August 1983
Volume 10
Number 4

CURRENTS in theology and mission

BEGINNING AGAIN

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Printed in U.S.A.

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CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION is published bimonthly, February, April, June, August, October, December, by Seminex, a non-profit organization, 539 North Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63103, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Subscription rate is $8.50 per year. Second Class Postage Paid at St. Louis, Missouri 63103.

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

August 1983
Volume 10
Number 4

CURRENTS in theology and mission

Published by

Christ Seminary — Seminex
in cooperation with

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

Note: After July 15, 1983, address all business correspondence to: *Currents in Theology and Mission,* 1100 E. 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615.

Beginning Again

Each morning marks a new beginning as Christians, fortified by mercies that fall fresh as dew, go to their day's tasks with a clean slate and a fresh commission. Each day confronts the church with new challenges or the opportunity to redo the tasks we or our forebears muffed in the past. Even the great Lutheran fact of our decade — the coming together of the AELC, ALC, and LCA into a new church body — signals the enduring power of God's grace and reminds us of an unfinished ecumenical and missiological agenda.

The August issue inaugurates a new phase in the history of *Currents in Theology and Mission.* Three seminaries — LSTC, PLTS, and Wartburg — now begin to cooperate with Christ Seminary — Seminex in publishing *Currents.* Articles by Aune, Braaten, and Rochelle are only the down payment on the coming theological smorgasbord while associate editors Carl E. Braaten, Paul Jersild, and Robert Smith are the guarantee that their colleagues in Chicago, Dubuque, and Berkeley will make regular appearances in these pages. A hearty welcome to the hundreds of new readers from the alumni/ae and supporting clergy of the cooperating schools who begin the habit of reading *Currents* with this issue!

Carl E. Braaten reviews how the question of a mission to the Jews has changed after the Holocaust and the founding of Israel. Various attempts to resolve the problem on the ecclesiological level do not go deep enough. Christologically, however, faith in Jesus as the Messiah is the foundation of the church *and* the chief point of difference with the Jewish community. The messianic identity of Jesus requires an apostolic and catholic mission — for the eschatological future of God's kingdom and to the whole world in its splendid diversity. The criterion of apostolicity is "whatever it takes" to set forth the finality and universality of that messianic salvation which the apostles witnessed in the crucified and risen Jesus. Apostolicity today may mean only dialogue and conversation with Jews, but "apostolic dialogue" will be about such basic issues as the messiah, the kingdom, atonement, and resurrection.

Why have Lutherans and other Christians sought to reform the liturgy in recent decades, and what has really happened through such reform? **Michael B. Aune** believes that word and rite together communicate the full reality of Christ. Those who argue that worship is something said and those who argue that it is something done miss the tie between content and communication. Uncared-for liturgy says something negative about the gospel, just as uncared-for proclamation denigrates the good news. Liturgical activity and expression do not just represent historical or doctrinal truths; they actually accomplish or perform the promise of the gospel.

Old heresies keep showing up in new packaging, and no heresy has been more persistent or virulent than Gnosticism. **Ralph Moellering** reminds us that the Gnostics asked how a person could be liberated from the world of matter to become a partaker of the celestial sphere of light. For them the God of the Old Testament erred in creating the world while their Jesus was a docetic figure who helped people to discover the divine self which was within them. Gnosticism denies an Infinite Being who is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, holy and beneficient. The author finds a Gnostic strain in the Theosophical Society, the Unification Church, Scientology, and a variety of other modern cults.

Families that feud, according to **David F. C. Wurster,** are fighting for high stakes. The main issue in life is how a human being becomes justified or righteous before significant others in life, especially one's God. In the counseling case discussed in this article, the members of the family could appear righteous to the counselor, to each other and to themselves as long as they could make one member of the family a scapegoat. As time went on the members of the family learned that they did not need to use another member of the family to make themselves righteous. The cross is finally the one thing helpful in all of our quests for righteousness, whether that be civil righteousness or the righteousness of faith.

Premarital counseling is often a generic catchall for a variety of necessary and useful pastoral tasks. **David J. Rolfe** suggests that the church break down this ministry into education, assessment, counseling, spiritual preparation, and wedding orchestration. The value in distinguishing these several tasks is to clarify our methodology and to connect the couple with the appropriate dialogue partner — sometimes trained laity are more skilled than the pastor; sometimes professional counselors are needed. When a congregation requires preparation for marriage, it assumes its obligation to do its very best for its engaged couples. Handing out this article to engaged couples could make their — and your — task easier.

To minister in a pluralistic world requires that we know where to draw the line between who is inside the Christian community and who is not. **Jay C. Rochelle** points to baptism in water in the name of the Trinity as the one sure *principium dividendi.* This means that the church must often say no when asked to provide funerals for the unbaptized. Those who marry, however, belong to each other because of the covenant they make with each other and not because of their baptismal covenant. This suggests that ecclesial discipline (saying no) need not be invoked in the same way for weddings as for funerals. The author invites a defense for the opposite position, and we promise to print convincing and responsible discussions of that other side.

President **William E. Lesher's** column on the back cover begins a new, regular feature. The presidents of each of the four seminaries cooperating in the publication of *Currents* will take turns commenting on a current topic in church or world. Next issue: President **Walter Stuhr** of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

To begin again as editor of *Currents* brings with it a wave of excitement, enthusiasm, and anticipation. To begin each day as God's renewed daughter or son is the height and the depth of being baptized. So on this day, with *Currents* in hand, once more, with feeling...

Let us begin!

Ralph W. Klein,
Editor

Jesus Among Jews and Gentiles

Carl E. Braaten

Professor of Systematic Theology, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

I. Introducing the Theological Problem

From the beginning of my theological career I have always been aware of an indispensably close connection between Christianity and Judaism, Christians and Jews, the Church and Israel. No doubt this awareness was originally grounded in the preeminent place given to the biblical canon — both Old and New Testaments — by the Lutheran community in which I was raised, and it was certainly heightened through studies in the history of theology, particularly the encounter of patristic Christianity with Gnosticism, which tried to de-Judaize the Christian faith, and in our century the encounter of the Confessing Church with the "Nazi Christians", who similarly threatened to rid Christianity of its Hebrew connections. There never was any doubt in my mind that the Church Fathers and the Confessing Church were right. And I have also maintained that in the Christian encounter with other world religions, the Hebrew writings hold a unique place as foundation for the New Testament witness, and must never be supplanted by other religious writings in the missionary situation, such as the Upanishads. Nevertheless, this sense of closeness between Christians and Jews has never been elevated for me to a level of a clear and coherent Christian theology of Judaism. And I am unable to claim that I have achieved such a thing to this day. Hence, I am grateful for this opportunity to set forth some ideas "along the way."

As a Lutheran theologian I am also aware that I am not breaking new ground, but that I represent a community that has had a long history of relations with the Jewish people, and more recently has been involved in a series of theological dialogues. The Department of Studies of the Lutheran World Federation has published a report of a consultation held in Oslo, entitled "Christian Witness and Jewish People," (1975), and the Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. cosponsored a colloquium with the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, whose papers are published in a book, *Speaking of God Today, Jews and Lutherans in Conversation (1974).*[1] *However, what I* have to say does not attempt to summarize previous publications, as though there were a consensus to build upon, but rather embarks on a path of inquiry which I hope might prove promising.

I am also aware that the present conversations between Lutherans and Jews take place in a new context, conditioned by two major contemporary historical events, the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel. My brief paper can

[1] *Speaking of God Today,* edited by Paul D. Opsahl and Marc H. Tannenbaum (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974).

make no claim to have rightly assessed the impact of these events on either the Jewish or Christian consciousness at work in doing theology today. Some theologians who call for a post-Holocaust theology have been deeply influenced by these world-historical events, and their theological proposals reflect the radicalism which the magnitude of these events demand.[2] In this changed context many theologians are convinced that all talk of a Christian mission to the Jewish people is out of order. Is this a theologically grounded conviction or only a prudentially motivated call for a moritorium?

In the changed context Lutherans bear a special kind of burden vis-a-vis the Jewish people, because the birthplace of Lutheranism is the graveyard of millions of Jews. Fewer then 30,000 Jews are living in Germany today. No wonder there has been a keen interest among Lutherans to probe as deeply as possible the relations between Christians and Jews.

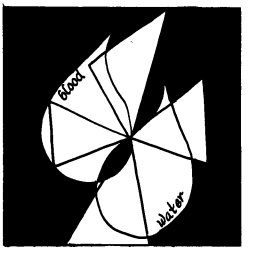
II. The Mission to the Jews before the Holocaust

There is no such thing as a uniform Lutheran theology of mission to the Jews. In the nineteenth century theologians oscillated between an anti-Semitic and a philo-Semitic approach. Powerful theological thinkers, such as Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Harnack, regarded Judaism as obsolete and Jews as fit candidates for absorption into a modern enlightened religion which they called Christianity. In his dogmatics classic, *The Christian Faith,* Schleiermacher offers this proposition: "Christianity does indeed stand in a special historical connection with Judaism, but so far as concerns its historical existence and its aim, its relations to Judaism and Heathenism are the same."[3] In a similar way Harnack wrote: "To repudiate the Old Testament in the second century was an error, which the great church was right to reject; to retain it in the sixteenth century was a fate from which the Reformation was not able to free itself. But to conserve it since the nineteenth century as a canonical source is the result of religious paralysis in the church."[4] In Hegel's dialectical interpretation of history, Judaism represents a primitive stage in the history of religions, superceded by Christiantiy as the absolute religion. In this climate the mission to the Jews took the form of

[2] See Paul van Buren, *Discerning the Way, A Theology of the Jewish Christian Reality* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide, The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979).

[3] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* trans. by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p. 60.

[4] These sentences were written by Harnack in 1921 in his famous book on Marcion, and here quoted from Helmut Gollwitzer, *An Introduction to Protestant Theology,* trans. by David Cairns (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), p. 126.



proselytizing and assimilation by Christian baptism, the underlying premise being contempt of things Jewish.

In polar opposition to this anti-Semitic approach to *Judenmission* was that of Lutheran theologians who struggled against the devaluation of the Old Testament in Neo-Protestantism. Lutheran theologians like von Hofmann, F. Delitzsch, and C. E. Luthardt supported Jewish missions by a profound love for the Old Testament and deep respect for Jewish people.[5] They accepted a biblical theology of the history of salvation *(Heilsgeschichte)*, and believed that God's election of Israel had a continuing significance, when viewing its history from an eschatological perspective. Is such a concern for Israel's vocation in the history of salvation nothing but a more pious form of theological anti-Semitism, as a growing circle of post-Holocaust theologians charge?

As a result of the 19th century approach to Jewish missions, there was a growth in the number of converts to Christianity. The International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA) and Jewish Christian communities were formed. This has spurred a controversy whether the term "Hebrew Christian" is not a contradiction in terms. As recent as the 1960's the debate over the status of the term "Jewish Christian" was carried on within the Lutheran World Federation.[6] On the one side, Jews who became Christians were struggling to retain their Jewishness; on the other side, some theologians were arguing that being Christian is a third state beyond division between Jew and Gentile. The upshot, however, is that if the Jewish Christian minority did not cling to its Jewish heritage, they would inevitably be swallowed up into the dominantly Gentile majority, a fate that would entail a peculiar reversal of Paul's argument that Gentiles need not become Jews in order to become Christians.

To pressure Jews to leave behind their Jewishness when they become Christians drives them into a kind of "no-man's land," and yet, theologically, Lutherans have not succeeded in resolving the issue of a Jewish Christianity within the church. The hard line, represented by Karl H. Rengstorf, holds that a Jew ceases to be a member of his own people when he attains faith in Christ.[7] Countering this view is that of Karl Barth who wrote: "And only a cheerless, unspiritual way of thinking can occasion a Christian Jew to be ashamed of his origin from Israel or a Gentile Christian to hold it against him. It is a mark of supreme

[5] See Eva Fleischner, *Judaism in German Christian Theology Since 1945: Christianity and Israel Considered in Terms of Mission* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1975), pp. 44-50.

[6] See Eva Fleischner, *ibid.*, pp. 53-68, where she has a chapter on "Jewish Christians."

[7] K. H. Rengstorf, "The Place of the Jew in the Theology of the Christian Mission," *Lutheran World* (1964) 279-295.

indelible honor to be a Christian Jew."[8] The controversy within the Lutheran World Federation in the 1960's was not theologically resolved. Rather, it was decided that further study was needed "of the term 'Jewish Christian' which shall include consideration of its origin, its meaning and its implications for Christians in the State of Israel as well as elsewhere."[9]

It seems to me that the question of "mission, witness, conversion, or outreach" being addressed to Christians and Jews today can be answered by Christians only within a comprehensive theology of Judaism that begins at both ends of the spectrum of the history of Christianity. At this end we begin with the sheer fact that some Jews already are Christians. How do we understand the fact that Jewish Christians do exist in the church today? Would it be better that they did not exist? Is there something abnormal about it? Abnormal to whom? Is catholic pluralism in Christianity meant to include people from all cultures, nations, races, genders, languages, and classes, except Jews? Does such a limitation on the meaning and mission of the church in world history make any sense? This last question drives us to the other end of the spectrum, the origins of Christianity according to the New Testament writings. There we find that Christianity began with a Jew and as a messianic movement within the horizon of Judaism. All the earliest Christians were Jews; the most primitive elements of the apostolic *kerygma, didache,* and *paradosis* developed on Jewish soil; the first missionaries were Jews bringing a message "made in Israel" to the major cities of the Gentile world.

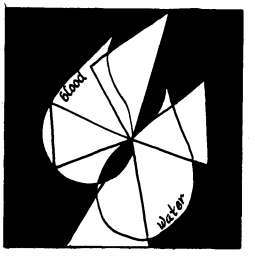
Even the resurrection of Jesus, as Pinchas Lapide reminds us, was originally a "Jewish faith experience,"[10] and not something which the Gentile world cooked up. How do we understand the fact that the first Christians were Jews, and that from their apostolic viewpoint it was entirely "normal" for Jews and Gentiles to become reconciled by a Jewish name? Isn't there something abnormal about the intervening centuries between the two poles when Christianity became almost exclusively Hellenized, and when Jews who became Christians were made to feel unwelcome in the church they founded, or pressured to shed every trace of their Jewishness?

It may be that the cash value of speaking of a Christian "mission" or "witness" among Jews is to be seen as a case of Hellenized church reaching out for the Jewish roots of its own identity. Some Christians have sensed that placing Jews in an unapproachable class is perhaps a reverse kind of anti-Semitism,

[8] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), Vol. II/2, p. 228.

[9] *Lutheran World,* Vol. XIII, No. 1 (1966) 66.

[10] Pinchas Lapide, *Auferstehung, Ein jüdisches Glaubenserlebnis* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1978).



and that the loss of the Jewish presence in the church leads to an over-Hellenized Christianity. Again Gnosticism and Naziism are extreme examples of a Christianity with a Hebraic void.

III. The Ecclesiological Dimension of the Issue

Terms like "mission," "witness," "conversion," and "outreach" are not self-explanatory. Their meaning is linked to the theological context in which they are being used. Today many would abandon all these terms in favor of more neutral terms like "dialogue" or "conversation", on account of so many miserable experiences and horrible memories. At a deeper level we are not quibbling about words, but about an issue that is inescapable from the side of both Jews and Christians. The issue is: How do we understand ourselves as "the people of God"? The church's relation to Judaism is ultimately a theological issue that strikes at the very core of the *ecclesia* and its self-understanding as the covenanted people of God.

Within recent discussions among Lutherans, one meets a variety of views on the relation between the church and Israel.[11] On the one side is the position of radical discontinuity. Let us call this the theory of displacement; God rejects old Israel, the people of the old covenant, and raises up a new Israel, the people of the new covenant, and this is the Christian church. In the first edition of his book, *Jesus: God and Man,* Wolfhart Pannenberg, represented this view. He wrote: "With the message of the resurrection . . . the foundation of the Jewish religion collapsed. This point must be held fast even today in the discussion with Judaism. One may not be taken in by benevolent subsequent statements of liberal Jews about Jesus as a prophet or allow that the conspiracy for Jesus' death was merely a failure of the Jewish authorities. There may be some truth in such explanations. But the conflict with the law in the background of Jesus' collision with the authorities must remain apparent in all its sharpness: either Jesus had been a blasphemer or the law of the Jews — *and with it Judaism itself as a religion* — is done away with."[12] Since then Pannenberg has modified his views and has expressed regrets for having

[11] See the two volumes, *Der Ungekündigte Bund, Neue Begegnung von Juden und christlicher Gemeinde,* ed. by Dietreich Goldschmidt and Hans-Joachim Kraus (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1962), and *Das Gespaltene Gottesvolk,* ed. by Helmut Gollwitzer and Eleonore Sterling (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1968).

[12] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus — God and Man,* trans. by Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 254-255.

reached such an erroneous conclusion, and is now very much involved in promoting dialogue between Christians and Jews on the basis of common ground in the biblical God who is above the Law.[13]

On the basis of this either/or position, Jews are no longer the people of God. There are only individual Jews, on a par with individual pagans, all to be treated equally as objects of missionary effort. On the basis of a new reading of Romans 9-11 it is fair to say that some Lutheran theologians have reconsidered the place of Israel among the nations, and now hold a theory of two covenants. Israel is still the people of God; its election has abiding significance. There exists a tragic misunderstanding between these two covenants, but rightly understood, they both retain a significance side by side in the divine scheme of things. There are two ways of relating to the Father, like the "elder and the younger brothers."

A different way of maintaining the ongoing validity of Israel and the Church is to affirm the one covenant of God with Israel. Israel is the original people of God, and the church is born of Israel, continuing the original covenant among the Gentiles. Krister Stendahl follows this line. I have often heard him speak of Christians as "honorary Jews". He writes: "We need to ask, in spite of it all, whether they are willing to let us become part of their family, a peculiar part to be sure, but even so, relatives who believe themselves to be a peculiar kind of Jews."[14]

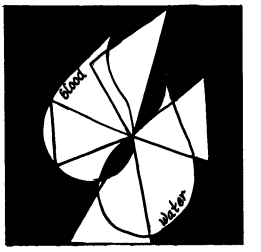
The meaning of "mission" or "witness" is vastly altered when we shift from the position of discontinuity to some kind of continuity. Yet, the issue of continuity versus discontinuity cannot be resolved at the level of comparing Israel and the Church. Why mission? Some churches press hard for mission, others back off in favor of dialogue. What is at stake? It is necessary to go deeper than ecclesiology to find the place where an answer might be forthcoming.

IV. The Christological Dimension of the Issue

Since Jews and Christians share so much common ground, it is important for both communities to try to specify the point at which their paths along the Way diverge. As Lapide says, the dialogue between Jews and Christians began as a dialogue between the brothers of Jesus and his disciples. Jews are related to Jesus by blood, and Gentiles by water.

[13] See *Judentum und Christentum — Einheit und Unterschied,* a dialogue between Pinchas Lapide and Wolfhart Pannenberg (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1982).

