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Why This Jubilee?

The year began when water, gushing from a frozen pipe several floors above, welled up behind my office ceiling and brought the whole thing crashing down upon my steel gray desk. There followed a year of ridiculously high interest rates and crushing unemployment. Wars were fought in the Falklands-Malvinas, in Beirut, in Iraq and Iran — not to mention Ethiopia, Afghanistan and God knows where. President Sadat fell by an assassin's bullet, and the people of (Lutheran) Namibia came only a little closer to independence and freedom. So, why this Jubilee in Advent, Christmas and Epiphany?

Jay C. Rochelle reminds us that the secret of Advent is the secret of those who know that God's presence is here among us even when it is not apparent just where that presence is to be found. God's incarnational love always seeks to come near to that which he created . . . regardless of its present state. At his baptism Jesus began a voluntary suffering, an intentional end, in order that the new beginning of God might start. Incarnational spirituality, to which the author calls us, is a life-style of discovering and becoming aware of God's hidden presence, of attending to the splendor of each moment, and of showing mercy and justice to others.

Herbert T. Mayer provides an exegetical study of apokatastatic theology, God's plan to restore that condition which existed at the beginning when he was all things to everyone. This theology is found in Pauline doxologies or essays, four of which are commented on in this issue. At creation God committed himself to the world and its problems, joys, and hopes. Through the incarnation he renewed that commitment and began the development of a new heaven and a new earth. God is one and his unchanging goal is to bring oneness and wholeness to everything. The Christian community is the sign and agent of this coming wholeness. Advent is an appropriate time to move against whatever causes brokenness. In this season we long for that condition when God will again be all in all, and his wholeness will be fully shared by all his children.

Systematician **Robert W. Bertram** continues his series of theological reflections on biblical texts. This time, however, he tackles the first Servant poem from Second Isaiah and illustrates how God's good news *and* his bad news can be discerned in this Old Testament pericope. The problem of Israel's exiles was the injustice done them by Babylon, their quest for deliverance in someone who could out-Babylon Babylon in power, and, finally, their suffering as sinners under Yahweh's hand. The good news comes in the form of *the* Servant Jesus, who is both physician and patient and who cries out in compassion for the bruised reed. For exiles to behold the Servant is to be held by the Spirit put on Jesus at his baptism. Servants remain victims, but are outfitted with an infectious grin that makes the oppressing nations laugh. So they are God's light to the nations, his way of treating them right.

Messianic prophecies are the biblical stuff of Advent, and Holland Jones puts two of them (Isa. 11:1-16 and 32:1-20) through an exegetical workout. The first prophecy invites subjects of the Messiah today to seek the anointing of the Spirit, deal righteously with the poor, and to enjoy fraternizing with God's other creatures. The point of the second passage is that a roller coaster existence, its cycles of complacency and complaint, can end in the age of the Messiah. God's solution is to defend the needy, to discomfort the fool, to pour out his Spirit, and to increase righteousness and justice.

The surprises in this fourth annual Surprise Package are literary and/or devotional works provided by regular readers — **James Hugh Drury, Kenneth Schroeder, Donald Hinchey, Steven D. Olson, Paul Bauermeister,** and **William J. Urbrock.**

Our goal in this issue is to help you jubilate not only in spite of the year it's been, but even because it's been this kind of year. Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany devotion is also an eschatological protest, a prayer to the Holy Jesus to bring us at last to the place where no stars are needed to guide and where no clouds hide the jubilee.

Maranatha!
Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Beginnings and Ends (The spirituality of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany)

Jay C. Rochelle

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Every ending is also a beginning; and, if we think of it for a moment, every beginning is also an ending. For beginnings mark a departure from the past, a bend in the road, a turn of the coursing of life onto new paths. Picasso said it: "Every act of creation begins with an act of destruction." The old passes away so that the new may come, perhaps with nostalgia and sentiment at some times, perhaps with only relief and expectation at others.

So it is with the year marked by the Christian. Each ending of the year on Christ the King Sunday marks a turning of the wheel so that we might begin again.

Yet the Christian year is not a cycle in the same sense as the Greeks or the Egyptians celebrated cycles, tuned into the rhythm and the warming and cooling of earth, the rising and dying of the plants, the animals, and even people themselves.

Among us who call upon the name of Jesus as Christ, there is an added sense of expectation. Every year is not the same as the last; each season is reminiscent but not the same as its precedent of the past year. We are closer to Picasso and the sensibilities of the artist than we are to the static social concepts of the Egyptians among us, for whom slaves must always remain slaves and Pharoahs may die; but the culture of the Pharoah lives on.

The newness, *the* beginning which marks a novel turn in the course of both history and nature, is marked by the Resurrection of Christ and its message for our lives, the message of forgiveness. Bonhoeffer was right when he said that 'Christianity *is* forgiveness,' even if among us that idea, that brilliant light flashing across the history of religion, is sometimes dimmed by our failure to comprehend and, worse, live out its truth. Recall the words of Martin Luther in the Small Catechism regarding the gift in baptism: "We are offered forgiveness of sins, life and salvation; for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation." I recall, more than his words alone, the gestures of Wolfhart Pannenberg when asked what he understood by forgiveness of sins. He responded in an animated way, "It means that the past is genuinely past, that the wrongs are gone, that you can live into the future," and he pushed his hands behind him vigorously to show where the old now lay in relation to himself. Such is the message of Easter, but more than message it is the key to a new and renewed way of life: redeemed, restored, forgiven.

Adrian Fortescue, a liturgical scholar of an older generation, once remarked, "Strictly speaking, there is no reason why there should have developed a church year at all." He was referring to the centrality of Easter, the cruciality of the Triduum from Maundy Thursday to the Great Vigil of Easter, when the darkness is shattered by the brilliant light of the Paschal Candle borne into the nave with the chant, "The light of Christ," to which joyous parishioners sing out

"Thanks be to God." Each Sunday would, thereafter, be known as a "little Pascha" on which the church would celebrate anew the joy and the message and the life offered by the Resurrection of Christ.

Yet as time wore on, people began to remember. Remembering is also central to Christian experience; remembering in order to give thanks for the gift of forgiveness come in Resurrection. Remembering in order to live with a consciousness of the nearness and presence of the God whom Jesus proclaimed and knew as 'Abba,' Father, the source of light and life, the ground of being and becoming, the end and the beginning of all things, in whom all things consist and from whom they derive their meaning.

And so, waiting became a part of faith. Waiting with expectation for the beginning which would lead to the end of resurrection; waiting in hopefulness and faith for the opening of the world to the panoply of God's presence, the ability to see within the structures of the world, within the pale of the everyday, and to find there not a void nor a cipher, but the very essence of meaning itself. Waiting for meaning to emerge from the details of history. Waiting for the beginning in the birth of Christ.

But since this waiting could never again pretend that the End which is always a Beginning had not occurred in the resurrection, the waiting took on a manifold meaning; there was to be a waiting for the memory of the historical birth of Jesus of Nazareth, wrapped in poverty, smelling of the commonplace, hooked into the complicities of the culture and politics and economics of the time. There was to be a waiting for the future parousia, the 'being there' when Christ would become all in all, the summation of the drive of the universe toward meaning, now frustrated by blindness, pride, and strife among and within the actors on the stage of history. And there was to be a waiting for the gift of vision, by which the ordinary person might not only hope for but see the workings of God beyond the curtain of history and within the everyday, whether that everyday contain joy and hope and fulfillment or whether it contain sorrow and anxiety and frustration. The secret of Advent is the secret of those who alone know that the Presence is here among us even when it does not appear where the Presence is to be found.

This is so because at Christmas we celebrate the divine absurdity. Rather than a royal birth, this child whom we dare to call the Christ comes in the smell of earth and rotting dung, not in a well-lit chamber fit for a king but in a cave where light does not often penetrate, not to the best of families but to those of questionable rootage in the economy and the culture of the time.

We must never romanticize this humble origin but we must always remember it; the irony of God is considerable in the nativity. Perhaps even for those with the ability to see, here is also the humor of



God. For it is the God who, according to the Kabbala, gets up each day to hide in the world only that he might find himself under a stone or in a tree, who comes in this birth. It is the God who amazingly wills to retreat from filling the universe in order that the world might be created, who retreats, rather bizarrely, into the form of a small child, helpless and thrown into the world with no defenses. Such a God, who knows, might eventually be "edged off the world in order that we might discover him anew" (Bonhoeffer). But not without accomplishing something quite new and startling in the course of time and history and myth; not without bringing newness to all who are able to see it and to believe it.

Among the devoted theologians of the East, there has long been the belief that the incarnation is but the sensible conclusion to the creation; for after all, the One who created the universe by the Word will, in time, and through the same agent, enter the world by virtue not so much of sin but of God's own love which cannot but seek to come near to that which has been created (St. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*).

This mission, if you will, becomes highlighted at the Epiphany. Once a unitive festival with the Nativity, the Epiphany took on a life of its own because of its association with the Baptism of Christ, now happily restored in our calendars as the Sunday after the Epiphany. In the Baptism of Christ is the extension of the mystery that God entered the mainstream of human life, for in the Baptism is celebrated the entry of Christ into voluntary identification with all things of the created order, and with people in particular. We might even see in the Baptism the beginning of that 'voluntary suffering' by which Christ will 'trample hell underfoot, break the bonds of the devil, enlighten the righteous,' and so on (eucharistic prayer from the Apostolic Canon of Hippolytus). It is important in Christian thought that the Christ undergo an intentional end in order that the new beginning of God might start; the eucharistic prayers of the early Church are filled with the language of voluntary suffering, "in order that he might relieve from suffering those who have believed in him" (*ibid.*). As Christmas has proclaimed the mystery of the hidden God entering the world, so the Baptism of Christ proclaims the mystery that he saw the mission spread out before him and voluntarily chose to do it. In such a way we begin to see, if we have not previously seen or marked it, that the God in whom we place our faith is not distant or separated or impassive toward the universe which emanates from him. There is movement not only among us, but there is movement in God, also. In such a way does our faith differ from ways of belief in which God is a name we give the creation. In such a way does our faith await and expect a God who makes all things new. In such a way does our faith rest

upon a God who can, in a Word, make promises.

It is the promissory nature of God which underlies the whole of the season of beginnings: Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. We live inside an ongoing story and that story is not an ongoing repetition of what has already happened. For to me is given this promise that all things will be new, to me is given the Word that breaks the chains of the past, in order that *I* might become new. But we must not become egocentric once more, even if we are the ones who hear and live under the promise. For the promise is precisely this, that I may be released from my egocentricity; that the self I am intended to be may be released from the encrustations which have marred and hampered it; that, in a word, I may be forgiven.

Forgiven to what end, we might ask — and it is not a bad question. Recall the words of the poet Heinrich Heine: "God's job is to forgive, man's is to sin: really, the world is admirably arranged." Confronted with a world in which trains do not run on time, people are rude if not outright miserable to one another, in which killing continues under the name of war, in which diplomacy all too often looks like the shadow of the gunman, such cynicism is not unwarranted. If this is the forgiveness which is brought under the heading "all things new," then there is little reason to rejoice in this or any other season.

But the God who is disclosed as intentional in the incarnation is also disclosed, in the total event of the resurrection which includes passion week and Good Friday, as a God who suffers the fate of those who are ripped off, misused, abused, and shoved to the margin of a culture. In God there is not only movement, not only intentionality, but there is also a moral ground: the Kingdom may indeed come, will indeed come, but it will not come without the answering of the grievances of those trodden underfoot by history. In the Epiphany of Christ this moral base is prefigured to the world, in that Christ undertakes a mission which immediately plunges him into the chaos of self-understanding precisely because the world would co-opt him at every point. In the Christmas event we hear this moral cry for justice perhaps most clearly in the song attributed to his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. In Advent we identify his coming with the anticipation of the Jewish people for a prophet who will restore the fortunes of Israel (the O Antiphons sing to us of the various names under which this messianic prophet may be known).

* * * * *

More than anything else in our time, we need a renewal of incarnational spirituality. All the moral codes we can invent do not restrain the cruelty and injustice we are capable of creating for one another. New ways to structure human interaction eventually crack up on the



shoals because, through them all, we are unable to create a new human being who is able to see the organic interrelatedness of all things in God. Where there is not this vision, the people will indeed perish. It is this vision which is proffered in the many texts and songs and rituals of the season of beginnings.

Incarnational spirituality is often thought to be ethereal because it is perceived to be unrealistic. "Look at all the debris of human history," people may say, "Do you think it possible to overcome this merely by believing that God has come among us in the figure of Christ?" And judging by the overall picture of history, we may be tempted to answer, "No." The other answer, of course, is that "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; more often than not, Christianity stands wanting to be tried" (Archbishop Temple); which is to say that it is among us who name the name of Christ Jesus that the incarnation must become reality as well as image, deed as well as proclamation, action as well as intention. And quite likely, like the strange God in whom we believe, it will be hidden in us as it lies hidden in the world. Hidden, but not without effectiveness; secret, but not without understanding.

In the season of beginnings, it is appropriate for us to ask, 'How do we begin (again) to live out this incarnation?'

We do it, first, by *discovery*. Discovery is the human side to incarnation; by it, we become alert to the presence of God in the everyday. We discover the hidden presence of God in the tears and the joys, the sorrows and the pains, of each day of existence. Not all of life comes under the category 'meaning;' but there is more of life that can come under this category than we normally recognize. The Incarnation comes to us as an invitation to discover this remarkable, silent Presence.

Discovery leads to *awareness*. Christ came among us that we might become aware of the hidden presence of that which he proclaimed as the Kingdom of God. It happened in seeds, in the healings of blind and deaf and dumb persons, in stories which opened a new meaning to the tired word "God." We are called to awareness, to see that which lies before us as redolent with and resplendent of the grandeur of God. Never again to live without the possibility of seeing within the ordinary the extraordinary: in the smiles of old men, the walk of old women, in the times when we are caught off guard by that feeling of openness to a truth which is beyond the surface of a given situation, in the moments when we know love fierce and sharp in its captivation. This is awareness, and to it we are called by the incarnation; it becomes a part of our mission, linked to our baptism as a form of discernment of the spirits and of the Spirit within all of life.

Awareness leads to *attentiveness*, the ability to stop in the moment and see what is going on, to remain riveted to

the situation without leaping into the past or retreating into the future. Attentiveness is a learned behavior which has interior meaning, which is able to build one up from the inside. Not without justification did Blake once say that only those who are artists and musicians are able to be truly Christian (introduction to the Laocoon Group); a harsh judgment if taken literally, but understandable when we recall the discipline needed for the artist or musician to see and hear and enact that which is available in the moment of creation. We who believe the Incarnation are called to develop such a discipline that we might be free to be attentive to the splendor within each moment of our lives.

Attentiveness leads to *mercy and justice* toward others. It is not possible to see the presence of God in another human being and fail to be compassionate toward him or her; it is not possible to see the hand of the creator within the forms of creation, the *larvae Dei* or masks of God (as Luther called them) and to stand outside that creation so that matters of environment and ecology, issues of justice toward the creation, toward trees and whales and dolphins, toward the land, are simply ignored. Here the intentionality and the moral ground within God calls forth in each of us an intentionality and a moral stance toward the world in which we live, toward the people who populate that world with us, toward the smallest and the largest bits of the creation: 'all things bright and beautiful . . .'

These, then, are notes toward the celebration of the season of beginnings. May they be grace notes to help us write the melody of the incarnation both in historical remembrance and in our own lives.

Paul's Advent Doxologies

Herbert T. Mayer
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The early church fathers, especially the eastern fathers, are often able to sharpen our understanding of New Testament passages. They lived closer to the spiritual and intellectual world of the New Testament writers than we do, and so can provide perspectives that we do well to heed. In this article, I propose to look at selected Pauline pericopes in the light of Ignatius of Antioch's understanding of unity *(henosis)* and silence *(sige)* and Origen's doctrine of the final restitution *(apokatastasis)* of all things.

The goal of this article is to help readers to renew and deepen their understanding of God's oneness and wholeness and of the grand plan that marks God's government of the universe. In pursuing that goal, we shall have occasion to develop the concept of radical sacramental monotheism and the connection between God's oneness and the nature of the unity that we seek for all areas of life. The application of this understanding to the readers' lives will enable them to celebrate Advent more fully.

I. Patristic Insights Into Paul's Thought

I want to suggest in this article that the key to an Ignatian-Origenistic appreciation of Paul's thought on the oneness of God is provided in a literary form that I have chosen to call his apokatastatic (restitutionary) doxologies. I hope to show that these passages possess certain specific and identifiable characteristics. A related form is not liturgical in nature, but rather is in the form of a brief theological essay. These essays also have certain common characteristics that may justify the claim that they too comprise a literary form.

