert Smith

THE BIBLE AS THE CHURCH'S BOOK. (Library of Living Faith). By Phyllis A. Bird. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982. 118 pages. Paper. $5.95.

It was a delight to read this sensitive and wise book about a difficult and often divisive topic among Christians: the importance, extent, and authority of Scripture and the various ways in which to read and interpret it. Bird treats the topic in seven chapters: 1. The Church's Book; 2. Crisis and Canon; 3 Sola Scriptura; 4. The New Criticism; 5. Incarnate Word; 6. "Abraham Begat Isaac"; 7. The Stranger on the Road: Historical Criticism and the Church's Faith.

Bird's preference for the historical-critical methods ("listening aids") as the correct way of approaching the ancient record of our forebears in the faith is evident throughout the book (e.g., her explanation of genealogies, which "function primarily as social statements not as biological records . . . as the relationships change, so do the genealogies.") She successfullly uses the metaphor of a pilgrimage or tour in a foreign country to illustrate some of the things we must do when trying to understand Scripture and to appropriate its message for our own lives. She writes, "We often behave in our biblical travels . . . like 'typical' American tourists, who want to enjoy a foreign country from the safe and comfortable distance of an air-conditioned bus or hotel, uncontaminated by contact with the local people except on our terms . . . We are like tourists who speak only English and reprimand those who do not understand us . . ." (p. 87f).

But even the best book cannot escape some criticism. The fact that the Hebrew Bible, for example is also the living and life-giving Scripture for our Jewish brothers and sisters is not stated strongly enough. Christians need to understand that it was the Hebrew Bible, our OT, which gave the Jews the spiritual strength to survive the persecutions and pogroms instigated against them by Christians for over 1700 years and to rise from the ashes of the Holocaust and rebuild the state of Israel. The various "Canons" among Christians, with the resulting different dogmas and theologies, are not sufficiently treated. Finally, the "sexism" in Scripture is noted without much discussion, but its inflammatory connotations are immediately defused by the statement "but it is not the message."

A superb little book. I recommend it to all beginning seminarians and especially for Adult Forums — and wherever else Scripture is studied.

Walter L. Michel
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Briefly Noted

Between 1933 and 1943, Catholics, Lutherans, and the German Christians (the collaborationist group) were involved in a dread struggle over the soul of Germany. Peter Mattheson has collected 68 documents from this period for **The Third Reich and the Christian Churches** (Eerdmans, $5.95). It includes statements by Hitler, a vitriolic attack on the Old Testament by a Dr. Krause, excerpts from the Barmen Declaration, and Pius XI's encyclical "With Burning Concern" (1937), protests against Hitler's euthanasia policy, and much more.

Henri J. M. Nouwen is an outstanding leader in spiritual formation who recently resigned his position at Yale to move to Peru and learn from the life of its church. In **Making All Things New** (Harper, $6.95) he offers a primer to the spiritual life. He asks us to look critically at our own lives and to accept Jesus' call to enter the life of the Spirit. He recommends two disciplines: "Through the discipline of solitude we discover space for God in our innermost being. Through the discipline of community we discover a place for God in our life together."

Need a follow–up on Allen C. Reuter's article on stress in the August, 1981, issue of *Currents*? Try Keith W. Sehnert's **Stress/Unstress: How You Can Control Stress At Home and on the Job** (Augsburg, $3.50). Tips on exercise and diet and suggestions on how to manage stress. A final personal action plan will help readers set goals for their lives.

Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels (Theological Students Fellowship, $2.50) is a bibliographic guide broken down into sections dealing with literary criticism, linguistic studies, tradition criticism, historical criticism, and biblical theology. Nearly 1,000 works are listed (two by Danker and one each by Krentz and Smith from the Christ Seminary faculty), and brief summaries or evaluations are given for many of them. Along the way editor David E. Aune inserts brief paragraphs on methodology, definition of terms, chronology, and the like.