[14] Krister Stendahl, "Judaism and Christianity: A Plea for a New Relationship," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin,* Fall (1967), 453.



Franz Rosenzweig says the same thing: "A Christian is made, not born . . . Christian life begins with rebirth."[15] The basis of the difference between Christians and Jews has to do with the Messiah and the Kingdom.

Faith in Jesus as the Messiah is the foundation of the church, and the chief point of difference from the Jewish community. Jesus as Jesus is a bond of union between Jew and Christian; Jesus as Messiah is the point of separation. Many Jews today have reclaimed the Jesus of history as one of their own. "The 187 Hebrew books, research articles, poems, plays, monographs, dissertations, and essays that have been written about Jesus in Hebrew in the last twenty-seven years since the foundation of the state of Israel, justify press reports of a 'Jesus wave' in the present-day literature of the Jewish state. The fact is that much more has been written about Jesus in Hebrew in the last quarter century than in the previous eighteen centuries."[16] There is some validity to the notion that Jews and Christians are united in Jesus the man of Nazareth, in spite of being separated by Jesus the Messiah. Jewish scholars like Josef Klausner, David Flusser, H. J. Schoeps, Schalom Ben Chorin, and Pinchas Lapide have contributed much to our understanding of the Jewishness of Jesus. This bears out one of Martin Buber's insights: "The Jews . . . are 'brothers' of Jesus . . . Jews know Jesus from within in a way which remains inaccessible to those peoples who acknowledge his lordship."[17]

Jews and Christians may also be united by their common belief in the coming Messiah and the Kingdom. Christian identity is marked by belief that Jesus is the Messiah and the bringer of the Kingdom of God. Lapide formulates the matter this way: "We Christians and Jews are two types of messianic religions. Said otherwise, redemption is for us the unrelinquishable part of belief. The difference is only in how we perceive this messianism. With you the king stands in the middle, and with us it is the kingdom. With you the redeemer, with us the redemption."[18] Moltmann reinforces Lapide's observation: "Because Christianity arose out of the belief in the Messiah Jesus and lives in this belief, the original expectation of a messiah in person was pushed into the background in Judaism behind the expectation of a messianic time. And because in Judaism

[15] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption,* trans. by William W. Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 396-397.

[16] Pinchas Lapide, *Israelis, Jews, and Jesus*, trans. by Peter Heinegg (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1979), pp. 31-32.

[17] Quoted by Eva Fleischner, *Judaism in German Christian Theology Since 1945*, p. 128.

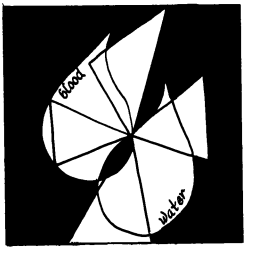
[18] *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine, A Dialogue by Pinchas Lapide and Jürgen Moltmann* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), pp. 72-73.

the hope of the Reign of God was dominant, the originally realistic expectation of the Reign of God in Christianity was pushed back behind that salvation which was already brought through Christ. Whoever on the basis of belief in the Messiah Jesus still hoped for that greater Reign was branded as having 'Judaizing tendencies.' Therefore Schalom Ben Chorin was right when he said, 'In general it can be said that while for Judaism the Reign overshadowed the messiah, in the Church Christ overshadowed the Reign.''[19]

Lapide summarizes their agreement by saying that Christianity is a "Who-religion." It asks: Who is God? Who is the Son of God? Who is the true Messiah? Whereas Judaism is a "What-religion." It asks: What has God done? What is his will? What does he intend for us?[20] A medieval rabbi under interrogation about the Messiah is supposed to have said: "If it is true that the Messiah of which our ancient prophets spoke has already come, then how do you explain the present state of the world?" It's a good question, one that seems to me still the question before us. If Christians claim that Jesus is the Messiah, then where is the Kingdom? If the Kingdom has come, then why doesn't the world shape up?

The question whether the church today has a mission to the Jews must be moved back to the source-documents of Christian beginnings. The dialogue between Christians and Jews must begin with Jesus of Nazareth. The kingdom of God was the central theme in the message of Jesus. Jesus was a "good Jew" in relating the coming of the kingdom to the world, as the power of God to overthrow the dominion of Satan and to create a new world of lasting righteousness and blessedness. Jesus expected God to establish the power and glory of his Reign in the immediate future. Instead, the world has gone on without any real fulfillment for two thousand years. Was not Jesus' expectation of the coming kingdom proved wrong by the ongoing course of history? For when God comes in the power of his rule, the world must change. Things cannot remain as they are. God's coming Reign is the power to destroy all resistance to his rule and freely to grant his gracious love to those in desperate need of a new beginning — poor people, tax collectors and whores. Poor people will become happy, the hungry will be satisfied, and those who weep will laugh. There will be a turnabout of all things when the kingdom comes. And this kingdom is God's kingdom, not a result of human beings becoming more religious and doing good works, and not by military violence and political negotiation. The ethics of Jesus are laden with eschatological presuppositions.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 85.



Scholars have debated for decades what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God. It is now a firmly established result of scholarship that Jesus' person cannot be separated from his kingdom message. His message had aroused hope that God was coming soon in power and glory to put an end to misery, poverty and oppression, but instead Jesus got caught up in the power struggles of his time that led to his death on the cross. So where was the fulfillment of Jesus' keen expectation of the coming of God and his kingdom, to make things right and sinners righteous? It was shattered on the cross. The fulfillment did not come to pass as expected. But after the crucifixion you find a few friends of Jesus interpreting the death and resurrection of Jesus as a down payment on the kingdom which Jesus preached. In this way the person of Jesus became incorporated into his message.

Thus it is not wrong to say that while Jesus preached the kingdom of God, the apostles preached Jesus Christ. Loisy said it perhaps more cynically: "Jesus preached the kingdom of God, but what came was the church." In any case, the claim of the apostolic gospel is that the messianic identity of Jesus and the arrival of the kingdom are bound up with his cross and resurrection. A corrolary of this apostolic claim is that faith is the only mode of access to the salvation which the coming of God with his kingdom has established in the person of the crucified and risen Jesus. This message is called by Paul both "scandal" and "foolishness' to Jews and Greeks, but I feel that it is equally true that it is an embarrassment to Christians. For what is the evidence that the Messiah has already arrived with his kingdom, if the world seems untouched by the good news of its arrival? What sense does it make to say that the victory has already been won, while people are getting killed and we are all perishing. I saw a graffito which said: "More people are now dying than ever died before."

Where is the evidence that the Messiah has already come with his kingdom? Did not Jesus himself promise that when the kingdom comes, there would be an end to suffering, oppression, poverty, hunger and death? But world history shows that these bitter realities still continue; they have not been diminished in the slightest degree. Our only answer in face of these facts is the apostolic one: the kingdom is hiddenly present in the person of the Messiah Jesus and the good news of this event can be received only through faith. All efforts to doctor up this bald proposition are cosmetic in nature. Nevertheless, the early church did acknowledge that in the end the kingdom will also transform the world. But that is obviously *not yet* the case. The arrival of the final kingdom is still outstanding with regard to the world itself. Thus the kingdom is split time-wise into an *already* and a *not-yet*. What has already happened is only the first fruits: preliminary, provisional, proleptic. The fulfillment, the parousia, is still to come.

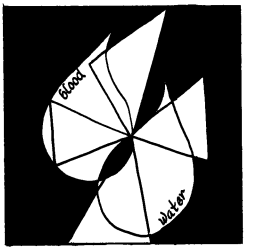
V. Mission in the Perspective of Eschatology

The truth on which Christianity as a religion is based is not dissociable from the living Word and faith. What the Christian message proclaims as true is not a predicate of the world ("It's been getting better and better!") or of the church ("Look at all its glorious success!") or of individual believers ("How deeply spiritual they are!"). Blaise Pascal knew that faith is a wager. "Il faut parier." On this side of faith it may all seem quite as reasonable as Hegel imagined, but Kierkegaard more deeply appreciated the precariousness of faith itself in a not yet finished world.

The eschatological cause of Jesus seemed to end in the failure of the cross. The promises of imminent fulfillment were shattered. Soon thereafter there arose a core of apostles witnessing to the reappearance of the crucified Jesus, which they interpreted as a resurrection occurrence within the framework of Jewish eschatological expectation. The immediate effect of the resurrection encounters was to create an apostolate commissioned to proclaim the message of the power and presence of God's approaching kingdom in the name of Jesus. The office of the apostle is centered in his witness to the resurrection as God's proof that the coming of his kingdom is indissolubly linked to the personal life and history of Jesus. The apostolic mission is not only a reflection of the light of God's eschatological action in Jesus Christ, but it is also an instrument bearing God's universal promises to the nations. The eschatological meaning of Jesus is carried forward in the universal mission of the apostles.

The root of Christian identity lies in its apostolicity. And apostolicity means doing the apostolic thing, namely, to continue the cause of Jesus under the conditions of its transformation through the events of Good Friday and Easter, as well as Pentecost and Ascension. There is no other way to retain continuity with the apostles than to keep on doing what they did — going with the gospel, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Math. 28:19) That is really all that mission means. There is simply no way for Christianity to remain Christian in the apostolic sense without resourcing its identity through preaching the gospel of the kingdom in the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus and spreading that witness wherever there are ears to hear. The eschatological message and the apostolic mission together define the being and meaning of the church in history.

The Christian church calls itself not only apostolic but also catholic, having in mind the universal scope of the apostolic mission. The mission is universal because of its eschatological character — reaching temporally and spatially in every direction, crossing all frontiers of culture and class and race and religion and age and sex and whatever else seems



to erect walls of partition and create *apartheid.* Therefore, a church can only be apostolic if it is also catholic, working in line with the universal horizon of the apostolic commission. "Catholic" means going beyond the limits of particularity, and for the church that calls for openness in two directions: to the eschatological future of God's kingdom, now already present in the Christ-event, and to the whole world in all its splendid diversity.

Being entirely related to Christ, the church must be related to the universal reality beyond its own limits because the eschatological salvation that preappeared in Christ sacramentally mediates the meaning and future of the whole world, and sends the church on its universal mission to carry the message of salvation wherever the door is open to do so. As an eschatological concept "catholicity" points to the movement of the church's universal mission "to the ends of the earth" and "to the close of the age." Then Christ will hand his kingdom over to the Father and God will be all in all.

This eschatological perspective of the *ecclesia apostolica et catholica* should guide the church in its worldwide mission and inter-faith dialogue. It leaves open the question of method and strategy for each generation to resolve under the conditions of its own time and place. Orthodox Christianity has frequently lost sight of the eschatological dynamic in the meaning of apostolicity, and has instead tried legalistically to repeat all the historically conditioned forms in which the apostolic mission expressed itself from age to age. What we need is a concept of apostolicity that can freely acknowledge the historical difference between the apostolic period and our present situation, without severing the vein of truth that connects the church of today with the apostolic mission. The criterion of what is apostolic in the church's life and mission, in its doctrine and polity, is whatever it takes[21] to set forth the finality and universality of meaning of that messianic salvation which the apostles witnessed in the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus.

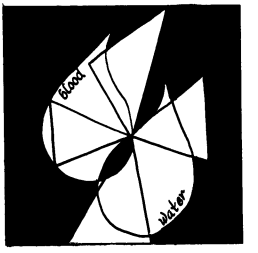
[21] When this address was given in the context of theological conversations between Jewish and Lutheran theologians, this phrase "whatever it takes" called for further clarification. My response is that early Christianity exhibited remarkable freedom under the Spirit to improvise structures to serve the faithful mediation of the apostolic gospel in post-apostolic times. These structures are now the givens of the classical Christian tradition which no Christian Church worthy of the name would do without. Such normative structures comprise what is frequently referred to as "early catholicism." The formation of the canon, the emergence of the eucharistic cult, the development of the creed, and the rise of the threefold office of ministry (bishop, presbyter, and deacon), are the four pillars of this "early catholicism." Certainly Lutheranism today has good reasons to retain continuity with these early forms of the Christian tradition. They provide the main guidelines of theological hermeneutics.

The church today can be free and open to take seriously its own historicity, the special needs and opportunities of every new time and place, without having to carry along all the baggage of the past. Things that were apostolic in earlier centuries may be irrelevant today, and things that were not perceived as apostolic not so long ago, such as the abolition of slavery and women's ordination, can be seen today as driven by the apostolic spirit in mission. What counts is not that the church replicates the past, but becomes free to be apostolic for its own time, often in contrast to the ways of being apostolic in former times.

The form of the apostolate in relation to Jews today may well be the sort of thing that is going on, namely, interfaith dialogue, witness, and conversation. Since a term such as *"Judenmission"* (Mission to Jews) carries so many negative connotations, it is well to drop it altogether. It is not a biblical word anyway. And a similar phrase like "evangelizing the Jews" is also one that can be dropped, because similarly it distorts the essential meaning of the apostolate, and has no New Testament backing. Let us drop these and other such loaded words, which succeed only in conveying the most unfortunate performances in the history of the Christian apostolate. Some evangelical missionary efforts to convert the Jews only recycle a nineteenth century approach which forgets what has happened in the meantime. Many people feel, both among Jews and Christians, that mission and anti-Semitism are inextricably associated. So where do we stand today?

Many Lutherans today wish to exchange missionary zeal for faithful witness in the context of dialogue and ministry in the form of service to Jewish people according to *their* needs. What is essential is that the Christian community retain the meaning of the apostolate as an eschatological reality in history, and this means "being sent" also to witness and serve with a message of reconciliation for all humankind.

In Romans 11:17-18, Paul says, "But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you." The dialogue between Jews and Christians must get down to the roots and in that sense become truly "radical," because both sides have been boasting about their branches, that is, the sorry ramifications of their conflictual histories. The question, "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?" is one that forces both sides to go to the roots of Judaism, of Christian beginings, and deal again with the meaning of messiah and kingdom and atonement and resurrection, all of which grew up on Jewish soil, and are simultaneously root concepts of Christian identity. Today, perhaps for the first time since the first century, we are in the position to hold such a dialogue. In such



a real dialogue I can quite imagine the possibility that sensitive persons will actually convert to the witness of the other side.

I agree with a statement made by Franz Rosenzweig: "Christianity, as the eternal way, has to spread ever further. Merely to preserve its status would mean for it renouncing its eternity and therewith death. Christianity must proselytize. This is just as essential to it as self-preservation through shutting the pure spring of blood off from foreign admixture is to the eternal people. Indeed proselytizing is the veritable form of its self-preservation for Christianity. It propagates by spreading."[22] But I would add only this: So does every other living religion. Today we have Christians converting to Hinduism, Catholics to the Moonie movement, Lutherans to neo-paganism, Blacks to Islam, and Jews to Christianity. When it happens, it happens, and all the slick de-programming techniques will not succeed in de-converting people back to the *status quo ante.* As Christianity is becoming more and more a minority religion in the world, it will have no advantage over others. When that time arrives, we will be back to something like the New Testament situation, where we have only *kerygma, didache, leitourgia, paradosis,* and *diakonia.* We will be driven back to the basic elements of the faith. The inter-religious dialogues are already helping us to clarify what these are.

[22] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, p. 341.

"To Move The Heart": Word and Rite In Contemporary American Lutheranism

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Throughout their history, Lutherans have been fond of making theological claims about what the event of worship does or should do. We have heard over and again, for example, that the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments really incarnate or communicate God's unconditional promises and blessings. We have been told that what happens in the worshipping assembly is that Word and rite move the heart "to believe and take hold of faith" . . . that the rite . . . is sort of a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word."[1]

The Lutheran perspective, i.e., how we look at our liturgical activity and how we understand its effectiveness, has almost always given priority and emphasis to God's doing and giving of "good things" to us — namely, "forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness."[2] Yet throughout the course of our history, our actual liturgical practice has not always been in line with these theological claims. As a result, there have been numerous reform and renewal efforts aimed at rendering credible and recognizable what our tradition has been promising for the worship event.

For American Lutherans, these efforts have, until recently, centered on the restoration of forms of worship from the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. Since the end of World War II and particularly since the mid-1960s, however, the concern has been to shape a liturgical practice that is catholic and contemporary as well as "confessional." What this has meant is a focusing of attention on issues of signification and communication — i.e., the dynamics of liturgical enactment and experience which are the very way of God's ongoing encounter and engagement with us.

In spite of these efforts to take seriously and to render credible what our theological tradition claims and indeed promises for the event of worship, the perception and evaluation of recent liturgical changes are quite often the opposite. Lutheran worship, we hear, has become too formal, too fussy, too Roman Catholic, too Anglican, too preoccupied with the details of furniture-moving, ecclesiastical haberdashery, and flawless "presidential" technique. Moreover, the efforts of liturgical "experts" to bring what actually goes on in our worshipping assemblies more into line with the claims of our eucharistic and baptismal theologies are often regarded as colliding head-on with the indigenous doxology and spirituality of our congregations. The incorporation of elements and themes not traditionally found in Lutheran worship such as the eucharistic prayer and sacrifice are perceived as betrayals and denials of our tradition because of their potential for

[1] "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," XIII, 5, *The Book of Concord,* ed. & trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 211-212.

[2] *Ibid.,* IV, 310, p. 155.



obscuring rather than enhancing our convictions about the Gospel.

Several questions emerge from these recent experiences of liturgical reform and renewal and they all seem to be centering on matters of Gospel-communication — of how God's presence and activity happen and become effective in the words, actions, interactions, gestures, movements, and elements of our worship. Or, to put the matter in another way, "How do Word and rite move our hearts to believe and to take hold of faith?"

The concern of this essay is to provide a historical-theological exposition of these questions and to suggest a way for Lutherans to approach as well as to understand our worship in such a manner that accounts for God's gracious invitation and activity and *our* response and reception. As exposition, my intent is to give an account of the whys and wherefors of liturgical reform and renewal among American Lutherans in recent years. As evaluation, my essay is intended as a critique of these whys and wherefors and to offer a reorganization of the discussion of liturgical development and interpretation. That is, what follows has a point of view: some ways of dealing with and thinking about the liturgy are more productive than others and I will try to say why.