Romans 9:5 is an example of a pure apokatastatic doxology. In the midst of a discussion of the salvation of the Jews, Paul breaks off to insert a doxology: "May God, who rules over all, be praised forever! Amen." Note the following characteristics of this utterance: it is doxological; it is not required by the logic of Paul's argument, and it focuses the reader's attention on the one God who rules the world.

An apokatastatic theological essay is usually quite brief and in it the author calls his readers to remember that God is One and he rules the world. Frequently the essay suggests that God's oneness is the ontological foundation for the oneness which the believer is trained to recognize in both history and nature. A significant number of both the liturgical and the essay forms occur in the context of a discussion of unity in the Christian community and/or in a discussion of the mission of the community.

The form is found in both varieties in Romans (13 times), 1 Corinthians (11 times), 2 Corinthians (9 times), Galatians (1 time, the theological variety), Ephesians (4 times), Philippians (2 times), and 2 Timothy (1 time). The examples are not always pure and sometimes the two types appear in the same

pericope. Particularly good examples are found in 1 Cor. 3:21-23 and 15:22-29 and in Eph. 1:3-12 and 4:4-6. A study of these four pericopes will help the reader to understand what I mean by apokatastatic theology and the central role it plays in Paul's thoughts.

Before we move to the Pauline corpus, I intend to summarize briefly the insights of Ignatius and Origen so that I can bring their perspective to bear on Paul's thought. Ignatius describes himself as a man intent on unity *(henosis)*. He understands unity to be a cosmic reality that gives both shape and direction to the world and to the lives of its inhabitants. Unity proceeds from God and thus provides an ontological foundation for all unity that people can experience. An important earthly manifestation of this divine unity is found in the relationship between the members of a Christian congregation and their bishop. A striking passage in his letter to the Magnesians (13:2) presents his dynamic and comprehensive understanding of unity.

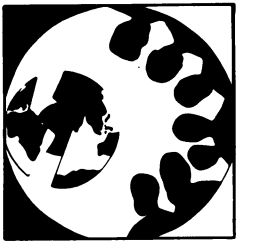
> Be subject to the bishop and to one another, even as Jesus Christ was subject to the Father, and the Apostles were subject to Christ and to the Father, in order that there may be a union of flesh and of spirit.

For our purposes, it is enough to note the community concerns in the first two phrases, the radical monotheism that is contained in the statement that Jesus Christ was subject to the Father, and the fact that this subjection will produce a union *(henosis)* of flesh and spirit. Ignatius' thought in the last clause is not clear, but he may well be saying that in the Son's subjection to the Father, flesh [in the sense of the created, historical] and spirit [in the sense of the divine unity] are somehow brought together. The concept is probably foreign to most westerners, but is found repeatedly in eastern Christian writers.

> In his letter to the Trallians (11:1b-2), he says: [Christ] by his Passion calls you who are his members. The head therefore cannot be borne without limbs, since it is God who is promising union, that is himself.

The last phrase contains a striking Ignatian understanding which also characterizes some of Paul's apokatastatic essays. With this identification of God as unity *(henosis)*, it is not surprising that Ignatius describes himself as a person set on unity or bent on unity (Phil 8:1). He encourages Polycarp to "care for unity, for there is nothing better." It is good when the people's repentance leads "to the unity of God the council of the bishop(!)"

In summary, Ignatius sees unity as the central Christian reality and can even call it God himself. He believes that God and Christ are working constantly to draw people into this final and perfect unity and understands it to be union



between the believer and God, to whom also Christ will be subject. These themes will recur in our examination of the Pauline corpus.

The term "apokatastatic" is awkward and in a sense misleading. It comes from the writings of Origen, especially from Books II and VI of the *Peri archon.* In my own use of the term, I do not mean to borrow all aspects of Origen's thought on this topic. Specifically, I do not borrow his universalism, if he is indeed a universalist. But I am impressed by the loving honesty of Origen. He has such a deep and dynamic understanding of God's love that he questioned whether even the devil would be permanently and finally excluded from the unity goal of his (Origen's) God.

However, there are other aspects of his thought which may sensitize us to similar understandings or emphases in the Pauline corpus. In Book VI he says that the end will be marked by the restitution of the image of God in (all?) people, for "the perfection of God's likeness was reserved for him at the consummation." Furthermore at the end "the whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Later in the same chapter, Origan states that the perfect unity (shades of Ignatius!) which joins the Father and the Son will also join the saints at the consummation or *apokatastasis.* Then God will again be "all in all" in the sense that everything that the saints "can feel or understand or think will be all God and that the mind will no longer be conscious of anything besides or other than God." The consummation will be like the beginning, a dwelling place for the pious who will perfectly keep the precepts of the true and eternal law.

Like Ignatius, Origen holds firmly to what later generations of theologians would call the heretical view that the Son is subordinate to the Father. This thought is expressed in a striking apokatastatic essay in Book I, Chapter 3.

> The God and Father, who holds the universe together (shades of Ignatius), is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to the rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father).

This passage is a good example of what can be called the radical monotheism of the fathers. It also illustrates what I have come to call the sacramental monotheism found in various forms in all the eastern fathers. By the term "sacramental monotheism," I wish to emphasize two cardinal theological points. The first is that everything, except evil, flows from the essence of Yahweh, the word that I will use for God in this article to stress the radical monotheism of the fathers and Paul. The second point is that this radically monotheistic God gives of himself so that people might taste and see his goodness. He comes into their

lives in various ways and through various channels to invite them to trust him and to commit their lives to his purpose. The phrase, "radical sacramental monotheism," will appear with some frequency in the remainder of this essay. But in my case, it was the writings of Ignatius and Origen that alerted me to this perspective. Only after I had been sensitized did I note how central this apokatastatic or restitutionary theology was also in Paul. And only then did I notice the spontaneous doxologies or *berakoth* that carry so much of Paul's apokatastatic thought.

II. Four Pauline Pericopes

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

In these verses Paul is concerned about those who despise the unity of the community on the grounds of their pride and superior wisdom. He assures his readers that God knows that "the thoughts of the wise are worthless." Therefore it is the height of folly to boast of self-achievement. In actual fact, he says, remember that everything already belongs to you. The list of their possessions is striking: "Paul, Apollos, and Peter; this world, life and death, the present and the future — all these are yours."

To emphasize the surety of these possessions, Paul moves his argument to an apokatastatic climax as he reminds the Corinthians that they are Christ's and that Christ is God's. In these last six words, *humeis de Christou, Christos de theou,* Paul makes a full statement of what can rightly be called "radical sacramental monotheism." The subordination of Christ to God is proclaimed as is also the fact that this monotheistic God has given and is giving them all things, including his son and himself. These words also proclaim clearly that God is the final reality, the source of every good gift; yes, the source of communal unity which proud and wise people were trying to break up.

Had Paul been a musician, this insight would have inspired him to compose a grand *symphonia,* which the Greeks understood as the fitting together of all the parts. It is almost a synonym for *henosis.* In this grand symphony everything contributes to the celestial harmony *(homonia,* another synonym for unity among the Greeks). This interpretation assumes that the two *de's* do not signal a contrast or a change in emphasis as they usually do, but rather here function as a transitional particle pure and simple, without any contrast intended.

The central reality in Paul's understanding of the world and of its people is the truth that all things in the final analysis are God's. It is difficult to give adequate expression to this idea. Mystics have for centuries tried to do so, but usually make their ideas clear only to themselves. It is as if Paul is saying: "Fix your eyes on Yahweh who is One and the source of all oneness. Remember that the basic nature of our universe is unity, a unity that is derived from God and re-



mains a part of his essence. Yahweh created and owns all things, even death. He is present and actively involved in all parts of his created world, though even the believer cannot always see or even sense his uniting sacramental presence."

But Paul knew that the world was constituted by the sacramental presence of Yahweh. The function of this six word doxology is to take the believer into the presence of God. Christ the Lord is the only means to that end, for he belongs to God. But Christ is penultimate in the divine economy; the enjoyment of the presence of Yahweh is the ultimate Christian experience. Therefore the Advent longing for Jesus Christ is really a longing to experience the glorious presence of Yahweh now. In that sense, Advent is the time for dealing with ultimates and a time for realigning lives as those who know that in Christ they stand in Yahweh's presence.

1 Corinthians 15:22-28

These verses represent an apokatastatic *essay* in their form, although the rhapsodic language of verse 28 is on the verge of becoming an apokatastatic *doxology.* Verse 24b is an example of the radical monotheism that abounds in Paul's writings. The son will give up the kingdom to God and the Father after he has destroyed every principality and all power and might. The striking thing about this list is that these are forces that in the New Testament are almost always described as enemies of unity, powers that thrive on factiousness and disharmony. They are sworn to oppose every attempt at recognizing in any way the fundamental unity that Ignatius even called God himself.

The phrase "to God and the Father" helps to make clear Paul's radical monotheism. His concern, as I said above, is to lead his readers to understand that God is the ultimate reality that they can enjoy through the work of Jesus Christ. The parallelism in this verse between "God" and "Father" alerts us to the fact that Paul will sometimes speak of the Father when what he has in mind is the one God, Yahweh. Verse 28 contains the core of Paul's apokatastatic thought, which reaches its climax in the pregnant statement that God will be all in all or everything to everyone. Again with a few well-chosen words, Paul has set forth the sacramental role of Yahweh. He who from the beginning has been all in all *(panta en pasin)* is drawing all things toward that "time" when the believers will experience and rejoice in the perfect unity that this phrase describes.

Ephesians 1:3-12

Whether or not Paul wrote Ephesians is debated. But it is beyond debate that the writer fully shared Paul's apokatastatic convictions and expressed his thought in the same kind of apokatastatic doxologies and essays. There are at least six examples of these forms in this short letter. In this respect, Ephesians is fully Pauline.

Ephesians 1:3-12 is an example of an apokatastatic essay, although it begins

with the classical *berakah* form: "Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Particularly striking in these verses is the emphasis on the role of Jesus Christ as the means to Yahweh. Eleven times in these twelve verses the writer insists that Christians enjoy every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, that they were chosen for adoption through Christ, that they have been graced in the beloved, and so forth.

The writer does not speak this way because he believes that the son is essentially inferior to the Father, as the Arians claimed, but rather to help his readers understand that through the son they have access to Yahweh himself. The writer is not anti-trinitarian, but he is radically monotheistic, in keeping with the central belief of his Jewish training. He did not abandon the "Shema' Yisrael" ("Hear, O Israel") but modified it slightly so that he might have said "Hear, O people, the Lord our God is one Lord!" That is the chief and central article also of the Christian faith, for God's oneness is the source of all our hope for and expectation of oneness or wholeness in our lives.

In verses 9-12, the writer speaks of the final "knitting up of the ravelled sleeve of care" when *all things* are given lasting stability and purpose as they are "again headed-up in the Christ, all things 'in' heaven and on earth." This is the final stage of the mystery of God's will (v. 9). A major preliminary event in that same mystery is the "again heading-up together (!)" of Jews and Gentiles (3:3ff, 9ff) and "the again heading-up" of believers in the body of Christ (5:32). Once again Pauline apokatastatic thought is developed in close connection with the unity of the Christian community.

Throughout the breathless sentence which runs from verses 2 to 10, the writer stresses the mediatorial and penultimate role of Christ in the mystery of God. He said in verse 3 that the God whom he worships is the Father "of our Lord Jesus Christ." The deity of Christ is clearly proclaimed, but the writer is at pains to remind himself and his readers that he with whom they have to do is always Yahweh, whom they sometimes worship as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Thus he shares fully the radical monotheism concern of St. Paul.

Ephesians 4:4-6

Probably the most dramatic example of Pauline apokatastatic thought is found in Eph. 4:4-6. In verses 4 and 5, the writer carefully constructs the chain that holds Yahweh and humanity bound to each other. It consists of seven parts and the dramatic utterance of the seven *hens, mias* and *heises* provides a firm base foundation that calls out for a symphonic interpretation with a timpani solo. Then in verse 6 the writer explodes with a characteristically Pauline apokatastatic affirmation of the oneness of the "one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." Does the



writer mean all things or all people or both? Probably both. But the primary point is that all things are pulled together by the presence of God in the world.

Verse 6 lends itself to the defense of classical pantheism, but that is not part of the writer's thought. God and the universe are not identical, but neither does God ever separate himself from his creation. Panentheism may approximate more closely to the apokatastatic theology of Paul and the writers of Ephesians than the philosophy of pantheism. This is "the belief that the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part exists in him, but that his being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe."

It is more helpful to try to define the relation between God and the world in sacramental, rather than in philosophical, terms, even though in the final analysis these, too, are inadequate. A sacrament can be defined as a "moment" or an experience in which God uses created realities in a special way to enable people to understand his constantly gracious intention and purpose toward them. The church has almost from the beginning insisted that the word sacrament must be applied in a special and limited way to those cultic "moments," numbering somewhere between two and seven or more, which have been given specific salvific significance by Jesus.

But a broader definition is also useful for then one can think of Christ as the sacrament of the encounter with God (Schillebeeckx) and of the church as the Basic Sacrament. We can speak of bread and wine as possessing sacramental potential also outside their cultic sacramental use. People are frequently sacraments to each other. That understanding can even be broadened to ascribe sacramental characters to our home, our car, and the company that employs us. The comprehensive use of *ta panta* in Ephesians 1:10 warrants that understanding.

Again it should be noted that this classical apokatastatic passage stands in the context of the writer's concern for the unity and the vitality of the community. It seems fair to conclude that, like Ignatius, Paul and his disciples saw a close connection between the unity of God and the unity of the community!

With this biblical background in mind it is now possible to offer a systematic and cohesive description of what we have called apokatastatic forms in the Pauline corpus. The pure liturgical form is spontaneous. It comes unbidden into the writer's mind and the logic of the argument usually does not require its presence. The spontaneous character suggests that apokatastatic ideas are never far from Paul's mind and may indeed be close to the center of his working theology.

Both forms clearly present the radical monotheism of St. Paul. Both present Jesus Christ as the Son of God whose work enables believers to stand before Yahweh, who is One and Holy and who

is over all and through all and in all. Both assume God's constant sacramental presence in his created world. Both often occur in contexts where the oneness of the community and its understanding of its mission are the chief concern. Both affirm that God is so moving and controlling all facets of creaturely life that they move toward the goal of thoroughly *(kata)* restoring that condition *(stasis)* that existed at the beginning *(apo)* when he was all things to everyone (1 Cor. 15:28). Thus Advent is a time to celebrate the reign of Yahweh which he symbolized to us in the gift of his son (2 Cor. 5:17-21) and which he fashioned anew in his death and resurrection.

III. The History of the Pauline Understanding in the Church

One could suggest that the basic task that Christian theologians have wrestled with for 2000 years is how to formulate Paul's radical sacramental monotheism (almost contradictory terms) while preserving it from pantheism, subordinationism, modalism and a host of other heretical and orthodox misunderstandings.

As has been noted, the early eastern fathers are simple and direct in their proclamation for they have not yet discovered the fine line between a statement that is necessary to preserve a biblical understanding and one that has gently slipped over into heresy. The trinitarian controversies of the second and third centuries so stressed the three persons in the Trinity that Christians often failed to understand the radically monotheistic nature of their faith. Shema' Yisrael was blunted and almost obscured. The bitter Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries led the church to develop a more Christocentric theology, which was all to the good, but at the same time led many to ascribe a false value to the work of Christ. This meant that the salvation of the individual was the work he had come to do while its apokatastatic purpose was obscured and sometimes completely forgotten.

The sacramental character of God's relationship to the world remained a relatively strong emphasis down to the time of the Protestant Reformations. Mystics like Eckhart, whom some interpreters identify as a pantheist, Tauler, whose sermons were highly regarded by Luther, and Suso, who influenced Thomas a Kempis, the author of the *Imitatio Christi,* preserved at least for their own spiritual nourishment the conviction of God's absorbing oneness and his sacramental presence in the world. Thomas' highly influential little book is really an essay in sacramental theology. These mystics were the apokatastatic *thinkers* in medieval Europe. The cathedral builders can perhaps be thought of as the great apokatastatic *doers* as they, too, affirmed the glory of Yahweh and his call for people to worship him with all the gifts and things that they possessed. For them surely God was all things and



in their buildings his sacramental presence was powerfully symbolized and joyfully celebrated.

Biblical interpreters in the Middle Ages, probably unintentionally, continued to emphasize that God was always in control of human affairs and was leading his people through time back to that great condition when he would again be all things to everyone. This was the basic principle in the predominant allegorical method of interpretation and through sermons, pictures and popular devotional tracts that belief in Yahweh's providence came to undergird the thought and action of every Christian.