James L. Crenshaw fills a sorely-felt need with **Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction** (John Knox, $9.95 paper; $16.50 cloth). The author, a professor at Vanderbilt and a leading scholar of the wisdom literature, defines wisdom and assesses the role played by the sages. After focusing on wisdom's central emphases, he "introduces" Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, and the wisdom psalms, reviewing both their theological content and the present status of literary investigation of them. Finally, he shows how the sages tested all their convictions by experience, and how Israelite wisdom manifests continuity and contrast with similar literature in the ancient Near East.

Another competent and popular entre to wisdom literature is provided by John J. Collins in **Proverbs, Ecclesiastes** (John Knox, $4.50). This volume is part of a new series called Knox Preaching Guides. Collins holds that these two biblical books invite us to probe human experience and try to make sense of it. His short, non-technical discussions will probably be as useful for the Bible class teacher or person who wants to get in on the new excitement about wisdom literature as for the preacher. His bottom line: "Not least of the lessons of Ecclesiastes is the critical attitude to tradition and scripture which refuses to accept them as fixed dogmas but is prepared to wrestle with them for insights that can inform our lives."

Jack B. Rogers and Forrest Baird are the editors of **Introduction to Philosophy: A Case Study Approach** (Harper and Row, $8.95). This book describes the most important insights of Socrates, Aristotle, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Kierkegaard, Marx, James, Whitehead, and Wittgenstein. What makes this an especially exciting book is that each

descriptive essay or case study is followed by a contemporary response in which one of the philosopher's chief thoughts is evaluated for contemporary relevance. For Socrates the response deals with what might be worth dying for; for Kant the focus is on whether we can really think and talk about God. The descriptive essays usually end with an intellectual or ethical dilemma faced by the philosopher, that will whet the appetite of students who have to read this book and of other serious minded people who choose to read it.

Samuele Bacchiochi is the author of **Divine Rest for Human Restlessness. A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today** (may be ordered by sending $8.95 to the author at 230 Lisa Lane, Berrien Springs, MI). In an earlier publication Bacchiocchi examined political, social, pagan, and Christian factors which contributed to the abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday in early Christianity. The present volume is a more popular presentation which surveys the significance of the Sabbath throughout the Scripture and urges Christians today to use the 24 hours of this day for rest, worship, fellowship, and service of the needy. For Bacchiocchi, a Seventh-day Adventist, the Sabbath expresses God's best news to the human family: that the Lord has created us perfectly, redeemed us completely, loves us immensely, and will restore us ultimately.

Georg Fohrer has published an Old Testament introduction, a history of Israelite religion, commentaries on Job, Ezekiel, Isaiah and countless articles in journals and lexica. Since 1960 he has been the editor of the most prestigious German Old Testament periodical. Now 15 colleagues have written essays in his honor for **Prophecy, Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer** (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenchaft 150; Walter de Gruyter, DM 92). Technical in nature, they deal with such issues as the social psychology of prophecy, Ezekiel's new temple in comparison with the Temple Scroll from Qumran, Hosea and Israel's foreign policy, and the way in which the original words of Ezekiel were expanded and updated for new situations.

Gerhard Krodel, dean of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, has written **Acts** for the Proclamation Commentary Series (Fortress, $3.95). Following the benefactor model of Frederick Danker of Christ Seminary — Seminex, he underscores the universal scope of Luke's doctrine of God and sees the miracles as divine benefactions. According to Krodel, "Luke loves miracles, the bigger the better and the more the merrier, for God does not come empty-handed with mere words that amount to nothing." The bulk of the book consists of chapter by chapter theological commentary. A final essay deals with historical questions.

History buffs are likely to be fascinated by George W. Ramsey's **The Quest for the Historical Israel** (John Knox, $12.50). He explains how scholars "reconstruct" history and reviews the results and methods of historians who have written about Israel's patriarchs, the Exodus, covenant, and conquest. He demonstrates the hard times that have befallen the parallels between Israel's patriarchs and the people of Nuzi or the Amorites. He finds the Hittite parallels to the Israelite covenant unconvincing and dates the covenant to the deuteronomistic rather than to the Mosaic period. His survey shows the weaknesses of both Albright's and Mendenhall's views of the conquest. Albright appealed to archaeological destruction layers to demonstrate a thirteenth century conquest; Mendenhall saw the "conquest" as primarily a peasant's revolt against the Canaanite city-state system. A final chapter, "If Jericho was not razed, is our faith in vain?" criticizes both fundamentalism and those neo-orthodox scholars who developed the notion of "revelation in history." He notes that the tradition as reported in the Bible has had the power to enable people to develop a faithful self-understanding and lifestyle. Hence the gap discovered by the historian between this tradition and

the past-as-it-actually-was need not be theologically devastating.