I. Recent American Lutheran Liturgical Reform

An exposition of the whys and wherefors of liturgical reform and renewal among American Lutherans in roughly the last three decades requires a brief consideration of the point of view that has almost always determined our approach and understanding of the form, meaning, and function of corporate worship. This point of view is rooted in the insight and claim of the Lutheran Reformation that all Christian communication, whether it is proclamation, sacraments, ministry, teaching, theology, is to engender "a certain form of human behavior (which includes attitudes and ways of thinking)" that trusts and "clings to God in Christ alone."[3]

The liturgical-sacramental consequence of this point of view was more internal than external. That is, the traditional structures and ceremonies of the existing Western rite, i.e., the Mass, were for the most part retained except for those items which Luther regarded as blasphemously reversing the intent and direction of worship from what God has done and continues to do for believers to human efforts to placate and propitiate God. The primary concern was a her-

[3] George Lindbeck, "Article IV and Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue: The Limits of Diversity in the Understanding of Justification," *The Bulletin,* Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, 61:1 (February, 1981), 6.

meneutical one in the sense of understanding and appropriating that "creative word from God that sets lives right" so that we can take care of God's creation, do justice, and stop oppression and tyranny. In short, what is at stake is a view and an understanding of worship as that communication, indeed embodiment of the Gospel's "for-you-ness" which moves the heart — "the whole responsible self" to the most radical levels of involvement, responsibility, and selfhood in this history and in this creation.[4]

In Luther's *Formula of the Mass* and the *German Mass,* the emphasis was placed on clearly communicating and expressing the reality of Christian faith through preaching the Gospel, proclaiming the Words of Institution, and sharing the elements of bread and wine so that God's promises and blessings were perceptible to the senses, effectively present, and actually experienced by people in their lives. Both the Word as well as the rite as a picture of the Word communicated the full reality of Christ — "the true Christ, not that he sits here, as one sits on a chair, but as he is at the right hand of the Father."[5]

What is remarkable about such a liturgical perspective is the recognition that the truth which theology examines and seeks to understand, namely "Word" as God's visible and verbal communication, happens *somewhere* and looks and sounds like *something.* It is a Word spoken and enacted in a recognizable way. It is an embodied Word. Early Lutheran tradition affirmed, therefore, that liturgical activity is not some mysterious behind-the-scenes activity of God but an event of Gospel communication which manifests and effects all that God in Christ has done and continues to do for people.

The shaping, doing, and interpreting of Lutheran worship in the centuries following the Reformation, however, have often been evaluated as not always rendering credible these theological promises either in the words and actions of worshipping communities or in the awareness of individual believers. Various factors contributed to these developments. These included an antipathy toward making too much of human activity in the sight of God, the disciplinary injunction in nearly every Lutheran church order that there could be "no mass without communicants," and the already long established practice of infrequent communion which had

[4] Robert J. Goeser, "The Doctrine of the Word and Scripture in Luther and Lutheranism," *The Report of the Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue Second Series 1976-1980* (Cincinnati, 1981), pp. 119 and 121. I am especially indebted to my colleague, Dr. Goeser, for the insights he has given me concerning Luther's creative understanding of language as Christian communication.

[5] Martin Luther, *Works,* Vol. 36, p. 346; cited in Goeser, 121.



been so characteristic of the Christian West for centuries.

From time to time, though, there have been efforts of liturgical reform and renewal aimed at overcoming this lack of "fit" between what Lutherans say they are saying and doing in their worship and what they actually say and do. As mentioned already, the matter of harmonizing Word and rite has usually meant restoring forms and styles of liturgical expression from the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. In this regard, Eugene L. Brand has noted,

> The questions were "What is done?" and "How is it done?" When the question, "Why is it done?" arose, the answer was, "Because that's the way they did it after the Reformation," or "Because this is what the Church does" — answers resting on the authority of historical research.[6]

So, beginning with the *Church Book* of the old General Council (1868) and continuing through the *Common Service* (1888), *The Lutheran Hymnal (1941),* and to some extent *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958), Lutherans in America have sought to express their faith liturgically in an unabashedly "confessional" manner. That is, a recapturing of historically Lutheran liturgical forms was part-and-parcel of powerfully and meaningfully communicating the religious experience and insight of the Reformation in the American context.

While Lutherans may have agreed that their worship meant or expressed the relationship between God's Word and the faith of the community, they differed greatly as to how this meaning was produced or performed. For some, the harmonization of Word and rite involved a thorough-going repristination of sixteenth-century ceremonial. Others preferred the dignified and tasteful style of expression associated with certain Anglican models. Still others continued to use the images, objects, vesture, gestures, and music of their homelands. And, finally, there were those Lutherans who eschewed any expressiveness in favor of a polite, tidy, and privatized general American Protestant way of worshipping God.[7] But whatever liturgical style was employed, the operative assumption seemed to be that the "meaning" of what went on occurred somehow independently of the actual saying and doing of the worship event.

But with the liturgical renewal and reform efforts getting underway in the early 1960s, both in American Lutheranism and in other Christian communities, the focus of interpretive attention began to shift toward the dynamics of ritual

[6] "Lutheran Liturgical Renewal: The Pastoral Motif," *The Bulletin* 56:1 (February 1976), 26. (cf. n.3)

[7] Cf. the provocative and helpful study by Todd Nichol, "Liturgical Civility, Upward Mobility, and American Modernity," *Word and World* 3:2 (Spring 1983), 168-177.

enactment, signification, and communication. It is one thing to claim that worship is effective and communicative. It is something else again to discover, to recognize, and to experience what theology was naming, declaring, and indeed promising for and in the actual worship event.

That American Lutherans were becoming concerned with the words and actions of the liturgy as audible and visible communication of the reality of the one Word can be seen in various essays and official church statements which appeared in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Such a concern grew out of the recognition that theological conclusions can be inferred from the way in which the liturgy is done and that the theology which is intended and claimed can be contradicted by the liturgical expression. Extreme ceremonial scrupulosity as well as expeditious and sanitary ways of administering the Lord's Supper, for example, "say" as performances that God's promised blessings either can be manufactured by adroit ritual technique or that it does not really matter how the words are said and how the actions are done.

Thus, it was probably no accident that when the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) began it work of liturgical reform and renewal in the mid-1960s, attention was given to the medium of worship itself and how believers enter into the rite and are engaged by it. Rather than beginning with the traditional question on the liturgical agenda, "What makes a liturgy 'Lutheran'?", the concern of the ILCW was with the nature of the liturgical event itself.

Evidence provided by a body of ecumenical liturgical scholarship had indicated that worship is not so much something that is said, but something that is done. Its primary characteristic is *action.* Early Christians, for example, had gathered to read the Scriptures, to hear them explained and applied, to pray for their own needs and those of others, and to celebrate the eucharist. "All the crucial terms are action words," noted Eugene L. Brand in *The Rite Thing* which appeared shortly after the ILCW had begun its work: "celebrate, eat, read, and pray."[8]

The ILCW was seeking to take seriously the conviction that worship is not only grace-event but also faith-expression. The communal response to God's gracious salvation was to be expressed in a liturgical pattern which would pay significant attention to the "we" of the worshipping community. The result was *Contemporary Worship 2 (CW2).* The structure, text, and symbolic action of this rite — including an offertory procession, offertory prayer, eucharistic prayer, and fraction — sought to embody the fundamental conviction that what God in Christ has done and continues to do *for us* is communicated to human aware-

[8] (Minneapolis, 1970), p. 21.



ness and accomplished in human life in recognizable ways.

Yet the appearance of *CW 2* in 1970 precipitated a lengthy and often polemical debate over the question of whether this provisional eucharistic rite was really "Lutheran." The inclusion of elements such as an obligatory offertory procession, eucharistic prayer context for the Words of Institution, an invocation of the Holy Spirit, and a rubric for the breaking of the bread — elements not usually characteristic of Lutheran practice — was regarded as failure "to safeguard the biblical doctrine of grace alone."[9] The consequences of such liturgical changes, according to the critics of *CW 2,* could very well be a practice as well as a theology of worship which reversed the intention and direction of this event from being God's action on our behalf to our cooperative action with God. Since there is nothing clearer in Lutheran theology than the fact that Word and Sacrament are God's free gift, any liturgical expression which even implied that human dynamics effected that gift would be a cause for concern.

Of course, the ILCW had not intentionally sought to be "un-Lutheran," either implicitly or explicitly. But it had not been sufficiently attentive to or critical of some of the conceptualities which had guided and informed contemporary liturgical scholarship. It is certainly harmless enough, however, to assert that Christian worship is something Christians do or enact. But the employment of concepts such as the "four-action shape of the liturgy" and its ally "representation theology," with their accompanying dogmatic baggage was viewed as extremely problematic. While providing insights into what goes on in worship, these concepts, upon closer scrutiny, are not value-free or doctrinally neutral because they rest upon the assumption that human ritual behavior has an intrinsic ontological power to overcome the time-gap which separates foundational redemptive event and present experience, thereby producing effective, saving presence now.

For a Lutheran, however, such concepts are extremely problematic because of what happens to the fundamental Reformation insight into the Word as the bearer of God's presence. This Word, or "gospel," is not a substance to be manufactured, a past event to be reenacted, or a "sacrament" which mystically contains and conveys something called "grace" to believers. Rather, the Lutheran insight into Christian communication in general and liturgical communication in particular has to do with what is accomplished rather than with what is represented. What is crucial, therefore, is not liturgy as reenactment or reproductive of past events, but Word and rite, verbal and non-verbal discourse, making available and disclosing what God wishes and wills to give us.

[9] Oliver K. Olson, "Luther's 'Catholic' Minimum," *Response* 11 (1970), 17.

But, as is so typical of inter-Lutheran discussions (cf. the Election and Common Service controversies of the late nineteenth century and the interminable debates over scriptural authority and interpretation in this century), nothing seemed to be resolved. Instead, *Lutheran Book of Worship,* especially the rite for Holy Communion, provided a variety of options. For example, there may be an offertory procession. There may be a eucharistic prayer. There may be a fraction. Or, there may not be an offertory procession, a eucharistic pryaer, or a fraction. Such variety should not be construed as a compromise or a *cul-de-sac,* however, because a major implication of these options was that Dix's "four-action-shape-of-the-liturgy" was no longer the going hermeneutic appropriate to understanding the liturgical event.[10]

Since the publication and introduction of *LBW,* several candidates for the slot left vacant by the "liturgy as action" hermeneutic have surfaced. They range from a hermeneutic of symbols to a creative recovery and appropriation of traditional Lutheran insights into worship and sacraments, from taking the liturgy seriously as a source of theology to employing the insights of the human sciences into the inter-subjective and communicative nature of symbol and language.[11]

Such proposals are challenging us to grapple with the knotty questions of how Christian worship actually operates and is meaningful to those who are involved. Yet these candidates for a contemporary American Lutheran hermeneutic operate with some unexamined assumptions as well. Chief among them is a notion that symbols can be defined and that they have meaning independently of a cognitive or theological framework or "code" shared by those who are engaged in symbolic behavior. Recent studies have indicated, however, that symbolism is not that simple, pre-rational mechanism or device.[12] How, for example, do believers and worshippers know or perceive that light is a means of evoking something about Jesus Christ, that the water of baptism has to do with initiation into a way of life called Christian, or that sharing bread and cup expressed and communicates what Jesus Christ did and continues

[10] William G. Rusch, "A Background Paper for a Theological Review of the Materials Produced by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship" (January 1977), p. 33.

[11] E.g., Gordon Lathrop, "Pastoral Liturgical Theology and the *Lutheran Book of Worship:* A Reconnaissance," *Dialog* 18 (1979), 108-113, and Robert W. Jenson, *Visible Words* (Philadelphia, 1978).

[12] Cf. Dan Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism,* trans. Alice L. Morton (Cambridge 1975) and also his essay, "Is Symbolic Thought Pre-rational?" in *Symbol as Sense: New Approaches to the Analysis of Meaning,* ed. Mary LeCron Foster and Stanley H. Brandes (New York, 1980), pp. 25-44.



to do for Christians? Such meaningful behavior occurs because of an inter-related web of many elements — some within the rite itself, some within the worshippers, some within the larger faith-context. But *all* contribute to the construction of meaning in response to what is being said and done to and by believers.

An adequate liturgical hermeneutic cannot rest content with a focus on parts independently of the whole. Moreover, one cannot simply assume that "meaning" can be determined or recognized just by being attentive to isolated clues. Rather, like trying to comprehend the words of a language or the sentences and paragraphs of a text in relationship to the reader and to the larger environment, an adequate liturgical hermeneutic must consider the complex, inter-related web of many elements that function together to create, produce, and perform "meaning." Such a hermeneutic needs to proceed with the understanding that its goal is not simply explanation of the words and actions of worship but *interpretation* which is the act of the appropriate meaning. In the remainder of this essay, my intent is to show what this kind of liturgical hermeneutic might look like.

II. The Meaning Is In The Doing: Word and Rite Moving The Heart

Any expression of Christian worship is "a peculiar cultural incarnation of the common faith" and its form, content, and style of expression are "the product of a religious culture and spirit, the unique way that a particular faith community perceives, lives, and celebrates its Christian life."[13] This insight offered to liturgical scholarship by Robert F. Taft and corroborated by recent research in a variety of disciplines which have as their principal tasks the analysis and interpretation of human discourse indicates that any consideration of Christian worship cannot separate conceptions of *meaning* from conceptions of *communication.*[14]

Usual Lutheran approaches to the interpretation of worship have restricted meaning to theological intent or content — e.g., forgiveness of sins, grace, righteousness — and have left issues of communication to repristinators of (pick-your-century) ceremonial styles. What this disjunction does, among other things, is to regard meaning as a thing or a concept to be extracted by the tools of theological analysis.

Eric Gritsch and Robert Jenson have certainly pin-pointed this disjunction of meaning and communication in a recent consideration of matters liturgical.

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[13] Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance* (Roma 1975), p. vii. (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 200.)

[14] Cf. Thomas B. Farrell and Thomas S. Frentz, "Communication and Meaning: A Language-Action Synthesis," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 12:4 (Fall 1979), 215-255.

Lutherans, they note, have been continuously tempted

> . . . to suppose that so long as sermons are preached, and water, bread and wine are regularly present with the minimum "words," it does not really matter what happens otherwise; and Lutherans have hardly ever resisted the temptation. Naturally, one devoted little thought to what does not really matter.
>
> The charge is not merely — as Lutherans usually suppose it must be — that bad liturgy is aesthetically unsatisfying or annoying to scholars of ancient tradition. *Liturgy is the union of the audible and visible word, and is thus itself communication; and uncared-for liturgy is certain to say anything but the gospel, just as is uncared-for proclamation.* In congregation after congregation, pastors and leaders ignore or abet liturgy that says we are saved by works, then wonder why their verbalizing about "grace" is so ineffective. They abet liturgy throughout which the people are rooted to one spot (mostly to their seats, as if at a lecture), then wonder why the word there spoken is not experienced as an energizing message.[15]

Or, to paraphrase Melanchthon's observation in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, we wonder why Word and rite have not moved the heart to believe and to take hold of faith.

The overcoming of this disjunction between meaning and communication, in short the disjunction between Word and rite, requires a hermeneutical theory of doing which, I suspect, will make a great number of Lutherans nervous because of its concern with human activity. Yet at the core of the Luthern insight is the conviction that

> The Word of address invites and calls for a response. Communication is not completed without response, and the response is of the heart — in modern terms the whole, responsible self. . . . It is the Word which brings a person before God, *coram Deo.* Life *coram Deo* constitutes the movement from all objectivity and detachment to the fullest degree of involvement . . . responsibility, selfhood. . . . Word is communication, but not mere verbalization; it is communication clothed in history and creation.[16]

Placing the concern for meaning and communication in this larger context or "form of life" provides a Lutheran with conceptual as well as aesthetic and cultural knowledge that triggers expecta-

[15] *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 203. My emphasis.

[16] Goeser, "The Doctrine of the Word . . .," 118-119, 121.



tions of and for the worship event — expectations that become concretized in ways of thinking, acting, and feeling.[17]

Paying attention to this larger context — "the unique way that a particular faith community lives, perceives, and celebrates its Christian life"[18] — also enables us to have an expanded notion of meaning as an effect rather than as an entity. In this instance, context or form of life and stance on life is a key factor which influences the construction as well as the performance of meaning.

What also needs to be considered in the articulation of a hermeneutic of liturgical doing is the event of worship itself as a concretized instance or episode of meaning and communication. In this event, words, actions, movements, songs, gestures, and interactions set in motion a whole chain of activities that call for the exercise of certain human faculties. There is an intersection of the claims made by the Word and the rite with the expectations of the worshippers. In this mode of communication called liturgy, believers are told about and engaged in that reality called "faith." Meaning then is no longer an object to be defined but an effect to be experienced.

Even if we want to preserve the classical Lutheran distinction between what God does in Word and sacrament and what we do, we still cannot avoid paying attention to the hitherto neglected recipient of what and who is being communicated. An adequate liturgical hermeneutic — one which can illuminate and make understandable contemporary liturgical experience — must necessarily be involved with "pragmatics" — the *concrete practice* of, in our instance "liturgy," and the *conditions* which govern its use or performance. The concern, in short, is with how and why something is communicated, i.e., accomplished, and hence "meaningful."[19]

In terms of concrete practice, one needs to ask how we enter into the liturgical event of proclaiming, hearing, praying, ritually gesturing, and even the event of assembling itself in such a way that it becomes a religious encounter? And how does our doing, including our verbal doing, shape our knowing, our orientation in life, our direction or directedness? The key issue is that of *performativity,* i.e., how we do things with language in order to produce an effect or "meaning."

Instructive at this point are the approaches to human communication provided by those who have described and analyzed the process by which a reality is produced by means of language. The key

[17] Thomas S. Frentz and Thomas B. Farrell, "Language — Action: A Paradigm for Communication," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62:4 (December 1976), 334-335.

[18] Taft, p. vii.

[19] Harmut Haberland and Jacob L. Mey, "Editorial: Linguistics and Pragmatics," *Journal of Pragmatics* 1 (1977), 1.

insight, initially presented by the British philosopher J. L. Austin, thoroughly developed in the work of John R. Searle, and subsequently extended to other uses of language is the recognition that human speaking is not simply the stating of a fact or the reporting of information but is the doing or effecting of something.[20]

For example, in certain circumstances, saying something produces a consequential effect in the hearer: I promise you, I command you, I order you, etc. The uttering of words is doing or performing a deed. Such an utterance, a performance — a "performance utterance" — is doing something with words so that a particular effect is produced upon or in the hearer.

The understanding of these performative utterances or speech acts requires a going beyond the words which constitute them to the larger setting which enables them to be meaningful communication. This larger setting, with its regulative and constitutive "rules," conditions as well as makes possible the performance of meaning.[21]

What is so helpful about this performative utterance or speech act perspective is the light which it sheds on the pragmatic character of Christian worship — both in terms of the hows and whys of communication and of the context in which it occurs. Extended to that communication-event known as Christian worship, such a perspective helps us to realize that Word and rite function "to engender a particular state of affairs and to express recognition of its reality."[22]

These insights into communication and meaning offer an important vantage point from which to evaluate and reevaluate traditional Lutheran liturgical and doctrinal concerns. Recent studies of the roots of the doctrine of justification and the emergence of Luther's new hermeneutic as a result of his biblical studies have indicated that the Lutheran Reformation's radicalization of what Christian faith and life are all about resulted from a new understanding of language.

With respect to the doctrine of justification, for example, Gerhard O. Forde has noted that justification

> and the associated ideas of imputation, reckoning, forgiving of sins assume a primary place for the reformers because they involve a quite particular use of language: They *do* what they *say*. They promise, pronounce, declare, establish, decide the issue they are talking about. They do not just talk *about* or *describe* salvation, they actually *give* it.[23]

[20] Austin's book was *How To Do Things With Words*, ed. J. Urmson (New York, 1962); Searle's is *Speech Acts* (Cambridge, 1969).