For all the good that they accomplished, the various Protestant reformers showed little or no understanding of the radically sacramental nature of Christian monotheism and the view of life that followed upon this apokatastatic understanding. Some of the reformers radically devalued the sacraments as signs of God's presence in the world and taught instead that they were only vehicles of deliverance and salvation for individual Christians. Reformers also tended to devalue liturgical celebrations, with the noticeable exception of Martin Luther. In doing this, they deprived both themselves and their people of the enormous quiet potential of the sacraments for signaling God's presence among his people and his care for all those "little fishes" (Tertullian) who live in and by water and who depend on bread and wine for daily sustenance.

The Reformers generally agreed that great emphasis should be placed upon the person and work of Jesus Christ as the Son of God who had delivered people from the power of sin, death and the devil through his innocent suffering and death. But none of them — again with the exception of Martin Luther who was deeply influenced by a number of early eastern writers, and Ambrose of Milan, who in turn was profoundly influenced by Origen, an easterner — apparently understood that in the incarnation of the Christ Yahweh had again mightily signalled his commitment to all people and to all his dear creation and had indeed begun the construction of that new world in which he again would be everything to everyone.

The essays of John Locke and David Hume and the influence of Enlightenment philosophers like Lessing and Herder contributed to the further desacramentalization of the general understanding of God and his role in human affairs. The way was prepared for the secularism of the 19th and 20th centuries which allowed no place for the sacramental understanding of God's way or even for the existence of God himself. Paul's apokatastatic insights all but disappeared from the western Christian understanding.

The secularism of the 20th century was hailed, perhaps correctly, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Harvey Cox, John Robinson and many other Christian theologians as

a major milestone in human progress toward the Kingdom of God or that condition where God will again be everything to everyone. But attractive as these views were to some sophisticated Christians, they did not help the majority of people who knew that their lives were out of joint but usually could not understand why. They are the searchers and for them Paul's apokatastatic theology has much to offer.

IV. Advent Implications in Paul's Apokatastatic Theology

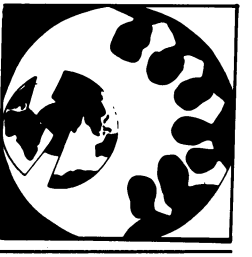
Those searchers are *Los Alienos,* the alienated ones who feel vaguely out of synch and out of harmony with themselves, with each other, with their world and with their own destinies. It is good to remember that most of Paul's hearers and readers fell into the same category. They, too, were *hoi apollotriomenoi,* the alienated ones. The symptoms of alienation were everywhere present: suicides, alcoholism, family break-ups, divorces, pornography, gluttony, rootlessness. Many of those people listened to Paul and found in his message truths that mattered and that made a difference. ference.

Paul's apokatastatic thought may generate some of the same appeal today for *Los Alienos.* Its chief points have been described. The following paragraph contains a summary and provides the basis for some implications for Advent worshiping, preaching and reflecting.

Paul's thought is marked by a basic radical monotheism. His desire is to know Yahweh and to stand in his presence. Jesus Christ is God's beloved son in whom we know Yahweh and through whom we approach Yahweh, for, finally it is Yahweh with whom we have to deal. In creation Yahweh committed himself to our world and its problems, joys, fears and hopes. In the incarnation, he renewed that commitment and began developing a new heaven and a new earth. Only evil is not touched and affected by God's sacramental or sacramentalizing presence. Because God himself is one and shares this oneness with the warp and woof of our universe, it follows that his unchanging goal is oneness or wholeness for everything. This goal will be fully reached when God will again be everything to everyone. In pursuing this goal of Yahweh's, the Christian individual and the Christian community play crucial roles for they are the true signs *(semeia)* and faithful agents *(apostoloi)* of God's coming wholeness (or Kingdom or Shalom or "allness in all").

Some suggestions for advent worship and reflection for individuals, families and parishes emerge from this summary.

1. Christians seek to make the worship of Paul's radically monotheistic God the central experience of their religious lives. Silence and awe are important elements in their private and public worship. They rejoice in the monotheistic affirmation that God is the ground of all being. At the core of our universe, and thus also at



the core of our daily lives, we find Yahweh.

2. The conviction of God's perfect oneness is the central organizing principle for Christian thought and life. Their primary confession is the *Shema' Christianim:* "Hear, O Christians, the Lord our God is One!"

3. Christians base all their planning and searching for wholeness for themselves and others on the perfect wholeness which God has imparted to his universe. Creating wholeness is their only business in life, regardless of their specific assignment. In baptism they were already sworn to oppose and to overcome brokenness in all its forms.

4. Therefore Advent is an appropriate season to think about brokenness and to act against it in one's own life, in the family, in groups of friends, in the parish, in the denomination, at work, at play, wherever. It is a time to move against political, economic, educational, military and recreational leaders and forces that cause brokenness.

5. In the Advent season, Christians rejoice in the first coming of their Lord Jesus and in the conviction that he is coming again. They rejoice because in his first coming (in his life, death and resurrection) and in his coming again they find themselves standing in the august presence of Yahweh. They recognize him as Yahweh's son and servant who came to bring them something even better than his own presence; namely, that of Yahweh. What they deeply long for in the Advent season is the advent of that condition when God will again be all in all and his wholeness fully shared by all his children.

6. In that spirit, Christians seek to understand more fully and to live out more successfully their call to be signs and agents of the coming oneness of God.

7. Advent is a good time to reflect on God's gift of himself, that is, his gift of forthcoming unity to the members of the Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. This unity finds its foundation in that unity which is part of the nature that he somehow shares with his creation and his creatures. It is a superbly precious and divine thing and is to be cherished by all. But the antepenultimate nature of this move toward Lutheran unity must not be forgotten. It is a small thing when viewed from the perspective of Yahweh's desire that he be everything to everyone, and that the church, the holy Christian church, both participate in that oneness and be a world-wide sign of it to others.

8. Because Paul's thought so regularly relates God's unity to communal unity, Advent is a good time to investigate the nature of unity and the steps that can be taken to strengthen the unity of each local community.

9. Advent is a good time to fine-tune liturgical and sacramental celebrations. The goal always is that in liturgy, preach-

ing and sacraments God's people have a refreshing experience of the radical monotheism of Yahweh and of his sacramental commitment to us. Is our worship and preaching radically monotheistic and sacramental in the sense that Yahweh is sacramental? Do we make effective use of silence? Are we conscious of *and* refreshed by Yahweh's glorious presence? Or is it all pragmatic, moralistic, very friendly, and busy?

10. Advent calls the church to remember and to confess that Jesus Christ, who brings us into Yahweh's presence, is 100% divine and 100% human, that in him the truly divine and the truly human are forever united. It is a time to reflect on the truth that the greatest art of pastoral care may not lie in rightly dividing law and Gospel, but rather in fully and clearly understanding and explaining to others the nature of the personal union in Emmanuel, God With Us.

Advent is truly a time for new beginnings and a time to rejoice anew in the great bedrock truth that our God is one and is leading us toward that "time" when he will again be all in all.

Pauline apokatastatic passages, both liturgical and essay varieties:

ROMANS
1:16f
5:1f
11
17-21
6:11
8:15-39
9:4f*
11:33-36*
14:8f
11f
15:5-13.16**
16:20
24-27**

1 CORINTHIANS
1:1-10
3:21-23* Note 3:1-5 & 19-21
6:1f
8:4-6
10:31
11:3
12:3
12ff
15:39-49
54-57* Note 15:12-26

2 CORINTHIANS
1:3
19f
2:14-17
3:17-18
5:4
17-21
6:16b-18
9:8-15 Note 1-7
11:31

GALATIANS
1:3-5

EPHESIANS
1:3-6** Note also 7-12



3:14-21*
4:4-6** 9.10.13.16
5:20

PHILIPPIANS
2:9-11*
4:19-20*

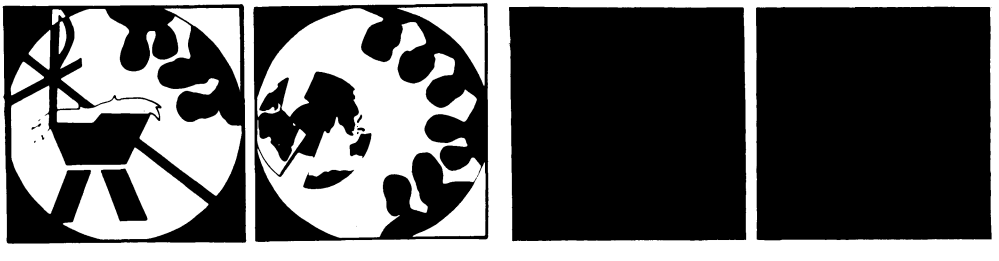
COLOSSIANS
1:15-19 Note 17 and 27
2:2f
3:1 Note 8-16
17*

2 THESSALONIANS
2:16f
3:16

1 TIMOTHY
1:17
6:13-16* Note 17-19

2 TIMOTHY
2:1-6**

Note: Passages marked with a single or double * are especially good examples. Where other verses from the context are listed, they indicate that this context is important.



A Baptismal Crossing, Isaiah 42:1-9

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Who in the Old Testament reading of Isaiah is "you"? "You," to make a long story short, is *you* — you, the reader of this page, and I. A long story that is, from the original "you" of this Isaianic song to the you who are reading it now.

> I, Yahweh, call *you* in righteousness
> and take *you* by the hand.
> I form and make of *you*
> the covenant of the people,
> the light of the heathen. (v.6)

You and I, here and now, are obviously not those sixth century B.C. Jewish exiles far from their Palestinian home, crushed and demeaned by their Babylonian captors, disillusioned with impotent old Yahweh and attracted to his glossier rivals Marduk and Bel and Nebo.

But if we are not the intended addressees of Second Isaiah, what are we doing reading their mail? Eavesdropping? Who gave us the right? And do not answer, please, "But this is the Word of God," which is assumed automatically to apply to everyone. That is the way biblicists (including highly sophisticated historical critics) short-circuit the long story, merely by invoking — without authorization — some Name-dropping formula like verse five, "Thus says Yahweh, the Lord." Indeed the Lord does say. But as Luther reminded biblicist Carlstadt, one must always ask first the truly historical question, To *whom* did the Lord say it? And by all historical evidence the Lord did not say Isaiah 42:1-9 to *us* — who, if we appear in that poem at all, appear as "the heathen."

But then why, by what long story, have we heathen come to take such liberties with the Lord's invitation to his Jewish people as if that included us as well? "Behold my servant," he invited them, "in whom I have delight." (v.1) What entitles us to "behold" their delightful Servant of the Lord as ours? Aren't we, by horning in on the beholding, being peeping-toms, religious voyeurs? It all depends, doesn't it, on who the beloved Servant is? I do not mean by that, who the Servant was at the time of Second Isaiah. That we do not know for sure and, since the prophet was not all that specific about the Servant's identity then, or all that consistent, we do well not to pry unduly.

What we do know, in a way that even Second Isaiah did not, is that in the long story the favorite Servant of the Lord eventually turned out to be that one who "came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan," Jesus. At his baptism "a voice came from heaven," repeating itself after half a millennium but this time with unerring specificity, "*You* are my Son, the Beloved, my favor rests on you." (Mark 1:11) In today's liturgy for the Festival of the Baptism of Our Lord, the ancient "you" of Second Isaiah now crosses over to you and me through the connecting "you," Jesus. Granted, this Christian recourse to that later lone Jew in order to admit us to his people's heritage hardly relieves the scandal of us heathen as



party-crashers. But at least it does fix responsibility for our inclusion squarely upon him — not on some anonymous "thus says the Lord" — and upon us for ever having believed him.

For us, then, there is no point in pretending to read Isaiah forty-two as though we did not know how it comes out in the end — who the "you" is, and who the Servant. That would be phoney historianship or antiquarianism. We have seen the answer, so we believe, at the back of the book. That is why the front part, however "old," is ours as well.

Initial Diagnosis: Babylon

If we wish to be numbered among Second Isaiah's "you," it is only fair that we accept also his diagnosis. This will not require fancying ourselves as captive Jews in long ago Babylon; we do not have to lose ourselves in that history. On the other hand, we might just find ourselves in it, thanks to the prophetic way it is "seen through" (dia-gnosed) not only by this anonymous prophet but by the One whose "voice" he is.

What is the problem confronting the prophet? To begin with, his people have been scattered — some no doubt by choice, but many by slave-raids and deportation — from their "devastated land" (49:19), with Jerusalem left behind in "heaps." Now as dislocated nobodies in a hostile environment they "fear continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor." (51:13) They are victims of the harshest injustice, "a people robbed and plundered. . .trapped in holes and hidden in prisons" (42:22), the objects of "devastation and destruction, famine and sword," whose "sons have fainted [and] lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net." (51:19, 20) Such persecution may defy imagination, yet even the most sheltered of us must know in some measure what it is to be "a dimly burning wick," "a bruised reed," (v.3) that is, not just the doers of injustice but the ones it is done to — to the very verge of being burned out.

Probably nothing quite so much as literal exile, being forced from the security of familiar haunts and from the accustomed protection of one's civil rights, is apt to drive home how all human misery is not just self-imposed but world-imposed, environmentally. Injustice may also be what we ourselves commit, yes, but at least as often it is what is inflicted upon us by people and principalities under whom we are compelled to live and work. That is not always apparent. Back in the cozy safety of Jerusalem, where your backyard was your own and even the neighbors' dog respected you, it was tempting to imagine that, if injustice befell you, there was no one to blame but yourself, or yourself and perhaps city-hall. That myopia is itself part of our captivity.

Once you are cut off from Jerusalem and have all you can do to survive under the Chaldeans, your sense of injustice

becomes remarkably cosmopolitan, transnational, inter-ethinic. There, in an inhospitable land, you cannot help but hope that sometime, someone else, "will bring forth justice," not to the city-council back in Jerusalem, but this time to all "the nations" (v.1), to "the coastlands" (v.4), to the whole "earth" (v.4), to "the heathen" (v.6), on whom your and your people's fate — you finally discover — has always depended. Unjust Babylon is not geographically all that distant; it also controls Jerusalem. Physical banishment has a way of making that diagnosis vivid.

Isn't that why genuine justice *(mishpat)*, when it does occur, strikes us as surprising, as the exception, and injustice strikes us as the rule: because those in this world on whose hospitality we depend, the powers who control our historical sojourn, can be counted on to deal justly with us only so long as our interests are not foreign to theirs? Maybe for awhile we can pose as guests, but before long we wear out our welcome. The Japanese say company are like fish: after three days they begin to smell. So in a world of strangers the hosts' justice is short-lived and highly selective. What is missing is not justice altogether, justice now and then, but justice as a steady diet, lasting and consistent and all-inclusive. The need for someone who not only will "bring forth" justice (vv.1, 3) but who, having brought it forth, will "establish" it as a permanent feature of existence. "Righteousness," as the prophet knows, needs to happen "as truth" (v.3), as what life truly is all about always, not a sometime deviation from the statistical norm.

That is the problem, and then only in its most evident form: the "earth" is a Babylon, we are its exiles, and the *mishpat* which exiles so sorely need for survival is at best erratic and abnormal, just enough to drive them to despair.

Advanced Diagnosis: Blindness

Up against Babylon's injustice, where do despairing exiles look for help? I suppose they look where any exiles do, at least at first, to Babylon. After all, if it is Chaldean power that put us in exile, that must be what we need too, Chaldean power, to get us out. What is the secret of our captors' clout and moxie? Whatever it is, that is for us.

Isn't that reasonable, to emulate our captors in order to be free of them? If it is, then that brand of rationality, says Second Isaiah, is "blind." That is our captivity, our "dungeon," "the prison [of our] darkness." (v.7) The very metaphors emphasize how this prisoners' mentality, just because of its compelling reasonableness, has already hoodwinked the victims. By now they have so internalized Babylon that it dominates even the way they "behold" their escape from it, or rather mis-behold it.

But mis-beholding is not only blindness. It is also injustice, unrighteousness.



Victims, too, practice injustice. It may not be the obvious Babylonian variety, the overt victimizing of other human beings. Exiles' injustice is subtler but at least as fatal: misbeholding the deliverer. That does the gravest injustice to the real Deliverer. Soteriological mis-beholding, known also as idolatry, is injustice at its source.

But did the exiles — I mean the original Jewish ones in Babylon — really idolize Babylonian superiority as cravenly as all that? Doesn't Second Isaiah himself reflect how that superiority had already begun to slip? Wasn't it widely suspected, also among the exiles, that the once mighty Chaldean empire of Nebuchadrezzar, now in the hands of inferior successors, was soon doomed to defeat by a new foreign invader, the bold and exciting Cyrus of Persia? Isn't it likely that he was the one on whom the exiles were now betting? From their standpoint, wasn't Cyrus, if conquerers there must be, the thinking man's conquerer?