The fourth century church historian Eusebius recorded fragments from Philo of Byblos, first or second century C.E., who had written an account of Phoenician religion, based on Taautos and Sanchuniathon. Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden, Jr. have provided an introduction, critical text, translation and copious notes in **Philo of Byblos, The Phoenician History** (Catholic Bible Association, $3.50). Philo's work is a valuable witness to Canaanite mythology and hence to the religious environment of ancient Israel. The authors, however, cast considerable doubt on the antiquity of Sanchuniathon, and they show a number of disparities between Philo's work and the actual Phoenician religion of the second millennium B.C.E.

Gospel Perspectives, Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels, Vol. II (JSOT Press, $16.75) examines questions of historicity from a scholarly and relatively conservative perspective. Edited by R. T. France and David Wenham, the 11 essays examine such questions as the literary genre of the gospels, the sources of the infancy stories in Matthew and Luke, the authenticity of the parables of Jesus, and the empty tomb tradition. The editors are convinced that the gospels present an essentially historical account of the words and deeds of Jesus, and they believe that a recovery of this belief will prove liberating both to scholars and the church.

The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship. By Ronald F. Hock. (Fortress, $7.95). This book represents a slight reworking of a thesis submitted to the faculty of the Yale Divinity School. His thesis is that "Paul's tentmaking, far from being at the periphery of the apostle's life [as all previous interpreters of Paul have wrongly assumed] was actually central to it." (p. 16) However, the evidence is not strong enough to support the thesis, as Paul Sampley points out in his study of legal influences in St. Paul. Nevertheless, the book does give interesting insights into aspects of tentmaking and economic life in Paul's world. (Herbert T. Mayer)

The Horizontal Line Synopsis of the Gospels. Greek Edition. Volume I. The Gospel of Matthew. Compiled by Reuben J. Swanson. (Western North Carolina Press, $19.95). Swanson became convinced that synopses printed in parallel columns were difficult and misleading. In 1975, therefore, he published a synopsis in parallel *lines* based on the English text. The horizontal arrangement does not prejudge the relationships between the Gospels, and it permits citing each gospel completely in its natural sequence. In this volume, Matthew is always in the first line. Subsequent volumes will give each of the other three gospels pride of place. In each volume the parallel readings from the other gospels are printed in horizontal lines beneath the exemplar or lead gospel. The layout and the compiler's underlinings greatly aid the reader in visualizing the relationships among the gospel.

The Philistines and their Material Culture By Trude Dothan. (Yale, $45.00). First published in Hebrew in 1967, this English translation contains an updating of the now abundant archaeological record. After reviewing the literary and pictorial evidence, Ms. Dothan surveys the forty-one sites where excavations have turned up Philistine antiquities. The bulk of the book is given to a meticulous description of five groups of Philistine pottery, of their cultic vessels, and of their burial customs, including especially their famous anthropoid coffins. The Philistine presence in Canaan began about 1190 B.C.E.; its culture lasted until the mid tenth century, when assimilation and defeat by David put the Philistines into eclipse. While the Philistines came from the Aegean or Anatolian regions, their culture is a mixture between imported and native Palestinian elements. Their pottery, for example, was locally made, but reflects a variety of cultural influences — Mycenean, Egyptian, Cypriot, and Canaanite.