[21] Searle, pp. 33-42.

[22] Wade T. Wheelock, "The Problem of Ritual Language: From Information to Situation," *JAAR* 50:1 (March 1982), 58.



Such a "reading of Christianity" was possible because of Luther's understanding of Word as "person, event, or proclamation."[24] Totally unlike the traditional Western way of interpreting reality as consisting of words and things — where "words by no means comprehend and bring with them the realities of which they speak"[25] but only signal or point to and then leave these realities "out there" or somewhere else, Luther had come to the insight, as a result of his biblical studies, that language, and most especially the language of God's self-communication, is "causative,"[26] or, as we would say today, "performative." That is, words are not empty ciphers or containers pointing to or waiting to be filled with the realities of which they speak. Rather, as Luther noted in his scholion on Psalm 109,

> Words are the vehicle, and the feet through which truth comes into us and over us . . . yet it [the word] has no other feet but its voice and syllables, which are materially the word in which the formal word — that is, its meaning — goes to the heart of the hearer.[27]

Luther's unique notion of the nature of language as performing a certain kind of action moves us from an understanding of liturgical activity and expression as a representation of historical and doctrinal truths to its purpose as an accomplishment or performance of the promise of the Gospel. Gathering, proclaiming, praying, setting apart bread and wine, and receiving the body and blood of the Lord Jesus act-out this Gospel-promise verbally and visibly. And as we can learn from a recent discussion of the structure of the act of promising, such an utterance is one of the strongest "indicating devices for *commitment*" that language provides.[28] Or, as Luther noted in his explanation of the Lord's Supper in the *Small Catechism:* "He who believes the words 'Give and shed for you for the remission of sins,' *has what they say and declare,* namely the forgiveness of sins."[29]

Such a promise is not an idea to be taught but a reality to be experienced. To use the language of our tradition, this reality is that vision of life and of the world, that "true human life," which the Bible and the Reformation call and which the liturgy *does* — "faith"[30] which is nothing less than the heart moved and hence transformed.

[23] "The Exodus from Virtue to Grace: Justification by Faith Today," *Interpretation* 34:1 (January 1980), 40.

[24] Goeser, "The Doctrine of the Word . . . ," 114 and 115.

[25] Robert W. Jenson, "Of Another Spirit," *The Bulletin* 62:1 (Winter 1982), 9.

[26] James S. Preus, *From Shadow to Promise* Cambridge, MA, 1969), p. 241.

[27] Cited in Preus, p. 253; I am grateful to my colleague, Robert J. Goeser, for bringing this quotation to my attention.

[28] Searle, p. 58.

[29] "The Sacrament of the Altar," VI, 8, *Book of Concord,* p. 352. My emphasis.

[30] Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism,* p. 68.

Ancient and Modern Gnosticism

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"Gnosticism" is an "umbrella word" which encompasses a broad range of concepts, ideologies, religious or pseudo-religious movements, and alleged heretical aberrations. In the most loose sense it can be used to refer to almost any esoteric cult.

Historians of Gnosticism have usually focused attention on various systems of mystical religious and philosophical teachings which endeavored to synthesize Christianity with Greek and Oriental world views. Gnosis is a Greek word meaning "knowledge". As a theological term Gnosis implies assured knowledge (certitude) in spiritual matters. In their own estimation the Gnostics were the illuminati of the ancient world — the privileged intellectual elite who were capable of comprehending and explicating the most profound mysteries. For Christian historians they are the adherents of heretical sects who propagated erroneous and dangerous illusions that were a serious threat to the development of orthodoxy.[1]

Until recent times it was generally assumed that a pure form of Christianity prevailed in the pristine communities of believers which was only adulterated and threatened by perverse tendencies and external intrusions in the post-apostolic era. However, the discoveries at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945, have marred this vision and caused scholars to reconsider some of their presuppositions. This collection of fifty-two texts would seem to represent early versions of Christian teaching. Elaine Pagels, one of the scholars who has participated in editing the writings from the Nag Hammadi library, concludes that "Contemporary Christianity, diverse and complex as we find it, actually may show more unanimity than the Christian churches of the first and second centuries."[2]

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[1] Cf. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion. The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 22, 23. "The extent of the gnostic area can be taken as narrower or broader, depending on the criterion employed. The church fathers considered Gnosticism as essentially a Christian heresy and confined their reports and refutations to systems which either had sprouted already from the soil of Christianity ... or had somehow added and adapted the figure of Christ to their otherwise heterogenous teaching ... or else through a common Jewish background were close enough to be felt as competing with and distorting the Christian message ... Modern research has progressively broadened this traditional range by arguing the existence of a *pre-Christian Jewish* and a *Hellenistic pagan* Gnosticism, and by making known the *Mandaean* sources."

[2] Elaine H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1981), xxiii. Pagels continues by affirming that "nearly all Christians since that time, Catholics, Protestants, or Orthodox, have shared three basic premises. First, they accept the canon of the New Testament; second,they confess the apostolic creed; and third, they affirm specific forms of Church institution. But every one of these — the canon of Scripture, the creed, and the institutional structure — emerged in its present form only toward the end of the second



How Gnosticism Began

Where and when did Gnosticism originate? This has been a controversial issue with a sharp disagreement between those who favor the traditional view of post-Christian Gnosticism and those who have adopted the view of pre-Christian Gnosticism.

Before the twentieth century almost everyone accepted the statements found in the writings of the church fathers who looked upon Gnosticism as a distortion of apostolic verities. A vigorous contemporary advocate of a post-Christian Gnosticism is Simone Petrement. In her judgment even the non-Christian or pagan varieties of Gnosticism are to be considered as posterior to Christianity. Gnosticism is derived from Christianity and not vice versa — even in small measure.

Challenging this long-accepted perspective are those modern scholars who profess to find substantial evidence for a pre-Christian origin of Gnosticism. The two leading figures in this effort to correlate Gnosticism with non-Christian and pre-Christian sources were Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920), a New Testament scholar who examined the early church as a Hellenistic-Jewish phenomenon, and Richard Reitzenstein (1861-1931), a philologist who attempted to pinpoint the beginnings of Gnosticism in Iranian and Mandaean traditions. In the early twentieth century Mark Lidzbarski published a number of significant texts of the Mandaeans, a Gnostic community which persevered in Southern Iraq and southwest Iran. Believing in the pre-Christian origin of the Mandaeans, Lidzbarski's dissemination of their texts had a tremendous impact, especially through the influence of Reitzenstein. Rudolf Bultmann even extracted the classic model of the Gnostic Redeemer myth from the works of Bouseet, Lidzbarski and Reitzenstein. In Bultmann's understanding, the parallels between the Mandaean texts and the Johannine writings showed that the simpler, fragmentary pattern of John must be derivative. Furthermore, Bultmann contended that the conflation of the mystery religion sagas about a dying and rising deity, the Gnostic idea of a Redeemer who comes to earth to save humanity, and the Jewish apocalyptic myth of a heavenly Son of Man was included in Paul's Christology, and eventually became determinative for Christianity.

In the 1950s and 1960s Pauline studies were largely under the influence of students of Bultmann who followed their mentor in assuming the pre-Christian existence of Gnosticism. However, Helmut

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century. Before that time, as Irenaeus and others attest, numerous gospels circulated among various Christian groups, ranging from those of the New Testament ... to such writings as the *Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip,* and the *Gospel of Truth,* as well as many other secret teachings, myths, and poems attributed to Jesus or His disciples."

Koester (educated in Germany, but teaching at the Harvard University Divinity School) and the American New Testament scholar, James Robinson, are much more cautious in not going beyond the available textual evidence. Some of Bultmann's disciples (e.g. Ernst Käsemann) have even defected and have come to doubt the reality of a pre-Christian Redeemer myth.

All the while, the claim has been made that Gnostic elements can be detected in parts of the New Testament and can be explicated in harmony with "Gnostic exegesis", that is, the hermeneutical principles of a man like Valentinus (c. 135-165 C.E.)[3] For example, in Colossians 1 the author asserts that he "became a minister according to the divine office which was given to (him)." His God-given mandate was "to make the Word of God fully known." He was obligated to communicate "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints." In a Gnostic understanding of these verses the apostle could be considered a unique teacher with extraordinary insight into the nature of ultimate reality. What would otherwise be only partially or inaccurately known — the most profound *gnosis* — can be comprehended and elucidated by an individual who is endowed with a superior intellectual capacity. In keeping with this same brand of exegesis one might identify the "saints" as the privileged people above and beyond the common rank and file, who are incapable of grasping the full truth or of appreciating the real message of salvation. According to Paul, Christ is "the hope of glory" whom he proclaims "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that (he) may present every man mature in Christ."

Both ancient and modern Gnostics would seem to be speaking in terminology and using concepts which could be construed as similar or synonymous. The gifts of divine inspiration (exceptional charisma) are attributed to the savants or intelligentsia. It could be someone like Mani (born about 216 C.E.) who reflected the thought of Persian Manichaeans in postulating a perpetual conflict between the realms of darkness and light or it could be someone in our contemporary world like Guru Maharaj Ji, founder of the Divine Light Mission, who promises his adherents a type of *gnosis* which will lead to a state of spiritual perfection and ecstasy.

Gnosticism appeared on the scene as a gigantic and variegated endeavor to form connecting links between the religions of paganism, occult speculations, and the Christian Church. What evolved was some of the most audacious and grandiose syncretistic systems the world has ever seen. Divine revelation was com-

[3] Cf. Elaine H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) and Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973).



bined with human wisdom. The whole undertaking was in accord with the all-prevailing drift of the age in the direction of syncretism.

Gnosticism Defined

Gnosticism was an eclectic movement in which cosmological myths, the philosophical thought of Greek and Oriental paganism, and the tenets of Christianity were all represented. The religions of Babylonia, Syria, Asia Minor, Persia, and India, the Judaism of Philo, and the Christianity attributed to Jesus and the apostles were all fused in the Gnostic crucible.

Even though Gnostics produced all sorts of hypothetical religious theories, that was not their primary concern. The underlying objective of Gnosticism was the avowed intention of presenting a way of salvation for a faltering world. All of the speculative elements are ancillary to the idea of redemption. The ultimate thrust is toward establishing a comprehensive religion in which aspects (facets) of truth are garnered from various sources and blended together in a presumably all-embracing totality. As might be expected, the mystery religions were imitated and employed to impart saving *gnosis*. Grandiloquent rituals were composed to expedite and enhance the achievement of the desired goal.

Basically the Gnostic was asking the same questions as the Jew or the Christian: What must I do to be saved? How can I regain harmony with the Source of my life? Invariably this led to further probing into the perennial problems associated with human existence: Whence God? How did the world come into being? How did they become fettered in the chains of matter? How can they be rescued from their dismal plight? How is the Redeemer? How do we attain immortality?

Integral to Gnosticism was postulation of a dualistic theory apparently derived from Syria under Persian influence. The assumption was that there are two antagonistic but undeniable realities operating within the universe: light and darkness. This physical dualism soon becomes a metaphysical dualism of spirit and matter. The world of matter is under the domination of the evil principle. From all eternity it is in violent opposition to the realm of spirit which is ruled by God. In this perpetual conflict some of the spiritual elements became imprisoned in the sphere of matter. In this adverse situation the world and humanity began, and likewise so did sin and misery.

In Gnostic thought there is an irreconcilable disparity between the cosmos which we perceive and the absolutely transcendent God. That God is hidden, concealed, unknowable. He is referred to as the Abyss, Source, or Primal Beginning of all things. The "I" of the Gnostic is a spark of the Absolute and

belongs to that divine being which surpasses everything in the universe. This "spiritual" ingredient, however, has become contaminated by its contact with the lower order of creation: first, with the body, controlled by sensual passions; second, with the soul, the center of psychic function. The precious spirit, wrapped within soul and body, has been trapped within these despicable elements. A person afflicted with this hideous malady is oblivious to the presence of the divine within him or her. Only an emissary from the celestial sphere above — a savior or a redeemer — can break the chains of confinement. Through a constant and steady absorption of *gnosis* the spiritual spark that lies dormant within the person is ignited, and the authentic self (the inner spirit) is liberated so that one becomes fully conscious of one's true identity.[4]

Valentinus, the most influential Gnostic teacher of his time (ca. 135-165), propounded a doctrine of the primal Dyad, one part of which is called Indescribable, and the other, Silence. From their relationship emanates the Father and the Truth, Logos and Life, Humanity, and Ecclesia, and from these proceed the whole fullness of the divine being. Portraying the divine being as a concordant combination of masculine and feminine hypostases, Valentinus asserts that the twelfth and youngest of these, Sophia, having severed herself from her counterpart, Theletos, sets in motion the devolution of the divine being. Consequently, a portion of the spiritual essence becomes intertwined with the ignorance, fear, confusion and grief she endured in her severance from the divine being. The purpose for the creation of the cosmos then becomes a means of rectifying the deplorable effect of Sophia's transgression. The redeemer figure sent from the "Pleroma" (the realm of pure spirit and full *gnosis*) transforms her four "passions" into the elements of air, earth, fire, and water.

This description became known as the emanation theory. From the *deus absconditus* (the hidden God) there was an egress of a long series of divine essences (aeons) whose inherent divine power diminished inversely with the distance of removal from the original divine source. This process of depotentialization continued until a point was reached where the good (spiritual) element came into contact with the decadent matter and was imprisoned in a material body. This is the explanation for the origin of humanity and the world.

The last link in the theogonic chain was the Creator or Demiurge.[5] It was assumed that this intermediary being occupied a middle position between the domain of the spirit and the world of matter. Usually he (or it?) was identified with Yahweh or Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament. Although not intrinsically and absolutely evil, the Demiurge was an inferior and antagonistic being — a sort of blind super-power who was unaware of Ultimate Reality (God), and who had unwittingly brought the world

[4] "Salvation" themes in some of our present day cults are similar. *Back to Godhead* is the name of the magazine begun in 1944 by A. C. Bhaktivedana Swami Prabhapada (died in 1977). His followers known as Hare Krishnas profess the Hindu belief that there is one Eternal Absolute in terms of which our own egos and our individual consciousness are simply illusions. Ideally, therefore, the goal is ultimately to lose one's sense of individuality and merge back into the Absolute. The primary ritual of devotion, the almost incessant chanting of the Mantra Hare Krishna is intended to expedite and accelerate the achievement of that objective.

[5] Literally worker (*ergos*) for the people (*demos*).

and human creatures into existence.

As already indicated, the foremost concern of the Gnostics was how to escape from mundane imprisonment. How can a person be liberated from the world of matter and become a partaker of the celestial sphere of light? Despite the depths of degradation to which human beings have sunk, they, nevertheless, deserve to be emancipated because they still retain vestiges of the spiritual realm within them. Redemption can only be initiated by rediscovering and reviving the spiritual ingredients which have not been totally obliterated within the human race. Since the demiurge would not and could not carry out the plan of redemption, the Highest Aeon, an emanation from the good but unknown God, came as a Deliverer to bring about the crucial renovation.

In many Gnostic texts this Redeemer figure is identified with Jesus Christ, but the understanding of his nature and mission differs considerably from the consensus which became established as orthodox Christianity. The arrival of Jesus on the terrestrial scene was acclaimed as the pivotal turning point in history. In much of its terminology, and in some of its concepts, it sounded similar to, if not identical with Christian dogmas.[6]

Yet, Iranaeus and his successors were convinced that it was a fraud and a deception because the crucial doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement were subverted or denied. Gnosticism, in most of the texts which have been discovered, implied Docetism. That the Supreme Being was fully identified with a human being was unthinkable. Matter is evil — what is purely spiritual cannot enter into union with it. One theory held that Christ had joined himself temporarily with the body of a uniquely spiritual man named Jesus. This amalgamation was achieved either at the birth or baptism of the man from Nazareth, and it was dissolved shortly before the crucifixion. Some Gnostics contended that Christ did not die at all.[7] What was reported to be his crucifixion was an optical illusion in which the man Jesus was

[6] For comparison in our modern era consider Mormonism which may sound "Christian" when it professes to subscribe to the authority of the Bible, but adds three additional sacred books to amplify its *gnosis:* The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants (special relevations avowedly given through Joseph Smith, and one communicated through Brigham Young), and the Pearl of Great Price (containing The Book of Moses, The Book of Abraham, and other esoteric writings). Mormons occasionally refer to the Virgin Mary and may seem to be teaching the Incarnation. In reality they are saying that the body of Jesus Christ was the product of the *physical* union of God the Father and the Virgin Mary. God is *not* fully sovereign and transcendent as in orthodox Christian thought. Rather he is undergoing an interminable process of development from a lower stage to a higher stage. Mormon soteriology speaks of Adam's fall, but makes it a blessing in disguise. While atonement is stressed, the purpose is limited to delivering everyone from death by providing everyone with the right to be raised from the dead. The doctrine of justification by faith is vigorously denied. Salvation in the highest sense is not merely eternal life with God, but receiving exaltation — becoming like God. Thus, in many respects, the Church of the Latter Day Saints, like ancient Gnosticism, is ostensibly a subdivision of Christianity. In fact many of its eccentric beliefs are modern offshoots of Gnosticism diametrically opposed to orthodoxy. cf. Anthony A. Hoekema, *Mormonism.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1963), 58-65.

[7] One of the Nag Hammadi texts, the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* portrays Jesus as teaching that "it was another . . . who drank the gall; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulders. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing in the height over . . . their error . . . And I was laughing at their ignorance." In James M. Robinson, General Editor, *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977) 332.

the real sufferer. By contrast orthodox Christians maintained that Jesus was fully human, that he was subject to all the experiences, vicissitudes, and woes common to all earthlings, and that his crucifixion was an historic and literal event. Even those Gnostics who affirmed the reality of Christ's suffering and death did not understand it as a sacrifice redeeming people from sin and guilt, but as a means for attaining a higher level of *gnosis* — for discovering the divine self within.

According to the proportion of spirit in their natural constitution, people were said to be spiritual, psychical, or carnal. The first classification referred to the *illuminati* who were especially sensitive to the presence of the spirit within them. They were the pneumatics and their salvation was absolutely assured. The second grouping was composed of Jews and Christians who had faith, but not *gnosis*. They could be called psychics whose souls were touched sufficiently to make them capable of eventual deliverance through faith and good works. The third category consisted of the *hylics* — the majority of people who were blinded from perceiving the truth by their carnality. They were eternally doomed.[8]

[8] In the eschatological beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses there is also a stratification of humanity. The 144,000 alluded to in Book of Revelation are the "bride of Christ" — the faithful adherents of the religion founded by Charles T. Russel in 1872. They have earned immortality and will inherit the invisible part of the new theocracy. Old Testament believers are consigned to the visible part of God's reign on earth. The "Jonadab class", the people of good will who collaborate with Jehovah's Witnesses, will be in some sort of intermediate state. Finally, there are those who will have an opportunity to prove their integrity in Jehovah's theocracy. On a hundred year probation they will have a second chance. If they fail they will be annihilated.