Indeed, even among Babylonians there seems to have been a powerful priestly class, angered at their own government's neglect of the god Marduk, who likewise looked to the oncoming Cyrus for deliverance and for the renewed worship of Marduk which he promised to bring. Eventually it was disaffected Babylonians within the walls who opened the gates of the city to Cyrus' general, who entered it without a struggle. So much for Babylonian superiority, as also the exiles must surely have "beheld." Rightly so. But righteously so?

The trouble is, even Cyrus the Persian was just a more successful version of the Babylonian's kind of power. He happened to be better at it than they currently were, and more attentive to their own god Marduk than they were. Any Jewish exiles, therefore, who grasped at straws and turned to Cyrus as their new deliverer were still dreaming like slaves. They were courting the same Mardukian idolatry he was.

But doesn't Second Isaiah extol Cyrus as Yahweh's "anointed" (45:1), by whom the Jewish "prey would be taken from the mighty" Chaldeans (49:24) and who would "set my exiles free"? (45:13) That Cyrus was Yahweh's instrument, there is no need to deny, for Yahweh too can operate with Persian power. He can play terribly rough. (47; 43:14-17) Yet quite apart from the fact that Second Isaiah expected more from Cyrus than he got, even this optimistic prophet had to admit that when it came to Cyrus' knowing the real Source of his power, he "does not know" Yahweh.

Says Yahweh to Cyrus,

> *I* surname you, though you do not know me, . . .
> *I* gird you, though you do not know me. (45,4,5)

Says Cyrus, in a well-publicized inscription about himself,

> Through all lands [Marduk] made his way, [Marduk] looked, [Mar-

duk] sought a righteous prince, a being whom [Marduk] loved, whom [Marduk] took by the hand. Cyrus, King of Anshan, [Marduk] called by name and designated him to rule over all lands.

To this the exiles may object, "Marduk, Schmarduk, what's in a name, so long as Cyrus — under whatever gods — gets the job done?" That pragmatic attitude may be good enough for Cyrus, though then again it may not. In any case, such theological opportunism will never do for exiles. It only deepens their "darkness." As if it did not matter whether the god in question were Yahweh, so long as someone, anyone, come to the exiles' aid. How bureaucratic of them, how managerially modern, where what counts nowadays is the job-description and its goal regardless of who it is who does it. The doer had better be an expert, of course, but if she is not, she is after all an exchangeable unit and can always be replaced. In its theological form that sort of bureaucratic "rationality," as Max Weber called it, Second Isaiah calls idolatry. It is the "dungeon" which keeps exiles misbeholding their deliverer, blind in their own injustice.

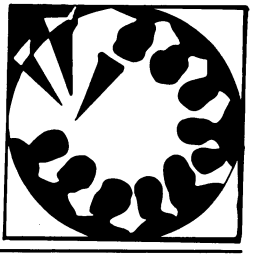
Final Diagnosis: Blame

So the exiles are the victims of Babylon's injustice, yet they themselves compound the injustice with their own violation of the Lord's *mishpat* by looking elsewhere — Marduk, Nebo, whatever works — for help. But then, notice, because of their own slavish complicity, the Babylonian injustice against them turns out to be, at bottom, their just due. Injustice functions as justice? In the end the captives' oppression is not only the cruel doing of the Babylonians but the just doing as well of Yahweh. Ironically, there was some truth after all to the canny advice, when in captivity look to the captor. But that is so only if exiles recognize their real Exiler, and that their exile at his hands is all too just, rather than be preoccupied with mini-oppressors like the Chaldeans.

Evidently, one *reason* exiles cannot behold the Lord as their hope is that they cannot behold him as their Afflictor, and that as part of his *mishpat.* How could such injustice as they incur be what they have coming from him? However privileged their status as Yahweh's servants, maybe precisely because of their status, they deserve the special reproach, "Who is blind but my servant? . . . Who is blind . . . as the servant of the Lord?" (42:19)

Rather than believe that, exiles would prefer to focus instead upon tyrants like Nebuchadrezzar and, when talk turns to good old Yahweh, excuse him as probably having forgotten them or as having done all he could though he means well. Yahweh, forgetful? Shorthanded? That is as wishful as it is mistaken.

Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler,
and Israel to the robbers?



Was it not the Lord, against whom
we have sinned . . .?
So he poured upon him the heat of
his anger and the might of battle.
(42:24-25)

So "look, you blind," says the prophet, "that you may see." (42:18) Who, we were asking, is "you"? Is there a motion to withdraw the question?

Initial Prognosis: Birth-pangs

Seeing through us is one thing, seeing us through is quite another. So much so that in the crossing we need to change the subject — away from ourselves, that is, the subjects under diagnosis. But the new subject to whom attention shifts is not, as pious folk might suppose, God. At least not God in mere contrast to us. That would be too religious for our own good. Anyway there is no need for "God the Lord" (v.5) to *enter* the transaction when in truth it has been God's affair — for good or ill, "weal and woe" — from the outset. The change of subject is away from us, all right, but *to* . . . well, to whom? Answer: to another one of us — the Servant, as Second Isaiah calls him, or in the Markan gospel for this festival, "Jesus Christ." (1:1)

Granted, the whole point of the Markan account of Jesus' baptism seems to be that this man, God's unique "Son," the Isaianic "Lord" for whom John the Baptizer was preparing the way (1:1,11,3), just as Second Isaiah had stressed that the Servant was entrusted with doing what only God can do. (vv.1-4) All of which has the effect, doesn't it, of contrasting Jesus with us? So isn't this the standard change-of-subject after all, native to most religions, in which the patients who are diagnosed as hopeless must finally turn to the only superior power left to turn to, the divine physician, the healing deity?

But what if, as in the case at hand, the physician himself is one of the patients, a fellow victim inhabiting their "earth" (v.4), a nobody on their "street" (v.2), as sensorily beholdable as any idol, baptized in the same river with the rest of the "sinners," and so generally like them as to leave us wondering when the Isaianic title, "servant," refers to him and when to his people. This religiously unconventional approach is what Second Isaiah calls "the new things" by contrast with "the former things." (v.9) The challenge is to enjoy what Second Isaiah calls "good tidings" (40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 61:1) and Mark calls "the gospel" (1:1) — too good not to be true.

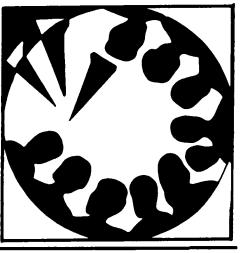
How good it is for once to find a leader in the religious community who is so humbly a servant, a minister, that "he will not cry or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street." (v.2) This is one public servant who does not crave publicity or toot his own horn. But then, comes back the objection, he hardly needs to when he has Second Isaiah to toot it for him and the evangelist Mark and 1,500 years of Bible copying and

distributing and reading to provide him the most ambitious PR network in history. (This article is just one more pitch.) By comparison the most headlined denominational executives with their self-publicizing house-organs and mass-mailings appear as shrinking violets alongside Jesus who, like no other, is "famous to all ages." Even if in the Markan account his religious experience at his baptism was not observed by anyone else, that is scarcely the case anymore. By now that must be one of the most publicized private experiences ever. Are the tidings about him so good, after all?

There are other and probably better ways to interpret the verse, "He will not cry or lift up his voice. . . ." The verse may be describing not the Servant's self-modesty but his forbearance toward others, his compassion for the "bruised reed" and the "dimly burning wick." It is against them, then, that he does not "lift up his voice or make it heard in the street" as judgment. Here the divine *mishpat* becomes "the sparing of those already under sentence of death." (Westermann) Unlike "earlier prophets of doom," this Servant brings "the quiet proclamation of God's . . . comfort to the exiles." (Whybray) That cheering interpretation, we might add, is echoed by Mark, who contrasts John the Baptizer, a latter-day prophet of doom, with Jesus and his better baptism of the Healing Spirit. (1:7,8) "When he [Jesus] touches upon [sinners'] sin he does it so gently that the reproach is hardly noticeable." (Elert) What is so good then about Servant Jesus' reticence is that in him God's final diagnosis of "you deaf" and "you blind" is being silenced, consuming Jesus instead. In Jesus' restraint God, to put it plainly, swallows hard, bites his tongue, eats his own words. Evidently there are times when it is best, for us and our salvation, that God keeps silent, and Servant Jesus is that suffering silence of God.

Return for a moment to the earlier, alternative exegesis. Suppose the Servant's silence does refer to his personal humility. The effect for us is still the same good tidings. For what is it that is objectionable about a superior's advertising himself? Is it only that bragging reflects conceit? That would hurt only him. Isn't it that bragging also hurts others, those he impresses: bruised reeds, misbeholders, the condemned? The celebrity's obtrusive superiority, the one-sidedness of his public image — only his best foot forward, his most photogenic profile, no hint of his own doom — makes the prosaic, unsung lives of his hearers and readers seem all the more insignificant. By comparison, how out of it they feel, that they have to fantasize vicariously with him in order to belong. I once heard a conscientious pastor confess that whenever he reads his denomination's newspaper he is depressed by how inferior his own obscure ministry appears. Superstars, especially saintly ones, are like the final diagnosis, condemning.

Still, didn't Jesus' own superiority, his



superior helpfulness, have the similar effect of depressing those he helped? Remember Peter's "Depart from me, for I am a sinner." Yes, but that accusatory effect upon others seems to be exactly why Jesus imposed such a news-blackout on his fans and kept his accomplishments as secret as possible, until. . . .

Wrede thought the "messianic secret" in the Gospel of Mark was added to hide the fact that Jesus never considered himself Messiah. That theory is increasingly untenable. It is at least as credible that the historical Jesus was deliberately secretive, and for very messianic reasons: to protect little people from being overwhelmed by a distorted, one-sided superman image of himself, to keep bruised reeds from being further bruised, until . . .

Until when? "Till," as Second Isaiah says, "he has established justice in the earth." (v.4) And when is that? Only when the full story could finally be told, including the other side of it, the doom side. Full justice is done him not merely in his wonder-workings and exorcisms, which tend to overawe, but finally only in his suffering and defeat on the cross — "woe" as well as "weal" — which is where justice is being done to the dimly burning wicks. Until the cross it would have been premature for him to be "heard in the street," knowing the wicks and the reeds would have heard the wrong message and been crushed by it.

Only at the bitter end, where exiles are, did the time finally arrive for him to "cry and lift up his voice," and then hardly in the form of an ego trip: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) Second Isaiah had anticipated this cry of the Servant.

> For a long time
> I have held my peace;
> I have kept still
> and restrained myself;
> now I will cry out
> like a woman in travail,
> I will gasp and pant. (42:14)

What a graphic christological metaphor: the mother bears the pain so her baby need not die but live. And her scream, no one could mistake for a commercial.

The newborn ones who are delivered through the pangs of Jesus' fatal baptism are not likely to construe his motherly cry as conceit. To their ears, no longer deaf, it is the best of tidings. Nor do they quibble whether such a trade-off of One for the others strictly qualifies as justice, *mishpat.* It does when it is the pathos of that Parent "who created the heavens and . . . the earth and . . . gives breath to the people on it" (v.5) and now goes into labor to the point of death so that the little ones may live. Any tidings as good as that have got to be just.

Advanced Diagnosis: Beholders

Through a change of subject from the exiles to the Servant, Yahweh's retributive justice becomes a justice of mercy. But in the course of that crossing, so do the exiles become something new, his

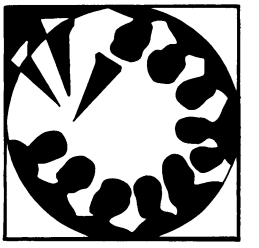
beholders. Recall, injustice is not only what they suffer from their Babylonian captors but also the self-imprisonment by which they are blinded to their true Deliverer, with the result that they themselves incur blame for their Babylonian captivity. The intervention by Servant Jesus, however, does not merely relieve them of blame, as though in all other respects they remain the same, "blind." The tidings are better than that. As vicarious as Second Isaiah's christology is, and Mark's after him, ineffectual it is not. The solution to the exiles' captivity is not in the Servant alone but, better than that, also in their beholding him.

The Servant's beholders still get bruised and burn dimly, and justly so, just as the Servant did. But that is what is new about them: "just as the Servant did." They now suffer and die as they never could have before, as not even the "servant" Cyrus could but only the beloved Son does, namely, as the Lord's clear-eyed beholders. As such, the exiles are already out of the "darkness" and "dungeon" on their way home to a new life, pre-enjoying resurrection. The Lord said of his Servant, "I have put my spirit upon him" (v.1) and at Jesus' baptism he did so. (Mark 1:10) To "behold" is to "be held" by that same holying Spirit, but now as a personal act of our own, newly created subjects, believing as no one else can do for us. Though Christ died in our stead, he rose not in our stead but to initiate resurrections of our own.

Commentators who claim that Second Isaiah foresaw the Servant's resurrection from the dead claim too much. The New Testament ought to be permitted a few surprises of its own. But even in the Gospel of Mark, whose report of the resurrection of Jesus is sparse enough, the reader need not wait until the open tomb to find rebirth among Jesus' beholders. While he was still on the cross a centurion — notice, not a disciple but a bona fide "heathen" — beheld the same thing which the "voice from heaven" and the descending Spirit had given Jesus to behold. "Truly this man was a son of God." (Mark 1:11; 15:39) "The heathen centurion . . . heard Jesus' cry of Godforsakenness in rejection by God, and believed." (Moltmann) Such believing or beholding or being held is, as Paul later discovered, the sinner's own *mishpat.*

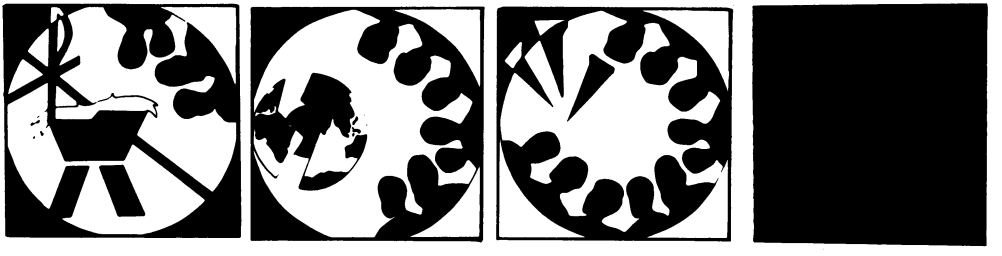
Final Prognosis: Brilliance

This same pitying *mishpat* extends even to our world-oppressor, Babylon, and through us, Babylon's victims. But how can we go as "a light to the nations" (v.6) if we go looking like victims, resembling all over again "those who sit in darkness"? (v.7) We go resembling the Servant, not for a moment concealing our servanthood any more than he did, but also not concealing the infectious grin which grows on us through beholding him.



What hilarious secret has the Servant heard that, as we hear it too, it begins to show on us, up and down "the earth" all the way to "the coastlands"? (v.4) Really, his secret is highly communicable: ". . . My chosen, in whom my soul delights" (v.1), ". . . My beloved Son, with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11) That highly placed favoritism toward the nobodies is the Servant's beauty, which is also in the eyes of his beholders and in their servantlike communities and institutions. That is what makes them not just "a covenant to the people" but, as one Jewish scholar captures the Hebrew pun, "a *brilliance* to the people." (v.6)

When one prisoner laughs, the others — maybe even the jailer — brighten too, probably with curiosity, wondering what she knows that they don't know, and not resting till they are in on her joke. Even Babylonian bureaucracy and Mardukian idolatry cannot extinguish the reeds and wicks who kindle to Jesus the Servant and who, reflecting him, light up the surrounding "dungeon" with their upbeat, high-morale liberation. It is Christ's church — Vatican II remembered to call it his *lumen gentium* — which is what the "heathen" have coming to them. It serves them right. *Mishpat.*



How I Would Use Messianic Prophecy In Advent

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When assigned this topic, the generous sprinkling of Old Testament lessons for Advent from the Book of Isaiah (7 of 12)[1] suggested to me that it might be useful for ministers of the Word to be better informed about the origin of the material in and the composition of that book. The fact that all of the Old Testament pericopes for Advent are not messianic prophecies, if one employs Mowinckel's list of "actual Messianic prophecies"[2], also suggested to me that it might be useful for gospel transmitters to be able to distinguish messianic and non-messianic prophecies.