It would take a Robert M. Grant to write a study like **Eusebius as Church**

Historian (Oxford, $29.95). He compares the church father's early *Chronicle* with his later, ten-volume *Church History*. Many scholars admit that Eusebius rewrote Books VIII-X to bring his theology up to date as emperors and attitudes changed, but Grant, Professor at the University of Chicago, demonstrates such revision for books I-VII as well. Not free from controversy, Eusebius had to explain why he did not become a martyr during the Roman persecution, and why he had been quoted by Arius in the Christological controversies. At one stage of his career Eusebius held that the apostles practiced sexual abstinence; later he wrote about the marriages of the apostles, their wives, and their children.

Nelson's Bible Encyclopedia for the Family. Edited by F. F. Bruce, et al. (Thomas Nelson, $18.95). This attractively arranged volume is divided into twenty categories. There are the usual and the expected — the story and contents of the Bible, modern translations, archaeology — and also the more esoteric but human — the home, the family, clothes and jewelry, farming and fishing, sport and leisure, health and sanitation. The book is devoid of footnotes and bibliography, but loaded with colorful pictures, simple diagrams, and generalizations. This is not a book for seminarians or pastors, nor is it the place to find out really when and how the Bible was written. But for people who want information in small, easily digestible mouths-full, who thrill to pictures of biblical scenery, who want no-nonsense information on the plants, the animals, and the geography of the Scriptures, or who want to be able to distinguish between a daric and a denarius without making a career of it, this book will be a happy find.

Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives. Volume II. Edited by Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis. (Abingdon, $10.95). After two essays on methodology, this paperback contains thirteen literary-critical essays on Old Testament narratives, one on Judith, and three on the New Testament. Conventional biblical scholars will miss the usual questions of history and theology, but they may well be enriched by gaining new insights into how a given work is structured or organized, how changes occur in its characters, and how readers respond to a work. Literary criticism promises to expand aesthetic appreciation of the Bible, and it provides a way to teach the Bible in public education in a non-sectarian way.

Palästina. Historisch-archäeologische Karte. Edited by Ernst Hohne. (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, DM 44). Imagine two sheets of paper, each 2′ x 3′ on which is drawn in fourteen colors a relief map of Palestine (scale 1 x 300,000). All important place names from ancient and modern times appear on the map, each equipped with a symbol that indicates when the city existed. Nine small maps are fitted around the edges and cover the more out-of-the-way places like Edom and Syria. An index volume lists the cities, their attestation in literary documents, their Arabic and Hebrew spellings, and where to find them on the maps. This beautiful reference tool has been reprinted from **Biblisch-historisches Handwörterbuch,** a standard contemporary biblical encyclopedia.

Le Livre de Jérémie. Edited by P. M. Bogaert. (Louvain University Press, 1500 Belgian Francs). This book contains nineteen essays on the historical setting of Jeremiah, the relationship of Jeremiah to other writings (e.g. wisdom, Ezekiel), the use of the Septuagint in literary criticism, and exegesis of selected passages. The writers represent an international and interconfessional spectrum and write in French, German, and English. Jeremiah is the longest prophetic book in the Bible (its 52 chapters take up 116 pages in the Hebrew Bible whereas Isaiah, the next longest, takes up only 105). Contemporary textual and redactional critics have demonstrated that much of that length comes from those who supplemented and edited the original Jeremiah tradition. This anthology has a number of essays by leading scholars that solidify this position.

The 17 essays in **Where the Spirit**

Leads: American Denominations Today (John Knox, $7.95) originally appeared as a series in the *Christian Century*. Pulled together, with an introduction and afterword by Martin E. Marty, the essays are sprightly expressions of the "state of the union" in American churches by denominational insiders (Richard E. Koenig sums it up for Lutherans). Marty expresses surprise at the preoccupation with order and structure: "We invest millions in reordering, and not one thing changes in the fortunes of the churches or their impacts on the world." This paperback would make an interesting text for an adult education course or provide a palatable update on what we used to call comparative symbolics. The title may be a bit misleading or even insensitive since the book also contains a stimulating essay on Judaism today.