The Apocryphon of John

There is no uniformity in the total corpus of known Gnostic writings. It may be instructive, however, to illustrate the import of Gnostic concepts by summarizing the content of one important text.

The Apocryphon of John, for instance, attempts to supply answers to two basic questions: what is the origin of evil, and how can we escape from this evil world to reach our heavenly home? The highest deity is defined in terms of an abstract Greek understanding of perfection which excludes all anthropomorphism and all involvement in the defiled world. From this supreme deity emanates a series of light-beings, including Christ and Sophia. In the Apocryphon of John it is related that the fall occurs when Sophia desires to bring forth a being without the approval of the omnipotent Spirit or her consort. Consequently, in a calamitous blunder she produces the monstrous creator-god Yaldabaoth, who still retains some of the light-power of his mother. The vile Yaldabaoth creates angels to rule over the world and assist in the formation of humanity. Man himself is fashioned after the perfect Father's image which was mirrored in the water. A spark of animation brings man into existence when Yaldabaoth is tricked into breathing light-power into him. Thereby a furious struggle is inaugurated between the reflectors of light and the minions of darkness for the acquisition of the divine particles in man. The nefarious powers put man in a material body to keep him incarcerated. Pursuing their sinister conniving further, they also create woman and sexual desire to diffuse the particles of light and make extrication more difficult. Finally, Christ is dispatched to the nether regions to emancipate humanity by reminding people of their heavenly origin. Only those who acquire this

gnosis and have lived abstemious lives can be restored to the realm of light; the others are reincarnated until they, too, can become the beneficiaries of the saving knowledge indispensable for their deliverance.[9]

Gnosticism was condemned by the church fathers, and a credal consensus evolved which was called orthodoxy. Nevertheless, Gnostic concepts did not totally vanish. In particular, the occult features of Gnosticism — astral speculations and thaumaturgy persisted, and were integrated into some of the mystical and superstitious practices of the Middle Ages.[10]

Modern "Gnostic" Cults

One obvious example of a revival of Gnostic thought may be found in the dynamic Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's occult, semi-religious Theosophical Society initiated in 1878. It is estimated that her memory was hallowed as late at 1946 by some 50,000 Theosophists scattered around the world. Dabbling in necromancy she wrote *Isis Unveiled,* which she claimed was dictated to her by the Masters of Wisdom via astral light and spirit guides. Travelling to India with her companion Colonel Olcott, she searched out "secret doctrines", and set up her international headquarters at Adyar, Madras. Here she accumulated Theosophy's assorted bag of borrowings from Buddhism, Hinduism, Yoga, and the Hebrew Kabbalah. Simultaneously she incorporated the key Theosophist teaching of reincarnation into her total system, and developed her full hierarchy of "Masters" — Tibetan superbeings who guide the destiny of humanity. All the while, wherever she went she endeavored to impress prospective converts with her magical powers — such as the miraculous and well-timed materialization of teacups, pin trays, rings, and other objects.

Another illustration of the perpetuation of Gnostic type doctrines may be traced to the rise and expansion of Rosicrucianism. The symbol of this secret society which developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe was a cross with a red rose in the center. Also known as the Ancient Mystic Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC), various strands of its teachings have been preserved up to the present day. What is called an "International Supreme Temple" in San Jose, California has advertised a book, *Self Mastery and Fate* which promises to provide charts which will be like "maps of a voyage on the sea of life, showing just what can be expected each week and month, and what should be avoided and what should be done to bring success and happiness." This system, it is asserted, "has no equal in any form of astrology, numerology, or character reading."[11] In Oceanside, California, the top man in what is called the "Rosicrucian Fellowship" maintains that true devotees of this branch of the movement are so spiritually advanced that they are far removed from the inferior realm of ordinary mortals. In their parlance there are "elder brothers" — the real Rosicrucians — who are spiritually in the vanguard of their followers who are still confined to their abodes on our planet. These "elder brothers" are

[9] In *The Nag Hammadi Library,* 98-116.

[10] Cf. Colin Wilson, *The Occult* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973). 211: "There can be little doubt that the Gnostics preseved many of the traditions and ideas of the Orphics, and are therefore in the direct line of descent of the Western magical tradition of the Middle Ages."

[11] H. Spencer Lewis, *Self Mastery and Fate* (San Jose, California: Rosicrucian Press, n.d.) The advertisement is entitled "Your Life Revealed!"

higher beings who function on both the spiritual and the material plane and who occasionally send special messages to worthy earthly brothers. Just below the "elder brothers" are the "probationers," those who have completed at least two years of study and who take vows to abstain from meat, alcohol, tobacco and drugs, and subscribe to other Rosicrucian precepts.

Among all of the manifestations of Gnostic characteristics or emphases among our contemporary cults it may come as a surprise to most Canadians to be informed that there is an organization in our own midst which claims to be "of the traditional Gnostic descent." Incorporated in the province of Alberta in 1977 is the Gnostic Catholic Church of Canada, which traces its "spiritual ancestry back through the Cathars of the medieval period to the Bogomils of the Eastern Roman Empire of Byzantium to the Alexandrian Gnostic communities of the first three centuries of the common era." In the judgment of this "Church," "all paths to enlightenment are equally viable for the individual who attains *gnosis* through them" whether it be so-called "paganism," some form of Eastern mysticism, or any other route that leads to an elevated spiritual consciousness.[12]

The historical interpretations of the Gnostic Catholic Church of Canada are fascinating, even if they may strike some of us as bizarre and dubious. The Albigensian Crusade of the thirteenth century, in their understanding, eradicated seven million Gnostics. Following that catastrophic decimation the "Church" went underground as a theological enterprise. Besides the Rosicrucians, they maintain that the Troubadours and the Knights Templar were offshoots of medieval Gnosticism. Allegedly, the cohesiveness of the Gnostic Catholic Church was preserved through certain schools of initiates communicating through a group known as "Wandering Bishops," men who consecrated priests of the Church. These individuals taught their secret wisdom to various people in symbolism and conceptual language chosen for the appropriateness of whatever time, place, and culture they found themselves. Among the most famous "Wandering Bishops" of the past century was Rudolf Steiner.[13]

In the broadest sense most of the so-called "cults" which are causing so much anxiety and controversy on the contemporary scene could be referred to as Gnostic — some to a greater degree than others. The Unification Church seems to fit into this mold when its founder Reverend Sun Myung Moon asserts that the Bible is a "cryptogram," a source of wisdom written in code and secret meanings that he alone has been able to deciper successfully.[14] Hare Krishna, most readily recognized when its adherents with their shaven heads indulge in their primary ritual of devotion, could be viewed as yet another variety of Gnosticism. Chanting "Hare Krishna"

[12] According to a letter or announcement addressed to "seekers of light" mailed to me in 1978 by the Gnostic Catholic Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

[13] *Ibid.* Steiner is alleged to have contributed to the avid interest which Hitler and other Nazi leaders had in occult phenomena.

[14] Like the Children of God (another "cult" which has attracted young people, but presently appears to be in decline), the Unification Church argues that it is uniquely Christian, the only modern religion truly in full harmony with the will of God. Unlike the C.O.G., which has had a loosely formulated theology, the Unification Church has a rather complex theology laid out in *Divine Principle,* Moon's major writing which offers an "updated" interpretation of the Bible.

repeatedly, the devotees of this religion believe that their song "tunes in" the mantra chanter to Krishna's divine energy, erases karma, and generally improves the world.[15]

Also included in this category of outcroppings of modern Gnosticism would be Scientology. In 1950 an adventurer and novelist named Lafayette Ronald Hubbard wrote a book called *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health,* which soon became a best-seller. The fascination with Dianetics quickly spread and, to the consternation of Hubbard, catapulted beyond his control. Stated simply, Dianetics postulates two aspects of the human mind — the analytical, which perceives, reasons and remembers, and the reactive, which records "engrams", detailed impressions of perceptions present in past moments of unconsciousness. Engrams may be compared to repressed memories stored in the subconscious. Dianetics is designed to help persons discover and rid themselves of negative engrams, thus reaching a state known as clear.

Scientology uses a specific technique and technology to help people reach this state. Through an instrumentality known as an E-meter, which measures resistance to electric currents, the student of scientology works with an instructor called an auditor to become free of engrams.[16]

Hubbard also wrote about a process of separating the personality from the body and mind — commonly known as astral travel by students of psychic phenomena. He named the thing which leaves the body the *theta.* Scientology teaches that the *theta* has the power to create matter, energy, space and time. By adding this cosmic dimension his pseudo psychoanalysis was elevated into candidacy for religious status. One of the major controversies which has been swirling around scientology in some Canadian provinces in recent years has been its demand for recognition as a legitimate religion. Now called "The Church of Scientology," it contends that it should be certified to perform weddings and be entitled to all of the privileges accorded to any religious denomination.[17]

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[15] Krishna is a manifestation of the Hindu god Vishnu (the preserver) whose philosophy and deeds are recorded in the *Bhagavad-Gita,* India's most famous and sacred text.

[16] Opponents of scientology have denounced it as irrational and fraudulent, e.g., Joseph Martin Hopkins, "Scientology: Religion or Racket?" in *Christianity Today,* Part I November 7, 1969; Part II, November 21,1969. Cf. Christopher Evans, *Cults of Unreason* (New York: Delta, 1973). 117: "No amount of decorative jargon can disguise the fact that the original claims of Dianetics . . . have not been met." Evans accuses Hubbard of attempting to prevent a close scrutiny of his claims (p. 118): "The proximity of too many sharp-minded and critically inclined individuals would, one suspects, cause Hubbard to dwell unduly on the gaping flaws in the fabric of scientology and their presence would thus be unwelcome."

[17] The Church of Scientology maintains that it is tolerant of religious diversity, and is compatible with all religions so that a person can remain a Jew, Christian, or Muslim while practicing its techniques. In this respect, and in its publicizing of celebrities who practice Scientology it is similar to Transcendental Meditation. The antagonists of Scientology accuse it of "wearing a cloak of secrecy that conceals a dagger of deceit." So writes Charles Stafford in a collection of articles entitled *Scientology: An In-Depth Profile of a New Force in Clearwater* (Place and exact date of publication not mentioned). Included are such "exposes" of the "dark side" of Scientology as "Church Played Dirty Tricks on Cazares" [Mayor of Clearwater, Florida]; "Scientologist's Downfall began with phony IDs"; and "U.S. Probe of Break-ins Focuses on Scientologists." These stories were the core of the entry that won the 1980 Pulitzer Prize in National Reporting for Charles Stafford and Betty Orsini, reporters for *St. Petersburg Times.*

In the broadest sense it would appear that Gnostic features can be detected in innumerable contemporary cults and occult phenomena. In devious and sundry ways there is a perennial search for personal fulfillment and deeper understanding of the enigmas of human existence. The quest for meaning and purpose is irrepressible. Any guru or charismatic leader who claims to have probed beyond the confines of "normal" perception and conventional wisdom can attract a following.[18] There is a persistent urge to discover some key that will unlock the "mysteries" that bewilder and disturb finite creatures. Those people who are not content to look through a cloudy mirror and know only in part (I Corinthians 13:12) do not find orthodox Judaism or Christianity satisfying. They *yearn for a more comprehensive gnosis* which will elevate them into higher levels of consciousness. Extrasensory perception and parapsychology may seem to provide possible routes to the desired destination. Pyramid power, extraterrestrial intelligence related to UFOs, astrology, palmistry, or the mysticism of offshoots of Oriental religions have captured the imagination of different types of twentieth century gnostics.

Even Satanism can be interpreted as a demonic manifestation of gnosticism. In the outlook of Anton LaVey the devil is not "an anthropomorphic deity", but rather a dark, inexplicable force in nature responsible for worldly happenings — a power for which neither religion or science has any explanation. LaVey's Satan is claimed to be "the spirit of progress, the inspirer of all great movements" that contribute to the advancement of humanity.[19] Rational self-interest and a "healthy ego" are championed. Lucifer is the "bearer of light" and the "personification of enlightenment." In vehement Gnostic fashion orthodox beliefs are caricatured and repudiated. A magical language called "Enochian" is used (with nineteen "keys") to "open wide the gates of hell" where those initiated into the mysteries can become "partakers of the UNDEFILED WISDOM."

Conclusion

Gnosticism, ancient and modern, is most sharply differentiated from orthodoxy in its denial of an Infinite Being who is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, holy and benevolent. In whole or in part, traditional doctrines related to the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection are undercut, minimized or renounced. Enlightenment or the attainment of wisdom (eradicating darkness and overcoming ignorance) become the primary motifs. Salvation by grace through faith alone is denied. While Gnostic emphases have varied considerably, they will continue to be incompatible with what most Christians regard as true and valid.

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[18] A thorough investigation of the "new religions" has been made by two sociologists, David G. Bromley and Anson D. Shupe, Jr., in *Strange Gods, the Great American Cult Scare* (Boston: Beacon, 1981). They deny the allegation of "brainwashing", and oppose deprogramming. A more critical survey of the "cult boom" may be found in a book by a Jewish Rabbi and his wife, James and Marcia Rudin, *Prison or Paradise, the New Religious Cults* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

[19] Burton H. Wolfe in "Introduction" to Anton Szandor Lavey, *The Satanic Bible* (New York: Avon, 1969), 6-7.

The Family Feud: The Battle for Righteousness

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Carolyn Jenkins calls a counselor about her problem with her sixteen-year-old daughter, Claudia, who is talking about suicide. After some discussion, the counselor says that it is imperative for him to meet with the whole family, including the husband, David, and the other children, Don and Laura.

The short phone conversation has told the counselor a lot about a distressed family. He can already guess that his definition of the problem is not the same as Carolyn's since a battle of definitions began already on the phone. But the counselor has also just entered unawares into the middle of a family battle for righteousness.

Sometime later the counselor raises a question about Don's absence and suggests that counseling will not be effective without him. At this point David and Carolyn gang up on the counselor and tell him that Don is not the problem, Claudia is. The counselor is firm and, after talking a bit more, he says they really can't begin until Don is there.

When the entire family was able to come together the next day, the counselor began asking the father a bit about how he saw his family. David spoke only a few sentences before he focused on Claudia and her problems. The battle of definition and focus was alive and well. Don turned out to be a cocky kid with his own story to tell about the family. With little prompting he was able to tell how the family interacted. He said that trouble usually began when his mom and sister got into a fight. Before long his dad would take his sister's side, and the fight would change to one between his mom and dad. With this change, Claudia would leave, and then he and his sister Laura would end up trying to get their parents to stop fighting. After the fight was over, his mother would tell him about her troubles with his dad while his dad shared with Claudia some of the troubles he had with his wife Carolyn. Don blamed some of the tension on his grandmother (on his mother's side), but he indicated that both his mother and he resented Dad because he worked and studied all the time. After he finished talking, there was no way to see the problem as only Claudia anymore. It involved all the members, including Laura. It was becoming clear that Don's "election" to be the absent one the day before had not been accidental.

Laura was afraid that Mom and Dad were going to get divorced. She had lain awake the night before wondering if her sister would run away and kill herself. It became obvious that there were really few secrets in the family that were not felt and known by all. If the counselor had simply worked to treat Claudia, the girl might have only been isolated and made worse. He would have participated in the family scapegoating process and unwittingly glossed over the family's battle for righteousness.

Before pursuing the battle for righteousness some personal remarks are in

order. I am basically a theologian who practices theology with troubled people. Part of a theologian's job is to challenge any system of righteousness that excludes Christ as its basis (the kingdom of the right hand in Luther's view) or any system of righteousness that keeps oneself intact at the expense of the other (justice and the kingdom of the left hand). It becomes obvious in cases like the one above that there is a system of righteousness in the family in which some members of the family are trying to stay intact and behind their masks at the expense of others. Even Claudia plays her part as scapegoat because she gets a certain amount of righteousness from this role.

Carl Whitaker has often said that he has given up the idea that individuals get married; families get married. This is a good thing for a pastor to think about when he or she hears the remark in the office, "I'm not marrying her family, I'm just marrying her." That statement is often the naive prelude to a symphony of distress. It's a clear signal of belief in the myth of individualism.

By challenging the myth of individualism in the Jenkins' family, the counselor was doing much more than having an academic difference of opinion about the definition of family. He was upsetting the family's whole system of stability and their whole system of righteousness. By refusing to have a meeting without the whole family present, he was saying that he had a different point of view than the family did. Whitaker calls this "the battle for structure in the therapeutic process." A pastor may find it difficult if not impossible to fight the battle in this way, but there are ways even in pastoral care to challenge a person like Carolyn with something new. Behind the child who is an "identified patient", there is often a troubled marriage.

Things were intense in the Jenkins' family because the real issue at stake was the righteousness of each one and of the family. Righteousness can be described as being in good standing, or as having a sense of dignity, worth, or meaning. As long as Claudia was the "crazy" one, the rest could appear righteous or upright to the counselor, to each other, and to themselves. The loss of a feeling of righteousness is probably the most painful thing a human being can experience. The family was dealing in life and death issues for each of them.

Before discussing why the battle for righteousness can get so hot, we need to mention another battle a counselor can go through with clients. Whitaker calls it the battle of initiative. Clients want to set the counselor up in a director's role, to tell them what to do. Unless people take the initiative to look at who they are in relationship to other people and to God there will be little growth. One woman was in counseling for quite some time to help the counselor with *her husband's* problem. The day she was able to say, "I was here a long time for him, but now I'm here for me," there was a big difference. She had begun to look at herself and her relationships. There is obviously a place for pastoral advice, but when any counseling becomes simply a matter of the counselor taking over and telling people what to do then the counselor is set up to become a new scapegoat. Dr. Whitaker once remarked that such a person is really saying, "Take over my life and botch it up and then I can hate *you* for it."

Occasionally it becomes obvious that a family hopes that a minister will have "that little something extra" to help them avoid the pain of the battle for righteousness. In one family with a pregnant teenage daughter the mother stated

openly her disappointment in me. They had been to five other therapists and found no help for the daughter. Coming to a pastor was the last resort; she admitted she was silently hoping for a miracle that would sort of lift them out of the whole mess they were in. She was fighting hard to avoid the pain of her own marriage and her own internal depression. More than that she was fighting hard to avoid the pain involved in the battle for righteousness. At this point pastors may need to challenge another myth of our day — the myth of a painless life and painless growth. Too often ministers' readiness to jump in and to tell people what to do comes from the desire to avoid pain in others or themselves. It is amazing in marital work to see how many men "go right up the wall" as soon as their wife begins to deal with any personal pain. There is no way for growth to take place without some pain just as there is no way to get a body in good physical shape without some exertion and soreness.

The battle for righteousness is hot and painful because just about everything is at stake. In the Jenkins' family, losing Claudia as the scapegoat made the battle for righteousness rage within the family. For a while Don became the scapegoat and Claudia was free. But finally the couple could no longer avoid the distress in the twenty-year-old marriage. They were angry with each other for many things, and they were terrified to risk anger openly with each for fear they would lose each other. They were really not sure what kind of relationship they had with each other at all anymore.