In his attempt to define "messianic," Mowinckel asserts it is a term which originated and was used in late Judaism and early Christianity to designate a royal, eschatological figure. It is therefore a misuse of the terms "Messiah" and "Messianic" to apply them to Old Testament passages which talked of kings who were actually reigning. In early Christianity Jesus was the name and "Messiah/Christ" was the title of its central eschatological figure, and one of its central confessions was Jesus is the Messiah. However, it is also imprecise to use the term "Messianic" as "synonymous with all eschatological expectations" of the New Testament.[3]

Contemporary studies of the Book of Isaiah describe the book as comprised of:

a) Oracles (mainly judgment oracles) of and legends about Isaiah of the eighth century. (Most of chaps. 1-10; 13-23; 28-31; 36-39)

b) Oracles (mainly salvation oracles) of Isaiah of the sixth century. (Most of chaps. 40-52, questionably chaps. 53-55 and 60-62)

c) Oracles (mainly judgment-salvation oracles) combining the ideas, themes, and motifs of the eighth and sixth century Isaiahs, produced by post-exilic redactors who combined the historically oriented traditions (i.e. a and b) and expanded them, thus giving them an "afterlife" by indicating their relevance for subsequent readers of every age. (Most of chaps. 11-12; 24-27; 32-35; 63-66 and the salvation parts of chaps. 1-2, namely 2:2-5, and 2:6-4:6, namely 4:2-5; questionably 53-59 and 60-62).[4]

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[1] *The Lutheran Book of Worship*, pp. 13-14.

[2] Sigmund Mowinckel. (trans. by G. W. Anderson.) *He That Cometh.* New York: Abingdon, 1956, pp. 15-16.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

[4] This summarizes Brevard Childs. *Introduction to the Old Testament As Scripture.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979, pp. 311-38; William Holladay. *Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978; R. E. Clements. "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,' *Int* 36 (1982), pp. 117-29; Paul D. Hanson. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic.* Rev. ed. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.

Of the aforementioned Isaiah passages, one notes that one (7:10-17), formulated by Isaiah of the eighth century, and was addressed to and was relevant for a reigning king. One notes that one (40:1-11), was composed by Isaiah of the sixth century, whose messiah was Cyrus, and who, in material ascribed to her by all scholars (i.e. 40-52), formulated no dynastic or messianic prophecies. The remainder of the aforementioned lessons are to be ascribed to post-exilic redactors. (i.e. 1:1-5; 11:1-10; 35:1-10; 61:1-3, 10-11; 63:16b-17, 64:1-8.)

Isaiah 2:2-5, Kaiser writes:

> *". . . is clearly an oracle of salvation [which] can be divided into four parts: It begins with a description of the miraculous exalation of Mount Sion in the future (v. 2a); . . . followed by the description of the effect of this event among the nations (vv. 2b-3b). The reason given for this in v. 3b leads in its turn to an account of the rule of God which shall end all discord, in v.4. Finally in v.5, there is a demand to the audience to draw from the oracle the consequence for their own lives."*[5]

While this oracle expresses eschatological expectations, it is clearly not a promise of a royal, eschatological figure. It is, therefore, non-messianic.

Isaiah 35:1-10 is currently described as the second part of a judgment-salvation oracle comprised of chaps. 34-35. Of it Kaiser writes:

> *"Against the gloomy background of ch. 34, with its proclamation of the destruction of mankind, the collapse of the cosmic order and the extermination of the Edomites in the course of Yahweh's bloody sacrificial feast . . . the apocalyptic poet now gives us a glowing picture of the future transformation of the wilderness into a richly watered, thickly forested country, through which a holy highway leads to Zion as a processional way on which the redeemed return home rejoicing."*[6]

Again, while this is clearly eschatological, it is not about a royal, eschatological figure, i.e., it is not messianic.

In Isaiah 61:13, 10-11, its formulator, in vv. 1-3, claims she/he is anointed, but anointed with the Spirit, not with oil. This Spirit anointing enables her/him to be a spokesperson for Yahweh. These verses are about an individual living in the era of the restoration of Jerusalem and Judah. They clearly are not about a royal, eschatological figure, i.e., non-messianic.

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 64:1-8 is a part of a communal lament (63:7-64:11):

[5] Otto Kaiser. *Isaiah 1-12.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972, p. 25.

[6] Otto Kaiser. *Isaiah 13-39.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974, p. 361.

". . . which as it now stands . . . is tightly bound to chapter 65, for in 63:7-64:11 the congregation addresses Yahweh in the form of a complaint, ending with the troubled query, 'Can you remain unmoved, Yahweh, keeping silent and oppressing us inordinately?' The word of Yahweh in 65:1-25 in the present redaction of the material seems to furnish the answer to that query."[7]

The latter part of this redactional unit, chap. 65, is a judgment-salvation oracle which describes how Yahweh will create a "new heaven and a new earth" in the end-time. Hanson writes:

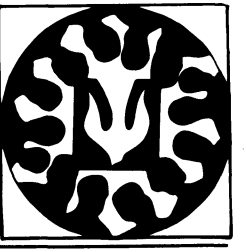
"The essential characteristics of apocalyptic eschatology are drawn together into a coherent whole in Isaiah 65: the present era is evil; a great judgment separating the good from the evil and marking the crossroads between the present world and the world to come is imminent; a newly created world of peace and blessing ordained for the faithful lies beyond that judgment. These teachings of world epochs, universal judgment, and a modified dualism are the basic components of later apocalyptic eschatology."[8]

In spite of all the talk of the eschaton, there is nothing here about the Messiah.

Of the five afore-mentioned lessons this leaves Isaiah 11:1-10, or better, 11:1-16. In my opinion this chapter was formulated by one of the apocalyptic redactors who combined the materials and ideas of the eighth and sixth century Isaiahs and predicted the fulfillment of their unfulfilled prophecies in the era of the new heaven and the new earth Yahweh would create. Vv. 1-5 speak of a royal eschatological figure, who will spring from the same place David did — the root and stump of Jesse — who will be anointed by the Spirit and enjoy six gifts of the Spirit, so as to be able to effect justice for the poor and equity for the meek, while punishing the wicked. Vv. 6-8 describes the environment of his dominion. When one compares these verses with 65:25 and notes that that verse is preceded by the promise, "I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth," it becomes clear that vv. 1-8 connect the reign of the Messiah with promises of the end-time based on the paradise myth. There is nothing in vv. 9-16 that denies and much that confirms that view. The new epoch is the era of no evil and no destruction (v.9), for all evil shall have been exterminated by Yahweh. The new scion of Jesse will be a banner for the peoples of the nations (v.12). The remnant of Israel (cf. the name of Isaiah's first son, 7:3) will be restored. The nations will obey the sign and gather reconciled Israel and Judah, who will be returned to the land of Israel by means of a highway for the 'remnant that will

[7] Hanson. *Op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 160.



return'. It is evident to any reader of Isaiah 1-10 and 40-52 that in this oracle the highway of Isaiah of the sixth century (40:3-5) is the medium by which the eighth-century Isaiah's remnant will return (7:3 and 10:20-23).

In this Messianic prophecy the themes of the royal, eschatological figure, of the return to paradise and of the liberation and restoration of the people of God are combined. By their combination subjects of the Messiah today are invited:

to seek the anointing of the same Spirit;
to deal righteously with the poor;
to act equitably toward the meek of the earth;
to gird themselves with righteousness and fidelity;
to enjoy fraternizing with God's other creatures;
to fill the earth with the knowledge of Yahweh and Jesus;
to eschew jealousy and oppression of others under the Messiah's dominion;
to act like people who have been liberated from the dominion of evil;
to walk through (or on!) the water as we stroll on the highway by which the redeemed journey h o m e .

Thus this Messianic prophecy encourages us to adopt a life-style compatible with our submission to our King, and provides the kingdom's word-merchants with kingdom projects that may well require the entire season of Advent for their implementation.

Should, however, one or the other of you exhaust all of the possibilities for Advent repentance and renewal suggested by this Messianic prophecy let me direct you to another such prophecy in the Book of Isaiah which the *Lutheran Book of Worship* pericope pickers seem to have ignored entirely, namely chap. 32. It is composed of three parts, which, in proper Hebrew fashion, we shall consider in reverse order. Isaiah 32:15-20 begins with the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit of God. One acquainted with the salvation oracles of Isaiah of the sixth century will note the similarity between this promise and that of 44:1-5. In that oracle Israel, which had been faithless and had become few in the exile, is promised that it will be energized by the Spirit to be fertile and faithful. This oracle describes changes that will be effected by the same vitalizing Spirit, who wil invade the wilderness that remains, when the Forest and City — two apocalyptic symbols for evil — shall have been destroyed. The Spirit will turn the barren wilderness into a lush jungle.

But, like 44:1-5, this oracle is not actually about vegetation, but about people; for the produce of this altered wilderness is the people products of justice and righteousness. The latter denotes the proper fulfilling of one's responsibilities in her/his relationship with God. The former connotes the fulfilling of one's responsibilities in her/his

relationships with people. The flowering of righteousness effected by immersion in the Spirit will result in quiet reliance on Yahweh and the *Shalom* — well-being — of his faithful people. These were the benefits forfeited by the constituency of eighth century Isaiah because they did not rely on God (30:8-17). The people will be so satisfied with the blessings the Spirit produces that they won't care if an ox or ass tramples the vegetation as it eats. They will liberate them to trample where they will!

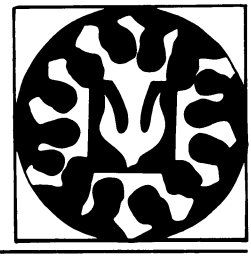
Isaiah 32:1-8, in the context of chaps. 32-35, "bear witness to the righteous government and devout citizenship in the Messianic age."[9] This description is comprised of two parts: vv. 1-4 depict the beneficial consequences of the dominion of the ruler of the Messianic age; vv. 5-8 describe the effects of such righteous rule for the fool — the one who says there is no God; (Ps. 14:1) — and the wicked, who mistreats the poor and needy, acting as if he had no neighbor. Together they provide an intriguing picture of the new age and of true nobility (v.8). Kaiser's words of application seem apropos:

> *"Perhaps in an age in which there are such loud and frequent complaints, some justified and some not, about oppressive rule and the restrictions and the lack of freedom which this brings, we need to be reminded that there can only be freedom for everyone when all regard themselves as to some degree under obligation. And perhaps in this context the words of the Bible are not as old fashioned as many people think, when they draw men's attitudes first to God and then to each other."*[10]

The promise of the Messianic age (1-8) and of the Era of the Spirit (15-20) are combined in this redactional unit by vv. 9-14. Kaiser thinks religious significance can be attributed to these verses only as a result of their position between 32:1-8 and 32:15-20. According to v. 15a the fulfillment of the promises in vv. 15-20 will bring to an end the distress portrayed in vv. 9-14. In these verses women are portrayed in two circumstances: they are complacent, self-satisfied, self-reliant when they are at ease, when the harvest and vintage are plentiful, when the fields are pleasant and the vine fruitful; but they are complaining, terror-filled, mouthing incriminating lamentations against others and God, when they contemplate the prospects of crop failure, famine and exile. The cycle of complacency and complaint seems to be depicted as an annual one. Today one might perceive that it occurs more frequently — monthly, daily, hourly. While this alternating up and down pattern of life is described by this author as the fate of females, one might discern that cycles of complacency and complaint are not

[9] Kaiser. *Isaiah 13-39*, p. 321.

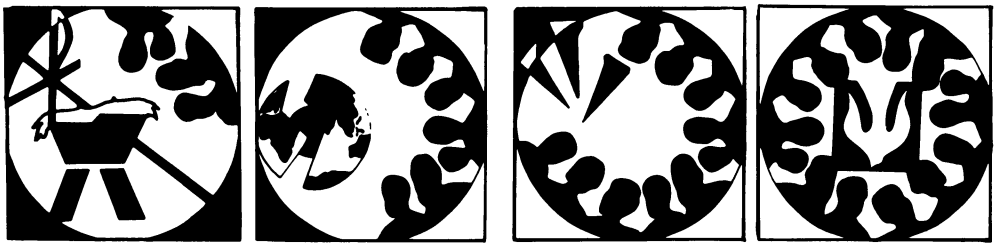
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 324.



limited to them; they are characteristic of males as well. The point of the unit is that in the age of the Messiah, which is synonymous with the era of the Spirit, that roller coaster existence can end. The good consequences of Messianic rule: the defense of the needy and oppressed, the discomfort of the fool and the wicked; and the benefits of the outpouring of the Spirit, the increase of righteousness and justice, will be the divine solution to the human cycle of complacency and complaint.

Spiritual activities that prepare for the reception and practice of these benefactions and benefits could well be the order of the day for Advent. Then Advent, with its appropriation of the promises of the age of the Messiah and its apprehension of the promises of the era of the Spirit could serve as the introduction to the entire church-year:

the half year of our Lord,
the half year of his Spirit.



An Angel, A Holy Family, and A Tree — A Trio for Christmas

James Hugh Drury

Christ The King Lutheran Church, Universal City, Texas

An Angel

one year my in-laws gave
up christmas trees
too pagan they said
and we got a
carefully
wrapped
tissued surprise
one slightly tarnished
flaked painted
angel
the very one placed on a tree
top
the same year my wife was
born
her angel they said then
now each year
we place that
fragile
old-style
plastic beauty
on top of our tree
wrap the lights so one
small white
bulb casts its glow
up into the angel's face
and think of another
angel
leading a chorus
for a six-month old
baby
now
then
now again
joy to the world they said
the angel
sings
and a star casts its glow
down into the
night and
the face of a
child

A Holy Family

each year we meet them at the
door
three children
coming to another family christmas
open house
hands out
eyes bright
their present ready
no sooner have they spoken the
parent-prompted hello
then off they are to our tree
to find the ornaments
hand-made
hand-carried to our home
their family project
for this day
star
wreath
santa and the angel
they stand around the tree
to point out the
five
their gifts displayed in their
pastor's christmas tree
a holy family for us

no one else brings ornaments
made with whatever's
handy around the house and
love
like another holy family
sharing their gift
with animals and shepherds
a star hanging in night's tree
a holy family's gift stretching
across time
into our living room
to decorate those five gifts
and those lives of love
with love
with life
in a child's
name

A Tree

pagan symbol moved into home
and sanctuary
proudly displayed
best of the creator's lot
the cutter's art
the grower's pride
in worship areas
filling the air with scent
wearing the dress of new
faith
orbs and crosses
fish
greek and latin letters
a pagan world turned inside
out
not at all as expected
but then who would have
thought
this
about a carpenter's son
savior
no this night
beneath the tree
in a cradle
things transformed
meaning added
time foreshadowed
branches stripped
horizontal two left
an ornament hanging there
between them
becomes life
becomes best gift
wrapped in sweat and blood
unwrapped in love and
glory
but on this night
not yet the pain
only the
gift
the child
to whom the tree
is given

Ah Joseph

Ah Joseph, how well I understand;
All too well I understand.

You blend into the background
And disappear into the Story.
Your dear, most beloved Mary
Carries it.
Nourishes it.
Feels it.
Bears it.
You share with her and she with you
As far as you both are able.
But it is not the same.
You are so strangely cut off. Alone

Ah Joseph, how well I understand;
All too well I understand.

It is both a wonder and a terror
This child.
Here. And yet . . .
Not here.
Yours. And yet . . .
Not yours.
This one you await.
Child of God.
Begotten of the Father.
The gift of gifts
From the Giver of givers.

Ah Joseph, how well I understand;
All too well I understand

The fear of it,
What will come of this child?
What will come to this child?
Born to die
Yet destined to live.
Who can bear it?
And the wonder of it.
This one is a new beginning and new
Life.
Today, by the grace of God
The future is here.

Ah Joseph, we both endure
Only in his mercy.
Your child is my child's inheritance
As he is mine
And yours.
We are all gathered into one
Around him.
Such a Child
To make a Father proud.
Ah Joseph, there is so much
I want to understand

Kenneth Schroeder

What This World Needs Now

Donald Hinchey

Our Father Lutheran Church, Englewood, Colorado

"What this world needs now,"
  Snapped the General in gold braid and spit-shined shoes,
"is a heat detecting neutron bomb to insure safety
  from here to Kingdom Come (which may be tomorrow)."
And thus his will was done.

"What this world needs now,"
  Said the Real Estate Man in 3 piece suit and smile,
"is miles of condos and asphalt driveways,
  centers for shopping, four lane highways."
And thus it came to pass.

"What this world needs now,"
  Smiled the harried kid,
"is a pill to pop the downer down,
  to blur the fear of being me
of being close, of being free."
  And thus — on high — it came to be. . . .

"What this world needs now,"
  Sang God one day,
"is my baby,
  Helpless, weak and chilled
in a barn where animals are filled
To grow and go and then be killed."
  And thus a manger came to pass
And thus a cross was raised at last
  And a vacant tomb tells the tale of how
God really knows what this world needs now.