Jesus and the Future. By Richard H. Hiers. (John Knox,$9.95, paper; $16.50, cloth). Hiers finds that an apocalyptic orientation holds a central place in the beliefs and message of Jesus, but that modern interpreters fear that if these features were allowed to stand, Jesus would appear to be out of step with modern thought and belief. The result: interpreters avoid, counter, or explain away much or all of these features. After surveying in detail the eschatological views of Jesus Hiers concludes: "This expectation [of Jesus] was not fulfilled. But if the God in whom we trust is the same as the One proclaimed by Jesus, we too may experience the eager longing and confidence that he will, in his own way and time, make things right. . . . We may be so bold as to trust that he can use even our small acts of obedience, justice, and love for his own purposes, which surely encompass, but far surpass our best human hopes and understanding."

Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1880-1980. (Scholars Press, $15.00.) It all began with a meeting of eight people in a professor's office, but by its centennial the SBL numbered nearly 5,000 professional biblical scholars. S. tells the story of these exegetes (remarkably these lovers of ancient documents often kept spotty records of their own history) as their organization changed from a northeastern club to its present open-ended shape and its feverish series of lectures and publications. There are anecdotes galore about the great and the near great of American biblical scholarship.

The Succession to the Throne of David. By Leonhard Rost. (The Almond Press/Eisenbrauns, $12.95.) When this volume was first published in German in 1926, it marked a major turning point in the study of the historical books. R. viewed 2 Sam 9-20 and 1 Kgs 1-2 as a block of material, united by theme and style, dealing with the question of who should sit on the throne of David after him. He believed that this document was written to the greater glory of Solomon, in the early years of the latter's reign. Thus R. departed from the view that the books of Samuel were an intertwining of sources like J and E, and subsequent scholarship has followed him in detecting narrative blocks like the Succession Narrative, the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4-6; 2 Sam 6) and the History of David's Rise (roughly 1 Sam 16-2 Sam 5) lying behind our present books of Samuel. This English translation is graced by a particularly sensitive essay by E. Ball, in which he assesses the strengths and weaknesses of R's achievement.

Richard A. Norris, Jr. provides the many things needful for a proper evaluation of **The Christological Controversy** (sc. in the early church [Fortress, $6.95]). In thirty-one pages he lays out the issues and describes the players in the drama; and then in some 120 pages he lets the players say their piece in their own way. Editor William G. Rusch points out the importance of in-depth knowledge of the patristic period for proper ecumenical discussion today. The series continues with **The Trinitarian Controversy** (Fortress, $6.95), edited and translated by William G. Rusch. The primary texts here cover the period from 319 C.E. (the preaching of Arius) to 419 C.E. (the completion of Augustine's *On The Trinity*). The main ways in which this controversy were to be resolved were

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already clear by the Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E.

The Theologia Germanica of Martin Luther, now in a new edition by Bengt Hoffman (Paulist, $7.95) was a treatise first published around 1350, but republished by Luther in 1518. The Reformer prized this volume almost as much as the Bible and the works of Augustine. As a mystical-ethical tract, it describes the soul's relationship to Christ, the wiles of the devil working through our nature, such obstacles to faith as self-will and pride, and the Christian paradox between liberation from rule and obligation to rule.

The Library of Christian Classics presents; **Luther: Early Theological Works** (Westminster, $9.95). In this paperback reprint James Atkinson presents English translations of Luther's Commentary on Hebrews, 1517-18, his Disputation against Scholastic Theology, 1517, the Heidelberg Disputation, 1518, and his answer to Latomus of Louvain, 1521. Though not as famous as the 95 Theses of 1517 or the Three Treatises of 1520, these four works round out the picture of the great reformer in his formative period.

Robert G. Clouse surveys the first two post-Reformation centuries in **The Church in an Age of Orthodoxy and Enlightenment** (Concordia, $3.95). His thumbnail sketches of the movers and the movements from 1600-1800, however, are sorely lacking in interpretation and perspective. An incisive analysis of Orthodoxy would help the reader understand why the next century brought the parallel, if highly divergent, reactions we call the Enlightenment and Pietism. Many generalizations are banal ("J. S. Bach's life was not very distinguished except for his music.") or unilluminating ("Nationalism, when supported by science, liberalism, and socialism has been a potent challenge to the church in the modern era," a whimper with which the book ends). The subtitle on the cover contains a typo. Instead of 1600-1700 read 1600-1800!