Carolyn was the first to gather up the courage to look at the marriage and at herself. She began to wonder about her role as a mother and wife and finally as a woman. In some ways she had been trying to live the life of a little girl and to look to her husband to provide her with the security of a father. In a sense she had made him her God and tried to find her sense of hope and righteousness in him. One day she spent most of the time in a session crying over the loss of her hopes that David could ever be what she wanted him to be. There was nothing the family or the counselor could do that day except to sit with her through the grief. If they would have become obsessed with doing something to avoid the pain, they would have made it worse. As the mother took the pain of her own battle upon herself, she did not need the daughter as a scapegoat any longer, and the relationship between the two improved a great deal.

Eventually David began to realize that his sense of righteousness or worth in life was all tied up in succeeding in business. He was not quite sure he was going to do enough to get what he wanted out of life or have the position he wanted. Carolyn helped him to see that the real shadow behind his constant doubt about his performance was his stern father. He never could do enough for his father though he had always tried to do enough to please him. In a sense David's righteousness still was based on trying to please his father.

As long as there had been a scapegoat in the family he never had to face the anger and disappointment he felt with his father. As David got into his own battle for righteousness, his relationship with his son improved in several ways. A strong loving father who was more than one more teenage buddy helped Don a great deal. As the generation gap opened, Don and his father came to have a much stronger relationship with each other. The more David was freed to be a man in the older generation, the more Don was freed to be a boy in the younger generation.

The depression and sadness that Claudia felt in the beginning did not all belong to her. As time went on each bore his or her own burdens, and they did not need to use another member of the family to make themselves righteous. There was more open conflict in the marriage than before, but the marriage was growing. The more the conflict was dealt with by Carolyn and David, the less it was acted out in the kids. With the improvement in their own sexual life, Claudia's promiscuousness vanished. The family was discovering that they were not a collection of individuals but they were an organism together. They also discovered that the more their individual identities grew the more unity they had as a family.

The battle for righteousness is crucial in human life. Philip Melanchthon referred to the doctrine of justification (or righteousness) as the main doctrine of Christianity. The main issue in life is how a human being becomes justified or righteous before the significant others in life, especially one's God.

To be declared unrighteous can be devastating. The Lutheran Confessions (AC xii and Apol xii) use words like "terror" or the "terrors like those dying" to describe the state of those facing their own unrighteousness. Karl Menninger reports accounts of primitive people literally dying after breaking an important taboo or after a curse is pronounced upon an individual.

One of the best devices to keep one's own righteousness intact is, of course, to have a scapegoat. In the family described above Claudia played the role and attained a certain measure of righteousness in the family system by fulfilling her assigned role. As long as she stayed in her role the family had a definition of the problem that made some sense to them even if it was painful and destructive.

In the Jenkins' family the chaos began when the counselor began to remove their elected scapegoat. One way the family tried to reestablish their righteousness was by electing Don scapegoat during the course of the counseling. Such elections are rather common in the course of counseling with families.

Another consequence of losing one's scapegoat is the painful and depressing realization that life is no Eden. It means facing up to the death of one's innocence and the hope residing in the myth of the innocence of one's parents. God really did put the cherubim with the flaming sword at the gate of Eden.

Coming to grips with the loss of a scapegoat means acknowledging that there is simply no such thing as unconditional positive regard by one's parents. Theologically it means also that God is not unconditionally positive either, but that even his love has a very specific shape and is conditioned by his action in Christ on a cross. The image of God is not a voice saying, "I'm OK, You're OK" at all, but a strong word of forgiveness for Christ's sake.

It is important to think that the two dimensions of righteousness that are operating in our world. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Art. iv and xviii) distinguishes between the righteousness of reason (civil righteousness) and the righteousness of faith (righteousness that justifies before God). There is a difference between being in good standing before people and society, and being in good standing before God. Melanchthon does not disparage the righteousness of reason since God requires it and wants it for the preservation of people. The more a family is able to grapple with the natural processes within themselves and among themselves the more loving

they can become toward each other. They can and do this almost entirely apart from the Christian faith.

The pastoral counselor also ministers with the right-hand righteousness of God. In the midst of the battle for righteousness, he proclaims through word and sacraments a righteousness that is by faith and not by reason. Here the issue is not simply the relationship with self and others in the family that a secular counselor helps people grapple with. Rather, the issue becomes the righteousness before the God who reveals himself in Christ through the means of grace. Christ has forever connected the battle of the two dimensions of righteousness inside the bodies of human beings. A pastor can speak of the right-hand righteousness of God in ways that enlighten the struggle in the left-hand battle for righteousness as well. Lifting high the cross could be very helpful to Claudia, Carolyn, David, Don and Laura in both dimensions of the battle for righteousness. There are many issues vying for the pastor's attention today but the basic issue inside people and families is still the battle for righteousness. The pastor's job is to know that battle well on both fronts and to know his right hand from his left and lead with the right (the Gospel). Then he or she will deserve to be called a theologian. Melanchthon said that righteousness is the chief article in the Christian faith; it is also the chief article in life.

Toward Better Preparation for Marriage

David J. Rolfe

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When a couple announces their engagement, the couple, their family and friends, all begin to focus on the wedding. As preparations are made for that eventful day in church, a bystander sometimes hears perplexing comments:

"We have to go for marriage counseling with the pastor."

"Tonight is the night we have to fill out some forms."

"The pastor will tell us what to do."

"We have to *wait* for six months before we can get married in the church: it's a new rule."

"We have to go to some stupid classes so they can tell us if we can get married."

Preparing for married life together seems to get all jumbled up with counseling (which assumes the need for remedial work), with the mechanics of planning the wedding day, with getting 'instructions', with understanding the concept of Christian marriage.

If we — the church — the pastor — the people — are going to be of greater benefit to the couples who want their marriage blessed and celebrated by the church, then we can make a good start by unscrambling our perspective and practice regarding preparation for marriage.

Marriage preparation is a valid and important ministry of the church designed to assist couples in *their* task of preparing for their marriage. There are actually five main parts to this process:

1. Premarriage education for couples.
2. Premarriage assessment.
3. Premarriage counseling.
4. Spiritual preparation for marriage.
5. Wedding orchestration.

There is some overlap between parts, but every couple deserves to receive all parts when they present themselves to be married in the Church.

1. Premarriage Education

This part of the whole is most effective when presented to groups of engaged couples. Ideally it is a program which examines areas of marriage from the perspective of "where are you going as a couple?; is this where you want to arrive?" It provides an opportunity for the couple to work consciously toward a viable system of coping with the areas that require understanding from a *couple,* rather than an *individual* point of view, such as religious faith, communication skills, sexuality, money management, abuse in relationships (alcohol, drugs, and violence), and parenting.

2. Premarriage Assessment

The assessment builds on premarriage education and is a process through which the pastor and individual couples travel. It is a particular method of review whereby the pastor surveys the couple's growth in each area of their relationship. The pastor will find out very quickly if the couple is well prepared for marriage, and

if they have made use of part 1. Premarriage assessment is done in such a way that, by its conclusion, both the pastor and the couple become aware of their strengths and liabilities as a couple.

Premarriage Counseling

Couples who are basically healthy can quickly build on the findings of the assessment and turn around any liabilities. A brief assessment by the pastor will confirm this. Other couples need counseling towards remedying some of the difficulties discovered.

It may be necessary for them to delay the wedding until *they* are ready to take on the responsibility for marriage. Of course, delay can lead to a decision not to marry, especially if the couple cannot or will not make the necessary changes.

In order to assist with the needed growth, the minister may contract with the couple to work together on specific areas of difficulty, e.g.; inadequate expression of feelings; poor anger management or negotiating skills; confusion about the place of sex in marriage; lack of knowledge about household management. Although this might be called counseling, it is better thought of as an individualized educational process.

The couple may need to resolve individual "skeletons in the closet," e.g., still functioning as a child vis a vis parents; emotional tangles; unresolved grief from loss of relatives, friends or having been jilted; wreckage from previous relationships; using marriage to escape from a particular role in the family of origin. This is more specifically a counseling task and requires certain skils not possessed by every minister. Referral to a counselor may be called for.

Counseling is for managing mutually discovered areas of inadequate preparation for marriage. For premarriage counseling to be effective, the pastor's skill is most needed in helping the couple to acknowledge that difficulties exist. If only the pastor perceives them, he will be written off by the couple as a road block. Equally, such difficulties need to be discovered in a context that also locates strengths, and these strengths will be the stepping stones from which the couples will move up to handle the difficulties. Not locating strengths along with difficulties may easily move counseling into a legalistic shambles of proof and counter-proof, which will not prepare couples for marriage, but will motivate them to avoid the church, counselors, and clergy like the plague in the event of future troubles. Pastors may wish to refer couples and individuals to a trained counselor for the counseling part of marriage preparation.

Spiritual Preparation

Spiritual preparation builds on the previously laid groundwork. With couple and individual issues well resolved, the couple will have sufficient energy and a commitment to work with their pastor to transform their relationship into the basis for a Christian marriage. Placing this component at this point of the sequence is deliberate: once a couple feels secure in their relationship and with their pastor, they can work on the spiritual side of their relationship and take guidance from the pastor without getting defensive or feeling that they are back in Sunday School. Spiritual preparation includes a thorough review of the church's teachings about marriage, helping the couple to appreciate that marriage is a permanent covenant in which God is involved, both in making and living out the covenant. Shot-gun weddings, by way of contrast, consist of a *contract* between irate parents and

manipulated pastor regarding the lives and status of offspring who are considered not as consentors in marriage, but as chattel of the parents.

Preferably, spiritual preparation consists of review and consolidation — not teaching or evangelizing. If one or both members of the couple are ignorant of the substance of faith, the premarriage process may be protracted while the persons receive Christian instruction, or such education may be planned early in the marriage. Proposed interfaith marriages need careful guidance, especially if one person is Christian and the other unchurched or antagonistic. A low-key review of both persons' beliefs, how they use beliefs (faith) to direct their lives, and how such belief and practice will be a future guide can be most helpful. This approach can help couples avoid "Crusader-type" or "Wedding Bell" conversions, and help them become much more responsible for honestly examining their faith.

5. Wedding Orchestration

A wedding is an event of celebration and publicly-made vows. By making this separate from other parts of marriage preparation, couples are helped to understand that wedding planning does not exhaust marriage preparation any more than attending a college graduation ceremony is synonymous with studying for the degree or praticing a profession.

The Parts in Detail

Part I, Premarriage Education, is an educational program led by a trained team of pastor and laity. It is usually a day-long or weekend program of talks, small group discussions, audio-visual presentations, and group and couple exercises culminating in a celebration of the Eucharist. Unlike Engaged Encounter, which follows the design of Marriage Encounter in not utilizing a small group discussion format, many premarriage education programs capitalize on the opportunity to encourage couples to review and understand their relationship. Care must be taken to avoid the traditional lecture approach since it often evokes resentment rather than growth.

The premarriage education groups can be managed by volunteers, but for a quality program, the groups are most effectively led by trained teams of pastor and laity. Training ordinarily takes two days, or a series of evening meetings. The success of training hinges on the willingness of the volunteers to work together as a team rather than as a series of individual discussion leaders. Lay persons need to know that they are called to assist, not to rescue, evangelize, admonish, or to set a good example. In practice the group program works well when shared by all parishes in a deanery, each taking turns to host the program. It is an excellent opportunity for parishioners to exercise their commitment to active lay ministry.

Part 2, Premarriage Assessment, can be handled in several different ways. The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (T-JTA), the Pre-Marriage Inventory (PMI), Premarriage Awareness Inventory (PAI), and Prepare are some of the better known assessment instruments. Prepare is the best of the four. All four use a self-report review of how couple members get along in a number of areas. The T-JTA is the most individual-personality oriented and probably the least helpful in getting a well-rounded picture of the couple's mutual relationship. Both the PMI and Prepare can be sent out for computer scoring. Prepare is the most scientifically validated. None of these instruments in-

volves the pastor in the assessment process (he or she is, none-the-less, in charge of reviewing score sheets); none reviews basic family background data; and none uses forced order ranking questionnaires. Ranking would get couples-in-love away from the tendency to rate everything as wonderful and move them towards identifying values and priorities in situations where choices need to be made.

Another instrument, the Marriage Readiness Questionnaire, combines a particular style of interviewing with brief pencil and paper tests, a projective test, and inventories on expectations of marriage and financial information. Like the other assessment tools mentioned above, the MRQ requires training before it can be most effectively used. It is easily scored by the pastor administering it. Unlike the other assessment instruments, it is difficult for couples to manipulate and come out with an artificially inflated indication of their readiness for marriage.

Part 4, Spiritual Preparation. If one is an ardent believer in the validity of his or her own denomination's perspective on the truths of Christianity, it is tempting for the minister to short-change couples by giving them less than adequate spiritual preparation. In the past, the 'host' church in a denominationally mixed marriage often treated the outsider as far less than equal, which put the couple in an unbalanced relationship, right at the point where Christian teaching says they should be seen to be of equal value in the sight of God. By encouraging both partners to become knowledgeable in the teachings of the host church they become better aware of the heritage of only one of them. In all fairness to the couple they should be encouraged to attend classes on the church heritage of the other partner also. The rationale for looking at both sides is simple: it avoids giving the impression to the couple that they are entering marriage on less than equal grounds. It also gives both of them as much perspective as possible on each other's beliefs. Beliefs, values, rituals, behaviors, methods of expressing affection, anger and so on, are all intertwined with a person's concept of family. This being so, we owe couples the opportunity to examine each other's family background, so each can more deeply appreciate and comprehend how their partner *emotionally* expects to live in family.

Finally, the wedding itself is viewed quite differently from one denomination to another. What is a liturgical Sacrament for some is a brief ceremony for others. In another dimension, it would be a church-community celebration in contrast to a private celebration in a home. Such differences in perspective need to be understood lest the same words of commitment be used to signify assent to different, even conflicting, conceptualizations of marriage.

This five part framework has distinct advantages over lumping everything under one heading of, for example, premarriage counseling. The clear labeling of steps helps couples see that Christian marriage requires more than the legal assent demanded by the state. Taking each part in turn helps establish the extent of commitment required of a couple entering Christian marriage, the church's support and the sacramental nature of marriage. With a little preparation, through sermons and bulletin announcements, parishioners can readily come to appreciate that this is one way the church is actively expressing *its* commitment to give every couple the best possible start in their married life. The requirement that couples need to prepare themselves for marriage in the church must not be bluntly set down as a hurdle over which each couple must leap, or misrepresen-

ted as a waiting period. Such an approach only evokes resentment, and further clouds a couple's understanding of the nature of Christian marriage and of the church's ministry to married people. The requirement of preparation for marriage needs to be expressed as the church's obligation to do its very best for engaged couples. When it is portrayed in this light, and followed up with quality programming, engaged couples are far more likely to look forward to the process and to appreciate the significance of Christian marriage. Quality marriage preparation puts the capital Cs in Christian Community.

Bibliography for Assessment Instruments

MARRIAGE READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE (MRQ)
Marriage Preparation
2323 - 8th Street
Coeur d'Alene, ID, 83814
208—666-1649

PRE-MARRIAGE AWARENESS INVENTORY (PAI)
Shepherd's Staff Publications
Box 371
Cannon Falls, MN, 55009
507—263-3808

PRE-MARRIAGE INVENTORY (PMI)
Intercommunications Publishing, Inc.
784 Osceola Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

PREPARE
Prepare, Inc.
PO Box 190
Minneapolis, MN 55440
612—331-1161

TAYLOR-JOHNSON TEMPERAMENT ANALYSIS (T-J TA)
Psychological Publications, Inc.
5300 Hollywood Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Probings Toward Ecclesial Discipline In a Pluralistic Age

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One social outworking of our individualistic age is religious pluralism. By this term people suggest that religion, as a leisure activity, is a matter of personal choice. The attitude of civility which accompanies this understanding reduces all religions to variations on the same theme: it doesn't matter what you believe so long as you are sincere. In such a way the voluntaristic principle is upheld; religious activity, or the lack of it, is a matter of will and, often, of 'free time.' One either does it or one doesn't; in campus ministries one notices that some people are 'into' sailing; others are 'into' religion.

Such nonchalant religious pluralism will lead to a dinimution of the importance of religion. As the gap between theory and practice widens, preaching becomes reduced to moralisms restricted to individual behavior, with no social implications.

Another way to evaluate religious adherence is to see it through the spectacles of *covenant,* which in fact was at the heart of the Puritan experiment when it began in New England. If one looks through these spectacles, it becomes clear that all religious adherence, far from the innocuous sentiment reflected by billboards which read "Attend the church of your choice this week," is a matter of ultimate risk. One stakes one's life upon the particular yoke which one takes upon oneself, for religion is a yoking of the person with the primordial reality we name God. It is also clear that some religions will better reflect the truth of God's reality than others — but all religion remains a risk, and the taking of the risk is what we mean by faith. Religious affiliation is a risky business; you could buy the wrong brand.

From a Christian perspective, that risk is never taken alone. It is taken precisely in the context of a community which holds onto a theology and experiences a relationship long before an individual is able to grasp them. This theology deals with the divine origin and end of the universe and the relationship of that person to God through Jesus the Christ. Among Christians it is not necessary to re-invent the wheel, so to speak; the wheel of faith already exists and our task in the community becomes to use it — certainly not without concern, criticism and contemplation, but also not to pretend that we need to start from scratch.

Simply put, we do not invent the sacraments; we administer them. We do not invent the Gospel; we proclaim it. We do not invent the community; it encompasses us. Some are called to define what 'Gospel' is for their particular community of faith, in line with the tradition of the larger church to which their community belongs, and in tension with other communities of faith not Christian in word or deed.

There is another way we see these things that may allow us to say that we, in a sense, do invent them. We invent them as ritual process within a particular community, so that they can work what-

ever work it is that they do, whether that be the forgiveness of sins, the inclusion into the community, or the celebration of the meal with the church's Founder and Lord.

The Gospel is that address by which the promise of God for new life is made plain. Though the Gospel may be enacted in a variety of ways, as is pointed out in the Smalkald Articles, the Gospel is essentially that address by which one is engaged with the person of Jesus Christ in order to enter life with God through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Other words may be edifying, filled with human potential and messages of self-realization, but they are not Gospel in the biblical sense.

Any community which professes to live by Gospel lives simultaneously with certain boundaries. The community of faith is not a limitless community; some people are within the community and some are not.

If one asks the question, how do we know who is in the Christian community and who is not, there is one irreducible datum to which we can point: baptism. Membership in the Christian community is not a matter of whim and not even so much a matter of personal declaration (important and necessary as such affirmations of faith be) as it is an act of God. Since Christianity is that religion in which boundaries are overcome by God, the article by which such community is recognized and proclaimed cannot be nation, race, ethnic background, sex, age, economic status or political affiliation. It can only be an act which *declares* one to be a member of the community, and that act is baptism.

What Christians must learn to live with is the knowledge that our faith is, from God's side, a claiming grace brought to us in baptism. There is such confusion in American culture about Christianity; often the word Christianity is a synonym for being good in a particularly unobtrusive way in accordance with civil and community standards. We "baptize by implication" all those who are not baptized in fact. We should not call Mormons, for example Christians just because they are ethically pure people, which indeed they are. In this case ethics is not the point; the point is the irreducible datum of Christian community, and that is baptism in water in the name of the Trinity.