Moments* — A (brief) Homily For Christmas

Steven D. Olson

New York, New York

Moments is the title of a book I bought this year. It contains photographs that have won the Pulitzer Prize for photography every year from 1942-1977.

The first time I paged through this book, I was stunned to notice that almost all of the prize winning photographs were photos of horrible or tragic moments taking place in the world and in peoples' lives:

1942— a photo of brutal violence on a picket line at a Detroit Ford motor plant;

1946— a woman jumping to her death in an apartment house fire;
1948— a child, turned killer, with a gun in his hand;
1956— a B-26 bomber crashes into a quiet neighborhood on Long Island;
1957— a picture of the moment with the Andrea Doria sank off of Long Island;
1963— the moment when Jack Ruby killed Lee Harvey Oswald at Police Headquarters in Dallas;
1972— the sight of naked children, fleeing a napalm attack in Vietnam.

But there in the middle of all these tragic photos, I glimpsed the prize winner of 1973 — the photo of a mother, child, and father at the moment of childbirth: of the mother, tired but gleaming; the father, peering out from behind a surgical mask, and the baby — gooey, yechy, still with the umbilical cord intact, lying on mother's stomach.

It somehow makes all the other pictures *bearable,* this one moment of joy. The proud parents; the naked little baby.

Two thousand years ago there was such a brief, shining moment. All of us have an image in our minds of what it must have been like. We see it in Christmas cards. As children, we could close our eyes and conjure up its wonder. There's the virgin mother, with the "Mona Lisa" smile and the proud, but pensive father, trying to fathom it all. And in the foreground, the innocent child, minutes old, naked and shivering in the straw.

Somehow this moment has wonderfully managed to redeem all the other unfortunate moments that came before and all the horror and tragedy that has happened since.

Stored in the deep, dark recesses of our minds and hearts are photographs of moments in our lives. Some are joyous. Others, tragic. If you close your eyes you can see them. Some of them are as clear as if they happened yesterday.

When you place the photo of the magic Christmas moment alongside them, they begin to take on a new meaning. They are given a new perspective.

In our pasts are still photos of painful deaths of friends and relatives. We still feel unspeakable anguish and loss at their passing. But place those sad moments next to the shining birth of Jesus, and you come to see afresh that death does not have the last word or the

upper hand. Because of his birth, death, and resurrection we all too will rise.

In our pasts — distant and not so distant — are shameful photos of moments we'd rather forget. We made a terrible mistake, we did something unloving, we *sinned.* Much as we'd like to tear them up, they cannot be erased.

But in the light of this shining birth, we see the child's message of forgiveness. Nothing we have done or left undone is beyond the scope of his forgiveness.

What of the moments of this past year? Some of them confuse us, some worry us, some are too painful for words. As we contemplate a new year, we think about the moments yet to come.

In this Christmas moment, God gives each of us the strength to go out and bear our present trials and whatever the future may bring.

Let this natal moment sink in. Capture it. Frame it in your mind and heart. Take its wonder and its peace. Carry it with you forever.The goodness of this moment is sure to enlighten whatever the future may bring. Amen.

**Moments: The Pulitzer Prize Photographs.* By Sheryle and John Leekley. New York: Crown Publishers, 1978.

Good Old Joseph

Paul Bauermeister

Professor of Practical Theology, Christ Seminary — Seminex

I know of a family that had a large manger scene they set up under the Christmas Tree each year. It had many people in it. Of course Jesus and Mary, and being good Germans, a cow and a donkey and a chicken, and a host of other figures — wise men (you could spot them by their presents and their crowns) and shepherds, young, old and in between. There was a problem, which developed into a game the children would play. Which one was Joseph? There were no halos to distinguish him. One theory was that Joseph was really the oldest one, leaning on his stick. A more romantic soul maintained that Mary wouldn't want a crochety old man like that. Hence he must be this younger one with the broad shoulders. And every Christmas the children played "Which one is Joseph" because they couldn't tell.

And it didn't really matter anyhow. Good Old Joseph has a very minor part in this the greatest drama of history. He gets only minor credit toward the bottom of the page among the supporting players. Good Old Joseph — needed but replaceable, loyal but expendable, reliable but dull. Good Old Joseph. He doesn't even make it into some manger scenes. Sometimes he is the first one knocked over and the last one picked up.

I am not here today to elevate a forgotten man. I'm not even here to glorify a forgotten saint. Good Old Joseph will have to fend for himself in that department. I've a suspicion he wouldn't care anyhow. What I want to do is try to look inside Good Old Joseph. His humble loyalty and obedience interests me. Where does it come from? Just think about what this man did. Once he got involved with Mary it was no longer business as usual. He accepted a wife, who was with child. He gave the baby that Name. He extended his journey, leaving far behind his Galilean town, his shop, his family, his people, even finally his country. This northern Palestinian cabin maker went to — of all places — Egypt! That was not business as usual for Good Old Joseph. His foreign trip was with a brand new baby and an inexperienced mother.

Loyalty, humility, obedience to God — where does it come from in this man? Is it reminiscent of the loyalty, humility and obedience to God of the one later called Joseph's son?

There is an easy answer to our question. Good Old Joseph had loyalty, humility and obedience because angels talked to him. Of course. That's it. Joseph didn't have to wonder about things. He didn't have all those decisions to stew about. Angels spoke to him!

Should I marry this girl or not? "Fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife." Whose baby is it? "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Even the question every parent asks: Will it be a boy or a girl? "She shall bear a *son.*" What shall we call him? "Call his name Jesus." Angels spoke to Joseph. He didn't have to wonder; he had no tough

decisions to make. He knew all the answers. When to travel? Now. Where to go? Egypt. Good Old Joseph didn't have to wonder. Angels told him. He knew God's will.

How simple! How uncomplicated! How unlike my life and yours! We wonder and we wrestle. Go/stay, move/stand, buy/sell, spend/save, discharge/promote, strive/be satisfied, give/withhold. We go on and on, always making decisions, regretting the bad ones, rejoicing in the good ones, trying to figure out how to make less of the former and more of the latter. Sometimes we pray to know a little of God's will.

And real decisions have real consequences. Taking route A means never having again the opportunity to try B. If you marry sweet Mary, you don't marry Salome or Deborah down the street, and you don't continue in single blessedness. If you go to Egypt or California, then you don't stay in Nazareth or St. Louis with your shop and your friends. That's how we live, with such decisions, and we wonder. But Good Old Joseph didn't have to wonder. Angels talked to him. He dreamed of angels and then he knew.

Angels don't talk to me. Not even in my dreams. I did hear the flutter of their wings last summer one time. But angels don't talk to me.

But wait a minute. Did he really know because angels talked to him? Did he have a dream and then know for sure?

If you dreamed of angels would *you* be sure? If angels talked to you, would *you* know? Or would you be just about where you are now, only with one more disturbing bit of data to deal with in making your decision? Can you imagine Good Old Joseph half way between Nazareth and Bethlehem, camped out on a chilly hillside with his very pregnant wife, wondering after the fire had gone out how he had gotten himself into this situation? Can you imagine him wondering if the dreams of angels were the result of some questionable fish he had eaten, or the heat of the day or the cool of the night?

Of the angel's message to go to Egypt (Egypt!) was that dream the result of a strange bed and a restless baby, of an anxious new mother and father? Goodness! Egypt!

Dreams of angels don't nail things down so tightly, do they? Remember an earlier lad named Joseph who got himself into a pretty deep hole with his dreams.

Finding the will of God, by me, for me, right now, right here, is hardly ever easy, and almost never automatic. But the context of our search for God's will is important. And here Good Old Joseph had it together. Look where he looked for the will of God — in the same world where you live.

It is the world created by God the Father, who loves this world. Incredible!

And in this world he guides his people, somehow. Incredible!

And he sent his Son into this world. Joseph held him in his arms. Incredible!

He became a human in the world. Incredible!

He died in this world with a nail through each hand. Incredible!

And he rose in this world. Incredible!

And he still comes to us in this world. Incredible!

Good Old Joseph lived with God the Father. He received the Father's Son. He responded with mind and hand to the Spirit's urgings, even in dreams of angels. He found it all credible. He believed.

It is a path we can all walk. Good Old Joseph, Good Old You, Good Old Me.

A Christmas Soliloquy

As mused over by the Ass, commonly supposed by artists and others to have belonged to Joseph and to have carried his wife, Mary, and her Child from Nazareth to Bethlehem, thence to Egypt, and subsequently back again to Nazareth.

Overheard and Recorded by William J. Urbrock
University of Wisconsin — Oshkosh

Some say the animals talked on the occasion of Jesus' birth in the stable! Hee-haw! That's a good one! I wonder what sort of conversation they imagine we carried on? Have you ever tried talking to a newborn infant? In Palestinian Aramaic, no less? Not much potential for intelligent discourse there, I assure you!

If I *had* been able to speak up, like that legendary ancestor of mine who reprimanded Balaam, I would have lodged a protest with Joseph. The journey from Nazareth was your typical back-breaking trip. As usual, I played the resident moving van. Why do I always have to carry everything? A pregnant woman is burden enough, but, no, they have to load me down with blankets and saddle-bags bursting with provisions, food and water, as well. I've heard the song some humans like to sing at Christmastime:

"Ox and ass before Him bow, And He is in the manger now." Well, what did they expect me to do in my exhausted condition?

Anyway, the overnight accommodations in Bethlehem were hardly your first class, five-star-rating kind. Just your ordinary stable and feed, the usual plebian room and board. Considering the crowds in Bethlehem, however, and the raucous bunch inside, I suppose we were lucky to get a little quiet and privacy. Din-din in the stable was better than the din in the inn! (A little ass's humor there, Hee-haw!)

I would like to set the record straight on one matter. Those pink, chubby little winged babies you see hovering about on the Christmas manger paintings, and the supernatural light bathing the premises, and the mother hardly ruffled in her flowing gown, and the Child perfectly content in his spotless white swaddling — it wasn't like that at all! The Baby's diapers were dusty from the trip, the mother was sweaty and disheveled after labor, and what light we had was provided by a few sputtering oil lamps. The only aura about the place was the pungent combination of odors from animals, feed, straw, and excrement! Anything extraordinary about this scene must have wanted different eyes than mine for seeing or different ears from mine for hearing! (My ears! Hee-haw! That's another matter I intend to take up with Someone someday!)

It was those silly sheep, after all, who got in on the real excitement. While I was cooped up in a stall listening to the moans of labor and an Infant's wailing, the sheep witnessed a regular extravaganza out in the countryside: a full-scale light show (strobes and all, I wouldn't doubt), a heavenly messenger, and an Hallelujah Chorus like you never hear in these parts! Can you imagine!? Sheep! I do all the work while they lie around in pasture or run off into trouble, and who gets the free passes to the hottest show in town?

I suppose you're going to throw the Wise Men into my muzzle! Well, the Wise Men weren't that impressive. Just a bunch of Easterners speaking a foreign language, interested in astrology, and chasing after stars. And you're wrong if you think I'm going to tell you whether there really were just three of them or whether or not they really rode on camels. When I want to keep a secret, I know how to keep my mouth shut! I'm not called a dumb ass for nothing! But just this: What makes people think camels are more appropriate than asses for transporting wise men? After all, we're dependable, and at least one of us had a vision of an angel, even if I didn't. Come to think of it, that smart ass *did* transport a wise man — an Easterner, at that! I rest my case.

I will say this about that Baby I carried down to Egypt and back. He, at least, appreciated asses! I'm told that years later, at Jesus' express wish and command, one of my relatives strutted into Jerusalem at Passover time, Jesus mounted on his back, while onlookers spread their garments like a red carpet on the road, called out blessings, and sang hymns of praise to God. That, of course, was past my time. But what I would have given to have been at *that* celebration! I'd have hee-hawed a few Hosannas along with the rest of them!

All this musing has rather taxed my ass's brain. I'm glad I could help clarify the situation. What it boils down to is, it just doesn't seem fair that others should enjoy all the excitement! The rest of us asses just plod along imprisoned in our petty round, backs bent to the daily drudgery. Why can't we be liberated by a Vision breaking through the monotony? Perhaps, if I had lived in Rome . . .

Postscript by the Recorder:

1. Literal-minded readers will note that the New Testament Gospels never do specify the mode of transportation used by the Holy Family on their "Christmas" travels.

2. Those interested in the Biblical ass lore referred to in the "Christmas Soliloquy" above may find the Balaam episode in Numbers 22. The story of the Entry into Jerusalem is told in two versions, Luke 19:28-40, and Matthew 21:1-11. Luke's version has Jesus mounted on *one* ass, Matthew's has him riding on *two!*

Book Reviews

INFLATION, POORTALK AND THE GOSPEL. By Thomas E. Ludwig, Merold Westphal, Robin J. Klay, and David G. Myers. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1981. 112 pages. Paper. $4.95.

This book is a collaborative effort of four individuals who are knowledgeable in the areas of philosophy, psychology, theology, and economics. At a time when so many people are experiencing the pain of inflation and given to much complaining, the authors examine the causes of inflation, inflation's real effect on people's lives, and why inflation is so painful. "Poortalk" is the word coined by the authors to describe the phenomenon of people's commiserating about how bad things are. Particularly informative is a brief discussion of psychological principles that help to explain why we sometimes feel worse than is necessary about our situation in life.

But the authors go beyond describing and accounting for inflation and poortalk. In searching for guidelines for Christian response they examine biblical theology. There they discover the biblical principles of "Anti-materialism" and "Justice." The "Anti-materialism principle" is the economic dimension of that commandment which beckons one to worship God alone. The "Justice principle" is the economic dimension of that commandment which directs one to love the neighbor. The Gospel provides the means for changing attitudes and behavior as one moves from poortalk to love for the neighbor. Here the authors provide many practical suggestions for change in attitude, language and behavior. Thus, as we move into the darkness of an uncertain economic future, the authors call for us to trust in the light of the Gospel.

For individuals and groups willing to examine lifestyle and Christian stewardship — that should include all of us — this book is a timely, excellent resource. It is written in non-technical language. Though four individuals contributed to the work it reads as though authored by one. Numerous illustrations, diagrams and cartoons encourage the reader's interest — and provide sermonic material. Discussion questions at the conclusion of each of eight chapters facilitate individual reflection and group study.

Marcus C. Lohrmann
Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
Hazelwood, MO

HELP FOR BEREAVED PARENTS. By Mildred Tengbom; **HELP FOR FAMILIES OF STROKE VICTIMS.** By Margaret J. Anderson; **HELP FOR PARENTS OF A DIVORCED SON OR DAUGHTER.** By Harold Ivan Smith; **HELP FOR PARENTS OF A HANDICAPPED CHILD.** By Nancy Roberts; **PASTORS COUNSELING MANUAL FOR MINISTRY TO THOSE WHO MUST SUSTAIN A LOVED ONE IN CRISIS.** By Theodore W. Schroeder. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981. 5 volumes. 40-50 pages. Paper. $2.50 each.

These books are part of a *Coping With Trauma Series* and offer help to family members whose loved ones are suffering a particular crisis: bereavement, divorce, stroke, the handicapped child. Authors for these modest booklets have been chosen with care, each having personally experienced the crisis about which they are writing.

Generally, the authors are sensitive to the uniqueness of individuals, situations, coping mechanisms — and this is important. Crisis is not only an acute event, but also a process which needs to be worked through over time. The authors provide bibliographies, places to seek further help, and lists of scriptural resources for those who seek to sustain others in trouble.

If there is a deficit in these booklets — and others in the quick-help genre — it is the tendency towards a mech-

anistic view of scripture and prayer, where prayer, for example, is viewed as a (magical) solution to any problem. This may lead away from a deeper understanding of the role of "unceasing prayer" and the profound insights which scripture offers about suffering and forgiveness, brokenness and healing in the life of the people of God. As helpers, we need to be sensitive to the *timing* of our interventions, be they words or advice, prayer, a reading from the Word, or simply, an empathic silence.

Steven D. Olson
Pastoral Psychotherapist
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New York, New York

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES IN TENSION. By D. A. Carson. New Foundations Theological Library. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981. xii and 271 pages. Paper. $11.95.

Some questions never go away, and this book is a variation of one of the most basic: how can one talk of the goodness and sovereignty of God in an evil world? How can humanity be held accountable for unfaith but not for faith, and vice versa for God?

In this abridgement of his doctoral dissertation, Carson gives a tour of biblical and extrabiblical literature as he traces the sovereignty-responsibility theme. In the Old Testament, the tension is felt but neither clearly articulated nor resolved. In intertestamental literature (Septuagint, apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic literature, and Josephus) an increasing emphasis on divine transcendence led to an increasing prominence of human moral freedom, "merit theology." In the Gospel of John, the only New Testament tradition treated, the tension returns but is heightened in Jesus Christ, the focal point of both sovereignty and responsibility.