Targumic Traditions and the New Testament. By J. T. Forestell, C.S.B. (Scholars Press, $12.00.) The Targums are Aramaic translations of the Old Testament, and they have been extensively investigated in recent years, especially to learn more about Jewish exegetical traditions. These new insights into Judaism often help us understand the exegetical-traditions presupposed in the New Testament. In this book, Forestell gives a brief summary of 362 books and articles, provides a cross index to specific passages in the New Testament, and concludes with a subject index. The word of God in the Targums, for example, is often a creating and revealing force, much like the logos in John.

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Can Seminaries Really Change?

Walter Stuhr

President, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Recently I had a conversation with the director of one of the national church program units. It had seemed to me that the collaboration between seminaries and units such as his tended to be sporadic and unimaginative. I asked whether he had any suggestions as to how collaboration might more effectively take place. I expected him, as a "bureaucrat," to make suggestions having primarily to do with paper, visiting experts, workshops, or some combination of them. Therefore, I was surprised when he answered, "You can help change the mindset of the people, to make them more receptive to the directions in which the church is trying to lead them." For example? "Becoming a multicultural church; providing social services which include political and economic advocacy; coming to grips with a national security policy based on nuclear weaponry."

There are three basic assumptions in his answer, in addition to those involved in the particular directions: 1. that the mindset of the people makes them unreceptive to these directions; 2. that the mindset can be changed; 3. that seminaries can contributes to the change process. Everyday experiences, verified by systematic surveys amply attests to the presence of a mindset which tolerates official statements and public pronouncements, but is indifferent or resistant to personal and congregational implementation. Or, put another way, the mindset tolerates going on record for change, but supports practicing the status quo.

As for the possibility of changing the mindset, it sometimes comes as a revelation that "change" is too limiting a concept for that which is envisioned by the Good News, which is no less than *transformation* — first from bondage under the law to freedom through the gospel, and second from a behavioral pattern determined totally by self-interest to one devoted to the well-being of the neighbor. It may be demonstrable only in exceptional cases, but it is undebatable that the Church is founded on the possibility and expectation of radical change. Change then ought to be an objective of every sermon, every Bible study, every pastoral call, as well as every statement and program of the national church bodies. (In that respect it is only as it should be that we are committed to forming a *new* — a changed church, not simply a merged church.)

But what about the third assumption? Can the seminaries contribute to the change process? If they are to have a part in the church, especially a new church, the answer had better be "Yes!" So a more helpful question would be how do the seminaries conceive of their contribution? As institutions of theological education, we are best equipped to conceive of it in terms of knowledge — new information, new insights, new ideas. Yet there is a great difference between receiving and assimilating knowledge, and integrating it into a new mindset. For that, the will as well as the mind is involved; it is a spiritual as well as an intellectual process. Therefore, while knowledge is necessary, it is only one component of change, serving sometimes as reinforcement and confirmation of change rather than cause.

The seminaries' contribution toward changing the mindset of the church, therefore, should embrace a comprehensive experience of life for their participants — faculty and staff, as well

as students. Neither "education" nor "training" is adequate for conceiving of the seminaries' objective. "Change," indeed "conversion" is what we are talking about. To accomplish this, the seminary experience should include the intentional cultivation of the basic conversion dynamic released at baptism. The structure of academic and administrative decision-making and implementation should be oriented to discovery rather than preservation. Curricular experiences should be designed to evoke change. All of this would contribute to an ethos which celebrates rather than resists change.

Is this a realistic expectation? Again our attention is drawn to the fact that a basic premise of our faith is the possibility and expectation of change. Why shouldn't the seminaries be in the midst, indeed the forefront, of that which stimulates change and is itself being changed? At the meeting of the PLTS faculty preceding the one at which we welcomed our new colleagues deployed from Seminex, the comment was made, "We shouldn't expect them simply to adapt to us; we should expect to become a different faculty because of their participation." A small, but significant illustration of the point!

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