Baptism is in fact the sacrament of initiation to the church, and one becomes a member of the community by it and by no other means; the singular exception in catholic church history was during the time of persecution when those catechumens who were martyred before the Easter Vigil at which they would have been baptized were reckoned to be "baptized by blood." Even among those churches which practice believers' baptism, full membership is not attained until one enters through the water.

Funerals

The question of ecclesial discipline is a sticky one, in part because of the desire among many Americans, ourselves included, to want to be as inclusive as possible in our definition of those things we hold dear. We are, despite our individualistic tendencies, a generous, warm-hearted and gregarious folk.

The church is a community in covenant with God through Christ by means of baptism, but there are many who do not recognize it, want it, or feel that they need it. Their wish to remain outside the church should not be boldly overridden at the time of their deaths. We have no ground for wanting to include them in the community of faith when they made it clear during their lives that they

wanted no part of it. Why baptize them through the use of the funeral liturgy? Granted that God is a God of love and not judgment, and granted that we know only a portion of truth about this hidden God whom we praise and worship, should we pray over such persons words which it is difficult, nay impossible, to use? The LBW service, in particular, is written for those who have been baptized and who were members of a living community of faith in which eucharist and absolution were common features of life. How is it possible to over-ride the church's concern for its own boundaries and celebrate funerals for all who come down the pike? Part of religious pluralism is to acknowledge that those who chose to live outside the Christian community did so of their own will and choice.

Yet it seems that many would overturn the communal nature of the faith at this point, citing as reasons the tenderness and compassion they feel toward the family which has been bereaved. Of course compassion; of course tenderness; of course love. But who of us can make our compassion a sign of Christ? In our *official* position as pastors of the church, to hold a funeral liturgy for the unbaptized seems out of place. There is a theological inconsistency when we emphasize baptism as the sole initiation into the church, but then overlook the boundary-nature of that sacrament when it comes to funerals.

Weddings

Another area of grief in pastoral care is the wedding. Luther was not sure what to do with it liturgically as is shown by the variety of options he offers (WA LIII, pp. 48ff). The civil marriage, to his mind, was the legal one; the church's part was already evident in the betrothal (tantamount in Luther's time to marriage) and in the reading of the banns. Marriage was part of the order of creation and not of the order of redemption, to use the older Lutheran categories. As an order of preservation (Bonhoeffer), marriage functions in the created order through natural means. The Gospel does not complete it; all the church brings to it is a further blessing. Such blessing is, of course, considerable since it is the invocation of the Trinity upon the couple to be married.

The disciplinary question, to my mind, arises at this point. Marriage is a rite which is open to all, members and non-members of the Christian community alike, because it is an order which exists everywhere with or without the church. Since the vow is central, theologically, to marriage and since it is the covenantal oath for this order of creation, focus may be placed in counseling and preparation for marriage on that aspect of the ceremony and its certainty as locus for the sacred. To put it another way, pastoral care in this case may mean working with the couple to see that the vow is the particular place where God is present in their lives and that the vow is thus central to the ceremony itself. The blessing of the Holy Trinity may surely be invoked for any couple even if unbaptized, since the Holy Trinity is the God of creation as well as of redemption. No necessary connection with the Christian community is assumed in those who present themselves to us for marriage. None, to my mind, need be demanded — which is not the case for the funeral.

Bonhoeffer has an interesting comment in his *Gesammelte Schriften* (sub *Seelsorge, Band V,* pp 363ff), where he says that the dead no longer belong to their own families, but only to the larger family of God into which they have been baptized; when the coffin leaves the

house and the pall is placed on it for removal to the church, the symbol is clear: the dead belong to the Lord.

So, of course, do the living, but in the wedding that belonging is enacted and symbolized through the covenant the couple make with each other and not through the baptismal covenant.

In an age in which more people are seeking spiritual direction, the next question relates to *absolution*. Insofar as absolution has been tied, in Lutheran theology and practice, to baptismal grace, it would seem difficult to proclaim forgiveness to those who are not of the household of faith, that is to say, to those who are not baptized. If repentance is but a return to baptism, as we have traditionally believed, then it seems logical that those who cannot return to baptism (having never been baptized) will not hear the word of forgiveness in the way we understand it to come.

Conclusion

These comments are meant to open up a dialogue, not to be a final word. For some, they will appar to be a reversal of their own current pastoral practice. I would like to see a defense made for the opposite position, although I believe that the weight of Christian tradition lies with my position.

In all of this it is important to remember that I have taken the common American position, that religion is a voluntary commitment and that ours is a pluralistic culture in which religions have equal importance and dignity under the law. It is also obvious that I come to different conclusions than the garden-variety reasoning does that often accompanies such assertions.

The validity and deep meaning of religious symbols and rituals are taken seriously in my view, and a certain consistency is maintained which can enable the pastor to come to a clearer, less-conflicted model of ecclesial discipline without having to become judgmental or authoritarian in the process. This model enables one to state the case simply and to refuse or accept requests for pastoral care sensibly so that the inquirer will understand the grounds for our belief and practice.

Book Reviews



THE STATURE OF WAITING. By W. H. Vanstone. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982. x and 115 pages. Paper. $4.50.

Gethsemane, not Calvary, is the highpoint in the gospel narratives of the passion of Jesus. Mark and John especially make a palpable shift in their reporting the status of Jesus after Judas' kiss: from being subject to being object, from the role of doing to that of being done to, from action to passion (in the ancient literal meaning of "letting things happen to you"). The textual and grammatical key is the word *paradidomi* used in 31 of the 33 New Testament references to Judas. The tradition erroneously translates it "betray", but the rightful rendering is the verb's regular "neutral, colorless" meaning: "to hand over." The normal word for betray *(prodidomi)* is conspicuous by its absence in these 31 cases.

Judas is thus the incidental agent for Jesus' Messianic move into the posture of receptivity, of waiting, of the one being done to. Thereby he discloses the deepest dimension of the glory of God, the God who waits *(impassibilis sed passus!)*, and bestows divine status on the stature of waiting. The waiting Jesus throws new light on our own experiences of waiting and of dependence which are becoming more frequent and widespread in contemporary life.

Our situation of waiting is generally resented: it is regarded as frustrating, as a put-down of our human dignity. Our social attitudes and policies attempt, most often in vain, to evade or repudiate it. The waiting of Jesus reveals new options: our own dependence and waiting are signs and consequences of the image of God. The one who waits is a figure of extraordinary importance and remarkable dignity.

Vanstone is Canon Residentiary of Chester Cathedral and a member of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England. His textual documentation of Jesus' stature of waiting is brilliant. Too bad that he sets this off against the cross itself and a belief in the sacrificial power and effect of death which he and many other Christians cannot share. The very NT texts he interprets protest this short-circuit: The grand finale was *paradidomi,* Jesus' waiting on the Father, whereupon, incidentally, he was put to death. Still, that's not yet enough to ground a Gospel that is both "news" and "good."

One of the key *paradidomi* passages that Vanstone cites, Romans 8:32, makes good news of Jesus' passion by linking sacrificial death with being done unto, and adding the fundamental third element (ignored by the writer) that God, not flesh and blood, nor even the principalities and powers, did it to Jesus. "God who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with Him?"

Vanstone's skittishness about the cross (is he scandalized by it?) would be remedied by a better biblical vision of death, not only of sacrificial death, which for him is "far beyond the intellectual capability of many Christians today." All human dying is *paradidomi,* and if God was in Christ, as Vanstone solidly affirms, reconciling the world unto himself, making peace by the blood of his cross, then *paradidomi* reconciliation is lethal business —

necessarily. But being done unto and being done in are not redemptive enough in their own right unless this cross has changed the logistics of human history. The Christian proposal is: The crucified (= incriminated) Jesus is what makes the waiting Jesus Good News. His cross makes the waiting Father Good News, and makes our waiting Good News too.

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STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES. By Carl E. Braaten. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983. 127 pages. Paper. $5.95.

Professor Braaten is internationally known as a competent theologian and dogmatician. For over 20 years he has been professor at the seminary now known as the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. This volume assembles chapel sermons which he addressed to colleagues and students over those years. He opens with "Introduction: On Theology and Preaching," which gives an insight into his method and the special quality of his messages, namely to apply the resources of theological science coupled with the discipline of preaching Law and Gospel. The volume comprises sermons preached at "festivals" followed by others for "special occasions." Among the latter are two for ordination and two on marriage. Dr. Braaten expects his listeners to bring capacity for understanding and attention to bear upon his messages, and he rewards them with imaginative turns of interpretation, wide grasp of literature and culture, and tight organization. This collection gives a helpful insight into the qualities of a good seminary and an encouraging view of the present moment of Christian theology.

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STRANGE GODS. By David G. Bromley and Anson D. Shupe, Jr. Boston: Beacon Press, 1982. 192 pages. Paper. $6.68.

Bromley and Shupe severely criticize deprogrammers as "self-serving, illegal, and fundamentally immoral." In contradistinction to most previous appraisals written by Christian investigators, they conclude that "the new religions of this era do not pose a great danger to American society." Denying that the cults practice "brainwashing," they accuse the anticultists of using "simplistic stereotypes" that prove to be inaccurate when subjected to close scrutiny.

To bolster their argument, Bromley and Shupe trace the development of "new religions" in the past, including the Mennonites, the Shakers, the Moonies, and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Each of these religions when they first appeared on the American scene was denounced and even persecuted for socio-political nonconformity and deviation from the mainstream of Christianity. Gradually it became more acceptable and was allowed full freedom. Mormons have even achieved economic prosperity and a degree of political influence.

In his laudatory introduction to *Strange Gods* Harvey Cox affirms that the authors have succeeded in strengthening his conviction that the anticult movement will only result "in creating a new armory of repressive techniques that an increasingly repressive society will inevitably apply to more and more unpopular groups and individuals." Dean M. Kelley commends *Strange Gods* as "a breath of fresh air and common sense on a subject that is usually clouded with hysteria and bugaboos."

Strange Gods provides much valuable information to the inquirer. It successfully corrects some faulty notions about the cults, and rightfully rebukes fanatical alarmists whose proposed remedies and tactics may be more repugnant than the teachings and practices of some of the self-acclaimed prophets. Yet, any person with a deep

commitment to the Christian faith may be dissatisfied with the total analysis and interpretation. Many Christians will continue to feel compelled by their own convictions to oppose what they perceive as absurd distortions of reality and truth which can have baneful effects on naive and vulnerable young people.

It is only partially valid to argue that because America opposed or even persecuted "new religions" in the past the strictures and anathemas directed against present-day cults are similarly based on sheer prejudice or misunderstanding. It is also not immediately obvious that every objection to the "sects" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was "outright preposterous." Was it not essential to restrain the imperialistic ambitions of Mormonism and to compel the leadership to abandon the practice of polygamy? Will not most Christian historians continue to allege that the founder of Christian Science made dubious, if not fraudulent, claims about the sources of her teaching? Is it really inoccuous for Jehovah's Witnesses to misrepresent their tenets as "Christian" and confuse the misled thousands of people with their wild speculations about the imminent end of the world?

The cults which have emerged in the past fifteen years are not fully comparable to the rise of Quakers, Shakers, or Seventh Day Adventists. From the perspective of Christian morality the "fishy flirting" (sex as a recruitment method) and the sexual promiscuity advocated by "Moses" Berg, founder of the Children of God, can scarcely be looked upon as a trivial aberation, especially by parents whose youngsters have been ensnared. One cannot easily dismiss all of the testimony of ex-members, parents, and investigators that repeatedly and consistently complain about various techniques of manipulation, hypnotism, "love bombing", deceptiveness, and mind control.

For another interesting and informative commentary on the deviant religions one might be well advised to read *Prison or Paradise: the New Religious Cults* written by a Jewish Rabbi and his wife, sold by a Lutheran publishing house (Fortress, 1980). James and Marcia Rudin have lectured extensively throughout the United States and Canada on the "high-intensity religious cults." Despite their incisive critiques they seek to be fair and judicious in offering their evaluations based on firsthand research and personal interviews. Their book presents specific methods for countering the aggressiveness and the attractiveness of the cults. Instead of indulging only in condemnations, they make a positive contribution by suggesting ways by which families, mainline churches, and other social institutions can be revitalized so as to provide the love, acceptance, feeling of community, and sense of purpose and meaning, which traditional religion has seemingly often failed to communicate, with the deplorable consequences that the vacuum may be filled by weird and nonsensical cults.

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LIVING BREAD, SAVING CUP. READINGS ON THE EUCHARIST. Edited by R. Keven Seasoltz. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982. xiii and 314 pages. Paper. $12.95.

While preparing bibliographies for students in his course on the eucharist, Seasoltz discovered that many of the most useful articles on the subject were no longer readily available. So he set out to bring his selections under one cover in book form.

All the articles are from *Worship,* which has published over seventy-five items on the eucharist since Vatican II. From those Seasoltz chose sixteen articles by fifteen authors that appeared between the years 1966-1980. The quality of the scholarship serves as a good advertisement for the importance

of *Worship* to those interested in the cutting edge of liturgical thinking.

Murphy-O'Connor's exegetical study of "Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians" reminds us of concerns about disunity whenever and wherever the eucharist is celebrated. His study should once and for all dispel notions that Paul was concerned with real presence and other ontological theories in 1 Cor. 11.

There follow three articles dealing with roots of the Christian eucharist in Jewish liturgy: "Thoughts on the Roman Anaphora" by Aidan Kavanagh, "The Eucharistic Prayer and the Gift over Which It Is Spoken" by Robert Ledogar, and "From *Berakah* to *Eucharistia:* A Reopening Question" by Thomas Talley. Ledogar points out that while there are obvious links between Passover and Christian eucharist, the early Christians significantly altered the central blessing activities of the Passover. The emphasis in all three articles is on praise and thanksgiving as central to eucharist. Kavanagh writes: "The basic purpose of a eucharistic prayer is to proclaim the Gospel, while blessing God liturgically."

Of a different sort is Rouillard's "From Human Meal to Christian Eucharist." The double sign, bread and wine, demands that attention be given to the *sign,* he asserts. Animals eat, people dine. If that's the case, more pastors need to dine out in fine restaurants so they understand how to serve Christ's dinner.

In David Power's "Words that Crack: The Uses of 'Sacrifice' in Eucharistic Discourse," pleads that we understand "sacrifice in Old Testament terms as God's way of communicating his protection and his covenant of love."

Schillebeeckx offers "Transsubstantiation, Transfinalization, Transignification," and assists Lutherans in understanding real presence: "Only a eucharistic presence that is personally offered and accepted becomes an altogether complete presence." In another article, Donald Grey suggests that real presence is useful only as we entertain "The Real Absence: A Note on the Eucharist."

The last entry in the book is grist for my own mill. In "A Congregational Order of Worship" Kenneth Smits asks what would happen in eucharistic worship if the general *role of the congregation* is understood as the principal one.

I'm a fan of *Worship.* Now I know why. The articles often explore converging streams of Lutheran and Roman Catholic theology, but the authors don't retreat from the hard questions which remain for all of us. The Lutheran reader of this volume should be prepared for challenges to commonly-held opinions regarding a whole range of theological and liturgical issues. But so comes growth.

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ESSAYS ON JOHN. By C. K. Barrett. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982. viii and 169 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

ESSAYS ON PAUL. By C. K. Barrett. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982. x and 170 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

Charles Kingsly Barrett became sixty-five and Professor Emeritus of Divinity at Durham University in 1982. During his long, impressive career in New Testament scholarship, he produced a series of significant books, among them commentaries on John (1955, 2nd ed. 1978), Romans (1957), the Pastoral Epistles (1963), 1 Corinthians (1968), and 2 Corinthians (1973). In addition a number of volumes on special topics appeared: *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (1947), *The New Testament Background* (1956), *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (1961), *From First Adam to Last* (1962), *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition* (1967), *The Signs of an Apostle* (1970), etc. It is not at all surprising that his friends and students published *Paul and Paulism* in his honor (London: SPCK, 1982), or that he was elected Chairman of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas. His career exemplifies devotion to scholarship, truth, and the church.

Seven of the nine *Essays on Paul* deal with the Corinthian letters; the other two are on Romans 9-10 and the Sarah-Hagar allegory in Galatians 4. All were published earlier and explicate views presented in his commentaries with the exception of the one on "Paul's Opponents in 2 Corinthians." There Barrett argues against Georgi's view and maintains that the intruders in Corinth were Judaizing Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who carried on a rival apostolate to Paul.

The *Essays on John,* ten in number, present four not previously published. They are a series, first given in Rome, on aspects of Johannine theology: symbolism, sacraments, paradox and dualism, and history. Two important essays deal with Johannine christology: Jesus is the indispensable revealer of God's reality, but not the final revealer (the coming of the Paraclete is necessary). Jesus is the one who is sent, who shows dependence on the father. Jesus' majesty is veiled in humility, yet the gnostic interpretation of John is false. Throughout his presentation of this christology, Barrett is in dialogue with Käsemann — and fascinated by him. The confrontation of two keen minds working on this profound biblical text will delight the reader.

This brief review cannot pass all the essays of these two volumes under the eyes of the reader. Suffice it to say that they are written with exegetical acumen, with clarity of style, and with theologically significant themes. They deserve wide circulation.

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THANK GOD, IT'S MONDAY! By William E. Diehl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982. xi and 196 pages. Paper. $5.95.

William Diehl was formerly Manager of Sales for the Bethlehem Steel Corporation and is author of a well-known text on the ministry of the laity: *Christianity and Real Life* (Fortress). He is also a member of the Board of Directors of Christ Seminary — Seminex.

In this volume he tackles the task of integrating Christian principles into daily life. He examines the complexities and ambiguities the Christian faces in relation to such issues as war (citing four different views — all "biblical"), status-seeking, materialism, competition, etc. He calls the New Testament "the testament of the losers" and holds that because of the image of the suffering servant "there is no biblical basis for Christians to be involved in competition." (p. 47)

Diehl's rich, descriptive, story-style of writing is quite readable. He has no quick answers, but states the problems — of our individual and corporate responsibilities — quite aptly.

His suggestions are well illustrated as he asserts that we must become knowledgeable Christians, implementing our servanthood in individual involvement in social change, developing small support groups to tackle the complex issues in society. He includes some most helpful and detailed suggestions on the planning of lay weekend retreats where there is "contextualized theologizing *by* the laity." (pp. 171ff.)

Diehl's book helps lay people connect their confessed theology and their operational theology and then be able to say, "Thank God, it's Monday!"

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SUFFERING AND MARTYRDOM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. Studies Presented to G. M. Styler by the Cambridge New Testament Seminar. Edited by William Horbury and Brian McNeil. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981, xxi and 217 pages. Cloth. $39.95.