The marks of a dissertation still abound: a plethora of footnotes and conversations with scholars living and dead, a good bit of Hebrew, Greek and Latin, plus pages filled with Biblical citations. There's no doubt that years of meticulous study went into this book, and as such it serves as an excellent reference, though, strangely, it comes without a bibliography.

Awesome as the book is in detail, however, it fails to convince in the overall. For one thing, it lacks the sweeping vision to give those details a framework. More crucial, however, is a problem C. intimates early in his book: "Although we may lack the categories needed for the full exposition of the problem, nevertheless we must insist that divine ultimacy stands behind good and evil asymmetrically." What is promised is a study in biblical/Johannine theology, but the categories are hardly indigenous: hardening as judicial hardening, soteriological predestination, absolute free will, Christological propositions. They just don't fit and they squeeze much of the life out of both the book and the tension itself. After all the admittedly impressive scholarly trappings are removed, we are left with conclusions looking very much like presuppositions, joined mostly with "insisting."

This makes the ending of his book doubly weak, for after several hundred pages of intensely documented and reasoned study, he concludes that we have ambiguities, mysteries difficult to understand, a "tension theology." True enough, but the sense of humility before those ambiguities and mysteries is not present and not communicated. Perhaps those ambiguities and mysteries are better approached by a poet than a doctoral candidate.

Henry Rowold
Concordia Seminary
Chia Yi, Taiwan

KEEPING THE FAITH. By David G. Truemper and Frederick A. Niedner, Jr. Philadelphia, Fortress, 1981. 144 pages. Paper. $5.95.

There ought to be more books like this one written for the Lutheran Church in this country. In a day when all too many clergy and laity are confused not only about their identity as Lutherans but as Christians, this book goes a long way toward helping us *keep the faith.* These two Valpo professors have come up with a real gem. At first glance it may not look so special. What can be so ordinary as another commentary on the Catechism? The authors even seem to play down their contribution by insisting that it "is not a systematic theology, not even a little one," but "a handy treatment of the basics." But this little book is not the same old rehash of the same old doctrines. It is a fresh retelling that is not only contemporary, but also consistently grounded in the Gospel.

It is this book's understanding of "doctrine" that is its great strength. Doctrine is what the church needs to keep the faith. That faith is endangered when doctrine is seen to be nothing more than "the sum total of the assertions and propositions which Christian people hold dear." Instead of such an intellectualization of doctrine, the authors use a much more dynamic understanding of doctrine. Doctrine is "instruction to the bearers of the Christian message about *how* to bear that message well, *how* to tell their story in such a way that Christ is glorified and sinners hear the good news." The use of these two criteria, glorifying Christ and enabling sinners to hear the good news, is grounding doctrine in the Gospel. This glorious obsession with grounding doctrine in the Gospel is what makes this book so consistently Lutheran. And, as the authors point out, being Lutheran is nothing more than teaching the *common* Christian faith, not just a few precious Lutheran slogans.

The authors, a biblical theologian together. As they treat many of the traditional doctrines of the faith, they show a sensitivity to the latest insights of contemporary biblical research and modern thought. Much of their material utilizes the motif of *story* and assumes the insights of "narrative theology." This approach seems to be particularly well suited to wedding biblical thought and Christian doctrine. The genesis of this book was the college classroom, and the authors add that it was written for "amateur theologians" in the churches. I think such amateurs ought to include every parish pastor and any of the laity who are interested in serious study of the faith. An excellent resource!

Steven Albertin
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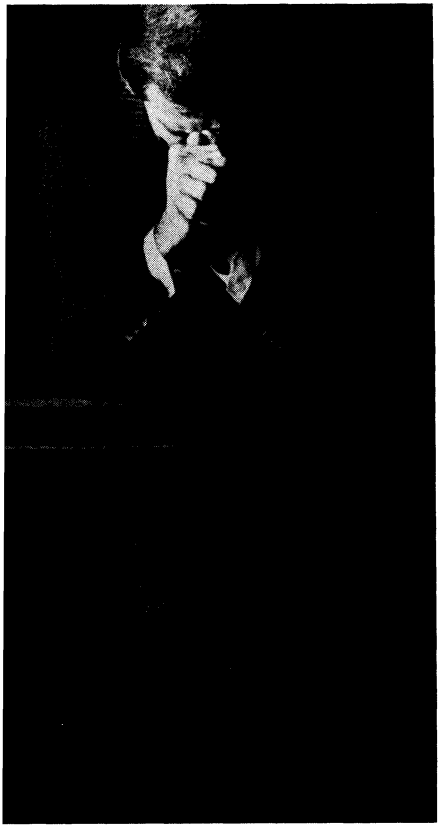
THE GOSPELS. By Fred B. Craddock. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981. 159 pages. Paper. $6.95.

This new series, Interpreting Biblical Texts, offers a fresh new kind of resource among tools for Biblical study. Neither a commentary nor a theology, it attempts to relate "the meaning of the biblical texts in their own times to their meaning in ours."

Introductory sections on interpretation, interpretation of Scripture (several helpful principles), and interpretation of the Gospels form the background for the heart of Craddock's task, a study of each Gospel in turn: a general introduction to its unique purpose and message and a short (6-8 pages) study of four pericopes in each. Those sixteen pericopes, as disjointed as they appear at first glance, are the real kernel of the book, because 1) they provide case studies in interpreting many different pericopes and literary genres (prologue, baptism account, miracles/exorcism, sayings and parables, passion and resurrection accounts), 2) they each provide a case

HE STRESS THAT THE AVERAGE MINISTER BEARS WOULD BRING MOST PEOPLE TO THEIR KNEES.

On an average day, the erage minister deals with ore problems than most ople do in a month of ndays. He sees more suffer- g, more anguish and more rdship than most people er see.



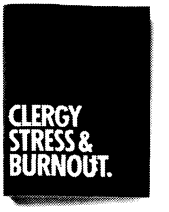
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study for seeing how the central thrust of the Gospel writer shows itself in the content and even the arrangement of each pericope, and 3) they each provide opportunity for special comments illustrating how C. would pursue the message of that pericope further and how he would apply it today.

This kind of neither fish nor fowl book puts a great burden on the writer to keep it from becoming a series of disconnected, superficial studies. Yet C., as professor of preaching and New Testament at Candler School of Theology, keeps in touch with both the original and the applied message. He is consistently fresh and provocative, now pulling the readers into the discussion, now sending them to the Bible or other resources to track down a new insight. Though this book is not the ordinary reference book, it is a fine resource, a good basic starting point for a fresh approach to a Bible class or sermon series.

Henry Rowold
Concordia Seminary
Chia Yi, Taiwan

CHOOSING LIFE. By Dorothee Soelle. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981. xi and 116 pages. Cloth. $8.95.

The Deuteronomic admonition to choose life is here applied with the keen edge of a surgeon's scalpel to the tough skin of bourgeois Christianity in North America. Soelle's rigorous assault on our death culture is carried out, as they say, with an absence of malice. She wants to bring us to our senses, to offer healing and life.

Her approach is to focus on what hedonistic consumerism and objective cynicism have wreaked on the middle class. "Consumerism means that my eyes will be incessantly insulted, my ears will be closed, my hands will be robbed of their creativity." Marriages forego sharing and being for the sake of having and consuming. Work no longer proceeds from faith and has nothing to do with life as a whole. The Capitalist culture is a death culture which destroys the third world and extinguishes the spark of life in the first world.

How then do we choose life? The choice of life is inevitably linked to the decision to bear the cross. Life is the fruit of suffering. The first step is to break with neutrality (the avoiding tactic of the middle class) by putting ourselves on the side of the damned of this world. Such a step into unfamiliar geography has this liberating effect — the invisible becomes visible. We see now the pain of those on the other end of our consumer economics. The diamonds we wear are stained with the blood of the murdered school children in Soweto.

This new vision needs to be shared in order to be liberating and life giving. She sees the true church increasingly in the grass roots communities and in the cells of resistance formed by those who share a vision of a human world and who will undoubtedly be put on the cross because of it.

So far so good. But then there is her "non-theistic theology" and her identification of resurrection solely with liberation in this life — "I don't believe in life after death any more." Here I find S. not helpful. Having moved some in the circles of the black underclass, I prefer the solid faith of the oppressed who trust in God to empower their struggle for life and who experience viscerally the wisdom of St. Paul. "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ . . ."

Dennis Jacobsen
Trinity Lutheran Church
Jersey City, New Jersey

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THE WESTMINSTER PRESS
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MICAH THE PROPHET. By Hans Walter Wolff. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981. xi and 223 pages. Cloth. $18.95.

Wolff's latest book doesn't fit a ready mold. In its detailed, careful study of the text (translation included), it resembles a commentary, though the comments are as much expository as exegetical. In form, it is not at all a commentary, but a collection of essays, sermons, Bible studies, and lectures given on different occasions, over a two-year span, to different audiences. The German title accurately reflects its nature as a dialogue with the Book of Micah in terms of the problems of today's world: **SPEAKING WITH MICAH: PROPHECY THEN AND NOW.**

The series of essays is grouped in three sections. The first, Orientation, gives a profile of the prophet and of his cultural and intellectual background. Interesting here is W.'s presentation of Micah as a village elder very much involved in the social events of his day rather than merely a rough country preacher. The second, Exposition, divides the Book of Micah into seven sections and gives careful exegetical and expository comments on each. W. distinguishes clearly between the "authentic" words of Micah and later application of those words in the life of Israel, though W. treats the entire book as the Word of God. The third, Updatings, is a second, and in come cases a third, retracing of Micah, with greater emphasis on the modern context (student strikes, terrorism, prophetic role of church social work, decline of the German church).

This unique combination of exegesis and exposition has much to offer all who read this book. For the general student of the Bible, W. proclaims the message of Micah without the intimidation of Hebrew, or piles of footnotes, or debates with other scholars. The problems he addresses are not in-house problems, but the real world of strikes, terrorism, and social justice. For the pastor, there is even more. In a challenging, yet positive way, W. raises over and over the basic question of the nature of the church's prophetic ministry today. (Sample: the church as prophet should be a scouting party in the world seeking out the helpless and defenseless.) For the professional student of the Old Testament, there is much too. Before finishing, I had completely filled not only his book, but my English and Hebrew Bibles as well, with notes and questions. He has many helpful suggestions for translating the obscure sections of Micah. His attempt to parallel Micah's use of word play and alliteration in ch. 1 sparkles with freshness. Throughout, his sensitivity to the details of text, grammar, literary forms, and echoes of themes and traditions from other parts of Scripture provide many clues and jolts for further study.

Part of what makes the book so readable is the smooth translation of Ralph Gehrke. Where German place names might not communicate, Gehrke has substituted American, and where German hymns are not familiar, he substitutes English — though, strangely, of five citations of the *LBW,* three give different publishers. Strangely, too, second and third citations of the same pericopes of Micah have somewhat different translations, though without the original it's hard to tell if the different translations are W.'s or Gehrke's.

As a book that doesn't fit a clear mold, W.'s study inevitably has a few gaps. For one thing, the second or third time through a pericope, in spite of the different audiences, is just not as fresh as the first. The author's views of authenticity also need further discussion. He suggests that the test for authenticity for Micah is what would/could have been spoken by a village elder. However, in view of the meager amount of "undisputed" material (1:8-16, 2:1-11, 3:1-12) and the implied limitation as to what a village elder would/could say, this comes very close to arguing in a circle.

This rewarding book will provide the student of Micah with rich exegetical and interpretative tools (not available ten years ago) for understanding and applying the message of that prophet

and his book to life today.

Henry Rowold
Concordia Seminary
Chia Yi, Taiwan

THE CHARISMATIC LEADER AND HIS FOLLOWERS. By Martin Hengel. Tr. James Grieg. New York: Crossroads, 1981. xiii and 111 pages. Cloth. $10.95.

"Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt 8:22, Luke 9:62) is Jesus' harsh response to a prospective disciple who asks permission to bury his father first. The account is enigmatic; no place name is given, the disciple is given no identification, and the outcome of the interchange is not given.

In 1967 Martin Hengel made this saying the subject of the trial lecture he delivered to the theological faculty of Tübingen University (where he is presently professor of New Testament). It was published a year later (with full documentation) as one of the **Beihefte** to the **Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft.** The present publication, a translation of that 1968 work, is an excellent monograph that deals with a fascinating topic in exemplary fashion.

H. first examines the saying in context. In form he finds only one clear prototype for Jesus' actions and words, the call of Elisha by Elijah in 1 Kings 19:19ff. The saying asks the disciple to break one of the supreme laws of love in Jewish piety, family relationships and the obligation to bury the dead. Two passages in the prophets are also the only direct parallels to this harsh demand, Ez 14:15-24 (Ezekiel forbidden to lament his wife) and Jer 16:1-8 (where lament for the dead is also forbidden). The context for such a demand is not the teacher-pupil relationship, but the call for radical repentance in the face of the imminent Kingdom of God.

H. considers possible parallels and analogies in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds. He passes in review Elisha's call by Elijah, the charismatic leaders in Holy War, the Zealot leaders of Roman Palestine, charismatic figures in the Hellenistic world, conversions to philosophy or study of the Torah, and John the Baptist. None offer an adequate analogy to Jesus' words and actions.

The third section of the book (and major one, pages 38-83) discusses the distinctive character of Jesus' call to disciples in the context of his unique charismatic-eschatological ministry. Here H. goes far beyond the single saying which began the investigation. He argues that Jesus died as a messianic pretender, a sorcerer who seduced the people by his miracles. (That is how he appeared to those responsible for his death.) He was in no sense a rabbi like the ones known at the end of the first century. He did not make the Old Testament the center of his message, had no "pernickety learnedness," used no homiletical or haggadic midrashim. His mode of securing disciples was not that of the rabbis, where pupils selected the master. Rabbis did not demand a desertion of money and security. Nor is Jesus a charismatic, zealotic prophet, for he did not call for a new state or rouse an enthusiastic mob to action. Rather, he called individuals. And not all of them had to desert family, wealth, and the like to follow him, but only an inner group who are to share his mission and authority. The discipleship of the gospels is thus not *the* model for membership in the church. Jesus acted with singular personal authority. He does not need the Holy Spirit to give him power. He remains ultimately incommensurable by all the criteria of his age as he calls people to discipleship. That call prepares the way for the apostleship of the early church.

H. has used the tools of critical scholarship to produce a meticulously crafted monograph. He provides extensive documentation from ancient sources; he moves easily in the semitic world of the rabbis and the Greco-Roman world too. The modern literature is dealt with, again extensively, in the rich footnotes. The work is a model of careful scholarship. (It has not had the notes brought up to date.)

H. is much more convinced of the historical value of the material than are

more radical critics. He accepts the historicity of the call of the twelve (contra Klein and Schmithals). He is certain that Jesus used the title Son of Man of himself. The logion with which he began is certainly authentic, for neither Judaism nor the church would have created such a word. This careful historical work suggests that we heed H.'s advice and no longer put Jesus into the category of rabbi which cannot contain him. I found this a delightful work — an adjective that does not often apply to scholarship.

Edgar Krentz
Christ Seminary — Seminex

SOUTHERN EVANGELICALS AND THE SOCIAL ORDER 1800-1860. By Anne C. Loveland. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980. 293 pages. Paper. $12.95.

One of the finest chapters in America's story deals with the evangelical Christianity associated with the "Second Great Awakening" in the first half of the nineteenth century. Historians have continued to take note of the social reforms emanating from the evangelical stress on a "second birth" and the millennium. What about the Southern version of this movement? Was it similar? Or was Southern evangelism "culture religion," subservient to the slave-holding ideology of the Old South?

Anne C. Loveland suggests that the answer to this question must be shaded with various hues of gray. The typical evangelical clergyman (Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian) in the South was in her view very political without becoming a politician. He firmly believed that the prosperity of the nation depended upon the spread of the gospel. But seldom did he endorse a particular candidate for office, much less run for it himself. Only when the power of moral suasion seemed to flag, was he tempted (as in the campaign for temperance reform) to rely on legislative tactics. As L. portrays him, the Southern evangelical cleric could shoulder the prophet's mantle and build a strong case for divine retribution with the evidence of economic and political adversity. He was also not afraid to take issue with the notion of popular sovereignty and to condemn self-reliance. Yet, his faith in God could become a rationalization for inaction with regard to slavery. Sanctimoniously, he placed the problem into "God's hands" and insisted that the solution must come from above.