G. M. Styler has been secretary to the famous Cambridge New Testament Seminar (led by F. C. Burkitt, C. H. Dodd, C. F. D. Moule, and M. Hooker successively) for thirty five years. This volume is a *donum gratiae* from the

present members of the seminar. Styler himself wrote little; he is best known for his essay "The Priority of Mark," published as an excursus in C. F. D. Moule's *Birth of the New Testament* (London, New York: Black, Harper, 1962), pp. 223-232, revised edition (London, New York: Black, Harper & Row, 1982), pp. 285-316.

The volume is a worthy tribute. It arises out of one of the themes set for the seminar in recent years and thus has a unity often missing in such honorific collections. It is prefaced by a most interesting history of the seminar, written with wit and human interest by C. F. D. Moule (pp. xi-xxi). Moule also provides an introductory essay giving a sort of continuity script for the essays that follow (pp. 1-8). It will give a good idea of the book simply to list its contributors and their essays:

J. C. O'Neill, "Did Jesus teach that his death would be vicarious as well as typical?" (pp. 9-27); Brian E. Beck, "*Imitatio Christi* and the Lukan Passion narrative," (pp. 28-47) Barnabas Lindars, "The persecution of Christians in John 15:18-16:4a" (pp. 48-69); Morna D. Hooker, "Interchange and Suffering" (pp. 70-83); W. F. Flemington, "On the interpretations of Colossians 1:24" (pp. 84-90); E. Bammel, "Preparation for the perils of the last days: 1 Thessalonians 3:3" (pp. 91-100); J. P. M. Sweet, "Maintaining the testimony of Jesus: the suffering of Christians in the Revelation of John" (pp. 101-117); G. W. H. Lampe, "Martyrdom and inspiration," (pp. 118-135); Brian McNeill, "Suffering and Martyrdom in the Odes of Solomon" (pp. 136-142); William Horbury, "Suffering and messianism in Yose ben Yose" (pp. 143-182); Nicholas Lash, "What might martyrdom mean?" (pp. 183-198).

The essay by Lash shows that the Cambridge New Testament Seminar conceives of its task broadly; Lash goes far beyond strict biblical studies to ask about the theological significances of the biblical teaching on suffering. In the process he discusses the nature of biblical theology, rejecting Stendahl's and Nineham's position on biblical theology and biblical meaning for today. It is a provocative essay well worth pondering — as is the whole book.

Edgar Krentz

JOSEPHUS: THE JEWISH WAR. Edited by Gaalya Cornfeld with Benjamin Mazar and Paul L. Maier. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982. 526 pages. Cloth. $39.95.

Josephus, ca. 38-100 C.E., was a Pharisee, a Galilean general in the war against Rome, and an indispensable historian of Judaism. Surviving works, in addition to the Jewish War, include the Jewish Antiquities (a history from patriarchal times to the outbreak of the war against Rome), his Vita (an autobiographical account of his military career) and Against Apion (a defense against anti-Jewish polemics, in which he compares Gentile morality with the Mosaic law).

Both as person and as historian Josephus is the center of many controversies. He considered the Zealots to be a fanatic minority that drove the country into rebellion against Rome. When he and some 40 companions were about to be captured by the Romans, they entered a suicide pact that left finally only Josephus and one other man alive. Josephus persuaded his companion to surrender with him to the Romans, and then predicted to Vespasian that he would one day be the Roman emperor. Two years later prediction became reality and Josephus was freed. After serving as an interpreter to Titus during the siege of Jerusalem, he added the name of Flavius to his own in honor of the emperor's family. The Jewish War is pro-Roman and speaks of the futility of rebellion.

The Jewish War and the other works of Josephus are invaluable guides to the history of the last two centuries before Christ and the first century itself. This book begins with the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes and ends with the fall of Masada. In between Josephus gives detailed accounts of Herod, of the Jewish parties (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots), and of the events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70

C.E. Josephus had access to the works of Nicolaus of Damascus (a historian of Herod) and to many other records, including those of Rome, and he wove this information and his own personal observations together into an often gripping account, spiced with speeches he had composed and put into the mouths of others. At times his work is an apologia for Rome, at times for the Jews, and always for himself.

His writings have been of the highest value to archaeologists since he has detailed descriptions of Jerusalem, its walls, and the temple mount, not to mention his topographical descriptions of places like Caesarea and the Herodion (a fort just east of Bethlehem that may have been Herod's burial place).

The works of Josephus have been especially prized in the church, partly because the destruction of Jerusalem was viewed as fulfillment of New Testament prophecy and because of the Testimonium Flavianum, a favorable paragraph about Jesus in the Jewish Antiquities. An Appendix in the present volume suggests that the text of the Testimonium stems from Christian hands, but that there may have been a more impartial paragraph about Jesus in the original work.

This new edition of the Jewish War is lavish in every way. A revised translation dominates each page, and it is surrounded by an extensive commentary and by hundreds of photographs. The illustrations are of statues, coins, maps, the Jerusalem model at the Holyland Hotel, landscapes, inscriptions, and archaeological excavations. Many of the pictures are fresh, not printed elsewhere, some are in color, and a few, such as the full picture of the upper Jordan valley, are startlingly beautiful. Unfortunately, a number of the pictures are darkened by shadows or are otherwise not of the highest quality.

The commentary itself is clear, concise, and related to the translation by a simple system of alphabetic reference. In view of the compexity of Josephus as man and historian, the two page introduction seems skimpy. Very detailed indexes help the reader to get to the appropriate paragraph quickly.

While parts of Josephus have occasionally been bound into some editions of printed Bibles and read almost devotionally as recently as the 19th century, the modern reader is apt to read selectively — about Herod's miserable death, the heroics of Masada, the Maccabean revolt, or Judas of Galilee, a first century "messiah" mentioned in Josephus and in Acts 5:37. This heavy edition (the slick paper makes for a surprisingly hefty tome) will reward, fascinate, and delight any reader, lay or professional.

Ralph W. Klein
Christ Seminary — Seminex
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MARTIN LUTHER. HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS. By James Arne Nestingen. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. 79 pages. Paper. $3.95.

Even for one who is well acquainted with Luther's life, this book tells its story in a refreshing and absorbing style, pointing out contemporary parallels that make Luther's story a vivid one. Nestingen's down to earth description of Luther and his times presents the reader with many meaningful parallels in modern times. He also interprets Luther's Small Catechism against the background of the Reformer's life.

The reviewer has one concern he cannot leave unsaid. While the section introducing the Ten Commandments is thought provoking and very much to the point, the author defends Luther's beginning with the commandments for reasons that might be questioned. He holds that life begins with commandments and they are first in the order of human experience and interrelatedness. "The commandments break through the obscurity of sin, clarifying what sin seeks to cover." (p. 52) The author might have put it into better focus if he had reminded his readers that the catechism was intended, not

for the heathen, but for Christians, baptized children and their parents, who needed to be instructed how they should respond to their Christian life and also recognize their ongoing sinfulness.

"The Afterword" illustrates some of the points of tension between Luther and our generation that need to be faced if we are to be fair to Luther and to our own times.

Arthur C. Repp, Sr.
Christ Seminary — Seminex

PREACHING THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS. By Peter L. Steinke. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983. 128 pages. Paper. $5.95.

Recent years have nurtured a distressing syndrome of folk-religion among American Christians, namely that trouble and pain could impossibly be the design of a loving God. This assumption has been abetted by prestigious pulpiteers. I have been sharing a stout volume by George Buttrick with good people who have been afflicted with this virus. Here comes another which can well replace it. The author has been a pastor and is now "Director of Clergy Care for Lutheran Social Services in Dallas." He can be expected to be sensitive to this problem.

Remarkable about his collection of sermons is that it has sprung from insights into the theology of the cross of Martin Luther beginning with the Heidelberg Theses of 1518. The sermons purport to serve preaching in Lent and Easter. They are supplemented by "A Theology of the Cross in Responsive Readings" synchronized with the ten sermons. Here are fine studies of Old and New Testament texts with pungent applications to current aberrations and helpful Gospel preached as remedy to people in need. Perhaps I resonated so quickly to this volume because I had just preached a Christmas sermon on Hebrews 2:10-18, parallels to which abound with many other basic texts in Steinke's materials. The Preface suggests also other seasons of the church year in which the accents of this book will be found useful.

Richard R. Caemmerer Sr.

SOCIETY AND THE HOLY IN LATE ANTIQUITY. By Peter Brown. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. vii and 347. Cloth. $22.95.

In this collection of previously published essays and book reviews, Peter Brown calls for a much broader understanding of history and the proper foci of historical research. He provides several suggestive models by his own exploration of the question of the precise locus of the idea of the holy, especially in eastern Christianity in the sixth to eighth centuries.

In Part I he issues an invitation to historians to let their imaginations play more seminal roles in their work and to range more broadly. He calls Edward Gibbon to the witness stand in two appreciative chapters and Henri Pirenne in one excellent critical evaluation of his *Mohammed and Charlemagne.* He observes that Pirenne's approach is the most revealing where he touches most closely on cultural history, especially the cultural history of the emerging cities.

In Part II, he presents his own appeal for a more careful and more exhaustive analysis of the role of the holy in society. Chapter 5 considers the Emperor Julian through the eyes of Robert Browning. Chapter 6 studies the rise and function of the holy man in Late Antiquity, and chapter 7 contains an illuminating study of the relations between towns, villages, and holy men in Syria. Chapter 8 continues the theme of chapter 7 as Brown suggests that a major cause of the division between East and West lies in their different understandings of the percise loci of spiritual power. Chapters 9 and 10 each contain a major book review essay in which importance of objects of art receive emphasis. The final three chapters focus on medieval Christianity. Chapter 11 examines the important role of icons in the age of Gregory of Tours. Chapter 12 surveys the icono-

clastic controversy, and chapter 13 talks about a fundamental change in the relationship between western society and the supernatural in the twelfth century.

The brief description of each chapter perhaps conveys an impression of unity and cohesion that is greater than exists in actuality. But even granting that the usual problems of unevenness, repetition and lack of constant focus mark this volume as they do every volume of collected essays, these still constitute an excellent, highly useful resource for scholar and student.

Prof. Brown argues that is is now time for the religious historian to undertake the twin assignments that he sets forth. This reviewer agrees because it seems to him that Prof. Brown has defined the problem of the location of the holy too narrowly in this volume's useful corrective emphasis on the important role of the holy man. The function of the Eucharist is briefly alluded to; the Virgin, I believe, escapes without notice. Basic to Prof. Brown's probing question about the location of the holy is the question of the mediatorial role of Jesus Christ. Josef Jungmann has described how Jesus' place in liturgical prayer changes from his original place of being the divine-human mediator to that of the wholly other, who is seated at God's right hand. As Jesus Christ's function as the true location of the holy changes, the door is opened to a long line of substitute "loculi," including the holy man. This, it seems to me, is the development that necessitates medieval feudal society.

Herbert T. Mayer
Christ Seminary — Seminex

SYNESIUS OF CYRENE: PHILOSOPHER — BISHOP. By Jay Bregman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. xi and 206 pages. Cloth. $25.00.

In this book, Prof. Bregman, who teaches in the Department of History at the University of Maine, offers a new interpretation of the role of Synesius. He concludes that "Synesius was primarily a philosopher. He never confessed a creed such as the Nicene, nor did he believe in redemption through Jesus Christ the Logos." This conclusion raises two questions. 1. Why, then, did Synesius, a man of personal integrity, accept appointment as a bishop of the Christian church? 2. Why did Theophilus of Alexandria, even though he was a person of questionable integrity, appoint Synesius bishop of Ptolemais in 410?

Bregman devotes almost all his attention to the first question and allows the second one to go largely unnoticed. Through a careful examination of Synesius' works, Bregman develops the hypothesis that Synesius accepted appointment despite several personal reservations because he had convinced himself that many basic aspects of Christianity were compatible with the Neo-Platonism to which he had been converted and never could disavow. It was an attempt on the part of Synesius to forge a new civilization that would be partly pagan Greek and partly Christian.

The argument is filled with many a "must have been, maybe, and perhaps." That is not surprising nor to be criticized. But one wonders whether Bregman has adequately shored up his very attractive thesis. There are other questions that could be asked. Although Ptolemais is at the western edge of Cyrene and therefore more open to African Christian influences, why does Bregman treat it as if it were a typical Alexandrian community? How did Synesius survive with the low-grade Christology that Bregman attributes to him under the watchful, far-ranging eye of Augustine?

In this reviewer's opinion, the most helpful thesis in the book is Bregman's argument that Synesius regarded himself as a philosopher-bishop after the example of Plato's philosopher-king. This insight would explain Theophilus' appointment and would also preserve Synesius' integrity.

Herbert T. Mayer

Briefly Noted

Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah. By Jacob Neusner. (University of Chicago, $25.00.) Neusner, a prolific author and a professor at Brown, here provides a rock solid introduction to the Mishnah, or collection of oral law, published about 200 C.E. He sets the evidence of the Mishnah alongside other competing voices in early Judaism and shows how the law developed before the wars with Rome, in the period between the two wars, and from 140-200. Finally, he tells what is distinctive about the Mishnah and what makes it a coherent, cogent, and distinct document and system. While George Foot Moore's great study of the Judaism of the same period was largely an exercise in systematic or dogmatic theology, N. offers an analysis of how the oral law was transmitted and shaped in the process of transmission over several generations. Thus he has provided for this central component of the Talmud the same type of historical critical exegesis now standard for biblical study.

Israel's Prophetic Tradition. Essays in Honour of Peter Ackroyd. Edited by Richard Coggins, *et al.* (Cambridge, $39.50.) Fourteen essays, all in English and all by European scholars, describe the "state of the art" in our understanding of Israel's prophetic movement. There are studies of individual books (Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), of the beginnings of prophecy, and of prophecy's intersection with wisdom, cult, apocalyptic, and law—and much more. The honoree recently retired after a distinguished career at the University of London.

A Letter of Consolation. By Henri J. M. Nouwen. (Harper, $6.95.) Here is a moving, deeply spiritual letter from a son to his father, about the death of his mother six months previously. He knows how to grieve and how to mine the riches of the Easter gospel: "It does not make her death less painful or our own grief less heavy . . . What seemed to be the basis for despair proved to be the basis for hope. Suddenly a wall becomes a gate, and although we are not able to say with much clarity or precision what lies beyond that gate, the tone of all that we do and say on our way to the gate changes drastically."

Baker's Handbook of Bible Lists. Compiled by Andrew E. Hill. (Baker, $6.95.) Hill provides multiple lists on the text, chronology, and genealogies of both testaments including much extrabiblical genealogical and chronological material. About half the book is given over to lists of biblical data (e.g. cosmetics in the OT, letter carriers in the NT, women associated with Paul's ministry, 184 crafts or trades listed in the Bible, and its 57 designated mountains). This book aims to entertain and to encourage further study of the 602,582 words in the OT and the 169,751 in the NT.

The Word of God: A Guide to English Versions of the Bible. Edited by Lloyd R. Bailey. (John Knox, $8.95.) Here are detailed discussions of nine of the most popular recent English versions written by respected biblical scholars with no theological axe to grind. Each of the authors gives attention to the textual decisions made by the translators, their interpretive decisions (use of extrabiblical languages, theological presuppositions), and English usage.

Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees. By John Collins. (Michael Glazier, $9.95.) This popular commentary by a first-rate scholar of apocalyptic and other Jewish literature is Volume 15 in a series called Old Testament Message. The series, which is nearly complete, is written by Roman Catholics and includes all the books in their canon. Hence this permits a discussion of these three books which are Jewish responses to the Antiochan oppression and its aftermath. Other recent volumes in this series include: *Isaiah 40-66.* By John Scullion, S.J. ($7.95); *1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah.* By Celine Mangan, O.P. ($7.95); *Job, Ecclesiastes.* By Dianne Bergant, C.S.A. ($9.95).

Church Union as Mission

William E. Lesher

President, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

I am writing under the influence of the Gospel text for the 7th Sunday of Easter, especially the phrases, "... that they may be perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me ..." John 17:23.

Much of our own church-wide effort these days is being directed toward the creation of the new Lutheran Church. In spite of our commitments to keep the organizational machinery of the three existing church bodies moving along until the day of union, some fine plans and creative initiatives are being held off and most decisions are being made in light of the terminus or transformation that lies ahead. Money, too, is a significant factor in the unification process. While exact financial estimates are impossible to make at this early point, the process is certain to cost millions of dollars in a time when resources for mission and maintenance are severely strained.

These realities of the union process are reawakening questions about the wisdom of the whole idea of Lutheran union. Is this costly effort really worth it? As the process moves along, we are becoming more aware that the new church structure in which we will be living together will be different in some significant respects, perhaps radically so, from the present forms which have become so comfortable to us. Will we really be a more effective body to witness to the Gospel in our new larger form? Will bigger really mean better in terms of mission? Jointly, and enthusiastically, the councils of the churches answered the queries in favor of church union in their resounding affirmation of the proposal to form the Committee on a New Lutheran Church. But as the slow, hard, sometimes threatening process moves along, one senses that the questions linger in many quarters and congregations of the churches.

Personally, I feel the questions must still be taken seriously. It is difficult to justify the cost of union on the premise that it will create a more effective church for mission. This may happen, but not necessarily. There is a lot to be said for the stimulating initiative and creativity of smaller, more homogeneous groups doing their own thing to the glory of God. Besides, the social trend seems to be moving perceptively in that direction. At a synodical youth gathering recently, a colleague speaking on the new church was asked, why are you adults trying to steal our identity and squeeze us into a single mold?

From a theological point of view as well, church union, especially between a relatively small number of North American Lutherans, is not to be confused with the spiritual oneness to which Christ calls us and in which we are confirmed by virtue of our baptism into Christ.

Yet, in spite of the recurring arguments and the second guesses, for me the convincing justification for all our efforts and sacrifices is the evangelical witness that is inherent in the union of our churches. It is good news, indeed, in our pluralisitic and often times polarized nation, in our cities and communities, in our broken personal relations, in our increasingly nationalistic and militaristic world, and in our fractured Christian church, to hear that a majority of Lutherans in America have decided to come together in one church instead of remaining apart. It is an action that is against the stream; somewhat like Jeremiah buying property when everyone else

thought they were about to lose theirs. As such, church union has a certain public and even prophetic character to it. It is an action that, in and of itself, announces the Gospel. It is a cogent and convincing form of public evangelism. It is, for example, a witness to fellow Lutherans in India who decided a decade ago not to unite with the Church of South India or with other Lutherans, because they would lose their identity and their relations with historic church partners in Europe and the U.S. Just a few days ago, I received a letter from a Presbyterian colleague in theological education who wrote, "You Lutherans have been a model and inspiration to us Presbyterians who now have voted to try to unite two major denominations."

But what will the world outside the church say? Will the relatively few people out there who know that these groups from different ethnic backgrounds and traditions are coming together see in this activity something of the compelling power of the unifying Christ? Will they see in this action a counter force to the many major forces of separation and resistance so prominent in life today? And will they, because of this, see the Church as a source of good news in the modern world?

I hope so.

It is the promise of this evangelical witness that makes the process of Lutheran unity irresistible.

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