But did these preachers in fact approve of slavery? L. contends that while they considered slavery an evil, they did not advocate emancipation. The strong Southern reaction to the abolitionists helped rekindle the memory of the time (earlier in the nineteenth century) when their denominations did go on record in opposition to slavery. After 1830, the clergy had found themselves increasingly subjected to suspicion and intimidation. They dutifully put forth their Biblical justifications for permitting slaveholding, or they ducked the issue by claiming separation of church and state. And yet, writes Loveland, these clergymen refused to view the peculiar institution as a "positive good," vehemently opposed the reopening of African slave trade, worked to overcome slave abuses, and provided for religious education for slaves.

Did such instruction strengthen or help relieve the bonds of slavery? The evangelical concern for the souls of blacks affirmed their humanity and contributed to the improvement of their temporal lot. But in fact, L. argues, it also reinforced the Southern way of life and provided more ammunition for its bloody defense.

L. has chosen to highlight several denominational versions of evangelicalism rather than the role of the revivals. Her interest, moreover, is in the clergy rather than lay attitudes toward the pressing social issues of the day. Readers of this fine book will learn to appreciate both the courageous and the frail humanity of parsons in every age and to refrain from hasty judgments about the South or its religious heritage.

Jon Diefenthaler
Waynesboro, Virginia

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THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND THE VICTORIAN FAMILY. By Janet Forsythe Fishburn. Philadelipha: Fortress Press, 1981, xi and 192 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

This is a wide-ranging attempt to locate the Social Gospel within the volatile context of changing values, ideas, and lifestyles affecting the emerging middle class from about 1870 to 1920. The author, who is Assistant Professor of Christian Education at Drew University, analyzes the published writings of six key individuals: Gladden, Abbott, and Strong, described as social activists and theorists of the phase between 1880 and 1890, and the more intellectually-oriented and self-conscious defenders of the Social Gospel at the turn of the century, Clarke, Peabody, and Walter Rauschenbusch.

Interdisciplinary in approach, the book gives evaluations of the impact of everything from Social Darwinism to labor strikes and sex roles on the thinking of these "men in the middle." They stood between the family-based fundamentalists of small town and rural life and the uncertainties of urbanized and industrialized America. Unlike those who have viewed the "social gospelers" as radically different from the individualistically-oriented revivalists of the antebellum period, Prof. Fishburn interprets Rauschenbusch and company as "new light evangelicals," equally concerned for individual and social morality.

For a study that underscores how central the institution of the middle-class family was for morals, values, and religious ideas in Victorian America, there is surprisingly little information from unpublished sources concerning the domestic life of the social gospel leaders during the decades of public notoriety. Exciting in scope and intent, the book at times suffers from a too-tightly compressed argument. Thesis-like statements tumble after each other in constricted paragraphs. To those already familiar with the cultural furnishings of the Victorian era and at home with the theological crosscurrents of 19th-century Protestantism, this innovative study should open up new perspectives on the Social Gospel movement.

Milt Sernett
Syracuse University
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MEETING HOUSE TO CAMP MEETING. TOWARD A HISTORY OF AMERICAN FREE CHURCH WORSHIP FROM 1620 TO 1835. By Doug Adams. Austin: The Sharing Company, 1981. 158 pages. Paper. $6.95.

This is an *important* little book because it helps to fill in what has been a real lacuna in our understanding of the history of Christian worship: the origins and development of free church worship in America. There is no doubt about the important place occupied by the Puritan-Congregationalist-Baptist-Quaker-Methodist-Disciples of Christ traditions in American church history. But previously we had little idea of what the forebears of these traditions did when they came together to do the most important thing that Christians do: worship God in the context of Word and Sacrament. We had some idea of what these groups have done for the past hundred years, and we are sure that their worship practices were strongly influenced by revivalism. But what did they do before the Second Great Awakening?

Right from the outset of his book Adams hits us with surprises. "From the landing of the Mayflower through the American Revolution, the majority of free church clergy probably spent more time interacting with worshippers around the common table than they did preaching from pulpits" (p. 13). Typical Sunday morning worship in Puritan New England included opening prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, singing of psalms, reading and expounding and preaching the Word, exhorting and questioning of the minister by the laity, and celebration of the Lord's Supper at least once a month

but sometimes every Sunday. Sunday afternoon worship included baptizing the children, offering at the deacon's seat, admitting, admonishing, and casting out members, concluding thanksgivings and the blessing. Word and prayer, but also both sacraments, every Sunday! And a great amount of lay involvement in praying and speaking and even challenging the minister without any slighting of clerical authority!

A. traces the origins of Puritan worship from John Robinson's shaping of Separatist worship in Leyden and then in Plymouth Bay Colony. He traces the influence of Separatist worship on the Massachusetts Puritans, the Baptists, the Quakers (whose worship probably evolved from the mid-week prophesying meetings of the Puritans, and who were not as quiet in the 17th century as they became in the 18th), the Methodists (whose societies in America quickly abandoned Wesley's liturgical orders adapted from the *Book of Common Prayer*), and the Disciples of Christ (who insisted on weekly communion celebrated by lay leaders in order to emphasize the priesthood of all believers, even when ordained ministers were present). The demise of this tradition can be attributed to changing communion practices among Congregational Churches as a result of liberalization of discipline and theology, increasing ministerial prerogatives as a result of Presbyterian influence (who, incidentally, celebrated communion only four times a year, unlike the Puritans), the elevation of the importance of preaching (with its architectural consequences) as a result of revivalism, and the lack of ministers on the ever-expanding frontiers (which took its toll on weekly communion in American Lutheran experience as well).

The author has put his book together from painstaking research into diaries, parish records, published commentaries, and sermons by noted free church clergymen. Long quotations from these sources are often provided so that the reader may also enter into the dynamics of this liturgical development. At many points, A. makes suggestions for future research (and one may expect to see doctoral dissertations fleshing out some of these hints). It is a little book published by a little-known press. But that should not detract from the significant advance it makes in our knowledge of the history of Christian worship.

Frank C. Senn
Christ the Mediator Lutheran Church

FUNDAMENTALISM AND AMERICAN CULTURE: THE SHAPING OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY EVANGELICALISM, 1870-1925. By George M. Marsden. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. 306 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

At least two times in this century, opponents and critics of Fundamentalism have attempted to conduct its funeral and to deny the possibility of its resurrection. The first anti-eulogy was delivered by liberal Christian leaders following the Scopes-Trial debacle of 1925, when the movement fell victim to Menckenesque caricature and floundered for lack of a successor to William Jennings Bryan. The second came from consensus American historians of the 1950's and early 60's who associated Fundamentalism with the anti-intellectualism that Senator Joseph MaCarthy had exploited so effectively.

Yet, Fundamentalism has stubbornly refused to go to the grave. Historian Joel A. Carpenter in a 1980 **Church History** article on "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942," for example, qualified Robert T. Handy's long-standing thesis concerning America's "religious depression" (1925-1935) by demonstrating that the newer evangelical and fundamentalist groups of the period (unlike the "old-line" denominations of Protestantism) actually prospered. More recently, a resurgence of Fundamentalism has accompanied the insurgence of Evangelicals into American politics. Only about four million of

the forty million Evangelicals in America today are fundamentalist affiliated, but their strength and influence go well beyond the number of card-carrying members.

George Marsden's contribution to our understanding of Fundamentalism is as creative as it is timely. He argues that Fundamentalism does not represent the type of "cultural lag" to which social historians like Richard Hofstadter tried to reduce it, but an authentic intellectual tradition. He views it as more than an outgrowth of movements espousing millenarianism and biblical inerrancy. Rather, the outlook of a contemporary fundamentalist comports well with certain elements still latent in American culture — e.g. the belief that allegiance to the Bible vitiates the differences between persons of low and high estates.

M. finds in Fundamentalism neither rural maladjustment to America's urbanization (the movement was predominantly urban and Northern) nor only a theological concern over the way liberal and modernist forms of Christianity were undermining the faith set forth in the Bible, but a set of philosophical assumptions. At stake for fundamentalists was a world view which assumed that God's truth consisted of directly-apprehendable facts (common sense philosophy of Scottish realism), interpreted best with the aid of the Baconian scientific method. Once considered to be both Christian and American, this approach to reality gradually lost ground in the latter half of the nineteenth century to the post-Kantian perceptual model of reality. It also made communication with the enemy impossible. Ironically, fundamentalists charged that modernists were "unscientific."

Throughout the book, M. stresses the complexity of Fundamentalism in America and avoids the temptation to tie up the loose ends too readily. Dwight L. Moody, for instance, was a key figure in the crisis that followed the Civil War, but he completely shunned controversy as a method of settling differences. And while Pentecostals mimicked the fundamentalists in many ways, fundamentalists remained critical, if not antagonistic, toward tongue-speaking Pentecostals. Contrary to what is often assumed, the early fundamentalist coalition did not ignore society's ills in its zeal for saving souls, but often made pronouncements similar to the Social Gospel. The "great reversal" of strategy in fact did not occur until the period between 1900 and 1930, when social Christianity became identified almost completely with liberalism.

One of M's chief themes is that Fundamentalism formed a mosaic of divergent and sometimes contradictory traditions and tendencies. Dispensational premillennialists within the ranks, for example, tended to advocate complete separation from the affairs of a doomed civilization. Other fundamentalists, like William Jennings Bryan, were optimistic patriots, determined to stem the decay of Christian civilization.

This monograph is clearly the best current work on the subject. To the main body of the text, however, he appends four insightful interpretations of Fundamentalism as a social, a political, an intellectual, and as an American phenomenon. All of them provide valuable starting points for discussion and further research.

Jon Diefenthaler
Waynesboro, Virginia

Briefly Noted

The English Bible from KJV to NIV. By Jack P. Lewis. (Baker, $16.95). Lewis evaluates fairly and clearly KJV, ASV, RSV, NEB, NASB, JB, NAB, NWT (the New World Translation, made for Jehovah's Witnesses), LB, GNB, NIV, and NKJB (the New King James Bible). None of the versions escapes criticism, but the NIV gets some of the more gentle treatment. Least favored are LB, NWT, and NKJB. If there is no such thing as a "bad boy," no translation is also wholly without merit. Far more serious is that many Christians read no translation. Incidentally, you will be able to understand the pluses and minuses of your favorite even if you known not a a word of Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.

Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions. Edited by Keith Crim. (Abingdon, $39.95). 150 writers have produced this 830-page, non-partisan guide to the religions and religious ideas of interest to contemporary North Americans. In addition to comprehensive articles on Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the many Christian denominations, there are also special treatments of geographic areas (Islam in South Asia, African tribal religions). A handy guide leads beyond the generalities. Those interested in Judaism, for example, will be referred to articles on Anti-Semitism, Art and Architecture, the Bible, the Calendar, Conservative Judaism, hasidism, Holocaust, Kabala (Jewish mysticism), Messiah, Mishnah, Moses, Music, Orthodox Judaism, Prayer, Reconstructionist Judaism, Reform Juda-

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ism, Synagogue, Talmud, Torah, Zionism. The same type of comprehensive information is provided for all the major religions. This book deserves to be high on the "buy list" for parish and public libraries.

Ugarit in Retrospect. Edited by Gordon D. Young. (Eisenbrauns, $12.50). In February, 1979, an international group of scholars gathered at the University of Wisconsin to assess what had happened in the first fifty years of Ugaritic studies and to gaze into their philological, historical, and biblical-comparative crystal ball. The twelve esays in this book deal with history and archaeology, the language and literature of Ugarit, and Ugarit and the Bible. Interestingly enough, Ugaritic or Ugaritic-like tablets are still being unearthed. Peter Craigie deals directly with the biblical question and surveys what is being done at Rome (new readings of biblical material on the basis of Northwest Semitic epigraphy), at Claremont (three volumes of biblical-Ugaritic parallels have been produced), and at Münster (new editions of the texts and lexicographical studies). C. notes progress, but warns also about an emerging pan-Ugaritism. The book concludes with a rollicking scholarly panel discussion, chaired by Cyrus Gordon, and replete with a dazzling display of off-the-cuff scholarly brilliance and a shocking display of oral solecisms among the learned.

Robert Stein of Bethel Seminary showed himself able to make the results of detailed and often esoteric scholarship comprehensible and useful in his **The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings.** (Westminster, $7.95). He now follows that up with another very helpful work that serves as **An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus** (Westminster, $8.95), a book that does exactly what its title says. After a survey of the genre parable, an examination of the purpose and historicity of Jesus' parables, and an overview of the history of parable interpretation and the modern study of the parables, Stein develops four basic principles of parable interpretation. He uses these principles to discuss the theological message of the parables: In the parables Jesus calls people to decision in the face of the present kingdom of God, for the God of mercy and forgiveness is also the holy and righteous God who will separate humankind into the sheep and goats at the last judgment. Written with clarity and grace, students and pastors will find that Stein gives a useful guide into a complex and important subject. Heartily recommended. Useful bibliographic notes. (Edgar Krentz)

Faithful and Fair: Transcending Sexist Language in Worship. By Keith Watkins. (Abingdon, $4.95). The character of religious experience is involved in the debate over the exclusively masculine forms of speech in our references to God. Watkins establishes several interim principles for careful, prayerful language changes, taking into account the sensibilities of the variety of people in congregations. This book is a must for every pastor and congregational worship committee. It might not be fast enough for the most dedicated feminists, but careful, prayerful change will last. (Gretchen Lepke)

Religion and Sexuality. By Lawrence Foster. (Oxford, $19.95). Here is a study of religious groups (the Shakers, Oneida Perfectionists, and Mormons) which reject existing marriage and family patterns, choosing instead such diverse models as celibacy, group marriage and polygamy. "The chief significance of these antebellum (Civil War) millennial movements is that they exemplify so starkly the creative tensions between structure and anti-structure, the game of life in all its variety and richness."

O Come, Let Us Worship. By Robert C. Rayburn. (Baker, $8.95). A manual to train ministerial students in corporate worship. The author is a professor at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis and writes for the "evangelical" wing of protestantism. While he attempts to call evangelicals to a deeper appreciation of the Lord's Supper, he advocates the use of grape juice, citing the problem of alcoholism, and calls for absolute quiet during the distribution.

Dictionary of Proper Names and Places in the Bible. By O. Odelain and R. Seguineau. (Doubleday, $22.50). More than 3,500 names of people and places in the Bible are explained in this unique reference tool. For a personal name the authors list its frequency, a transcription of its Semitic, Greek or other original linguistic spelling, its meaning, its etymological relationships, a brief account of the person's life, and cross-references to other articles. Numerous genealogical and chronological charts form an appendix. No bibliography is provided for the book as a whole or for individual articles, and critical or problematic designations are not nearly as well clarified as they are in the **Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible** (Who was the mother of Abijah/Abiham? Compare 1 Kings 15:2 with 2 Chr. 13:2. In the former passage his mother is Maacah, daughter of Absalom; in the latter, Micaiah, daughter of Uriel. This dictionary merely equates the two, p. 246). Originally published in French and meant to be used with the Jerusalem Bible, it fully covers also those books which Lutherans and other Protestants call apocryphal.

Synopse der drei ersten Evangelien mit Beigabe der johanneischen Parallelstellen. By Albert Huck and Heinrich Greeven. 13th edition. (J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] DM 45). Huck's synopsis first saw the light of day in 1892, but subsequent editors have expanded it and made it ever more useful. Greeven has supplied a new Greek text for this edition (different than Tischendorf and Nestle Aland) and a whole new critical apparatus. Johannine parallels are supplied, particularly for the passion narratives, and Old Testament quotations are now marked with heavy type. A second apparatus provides material from the apocryphal gospels and similar material. The forty-one page introduction comes in parallel German and English columns. The cereal manufacturers would say, "New! Improved!" We do, too. Note also the modest price.

The solid New Century Bible, based on the RSV, continues to produce new volumes and to reissue older ones in inexpensive paperback editions. Eerdmans is the American publisher. Recent arrivals, with original publication date and current price, include: **Matthew.** By David Hill. (1972, $8.95); **Mark.** By Hugh Anderson. (1976, $8.95); **Romans.** By Matthew Black. (1973, $5.95); **Galatians.** By Donald Guthrie. (1973, $5.95); **Ephesians.** By Leslie C. Mitton. (1973, $6.95).

The Roles of Israel's Prophets. By David L. Petersen. (JSOT Supplement Series, $14.95 [paper], $21.95 [cloth]). Petersen criticizes attempts to explain the prophets by emphasizing their office, their charisma, or their use of ecstasy. Rather, using the sociological notion of role theory, he defines such role labels as "seer," "man of God," "prophet," and "visionary." He finds considerble variety in these roles; what gives unity to Israelite prophecy was that it was in the service of one God, Yahweh. This approach prevents the scholar from projecting back upon the biblical prophets contemporary roles (e.g. prophets are sometimes confused with pastors), and it makes the studies of biblical scholars intelligible to people in other academic disciplines.

The Scope and Authority of the Bible. By James Barr. (Westminster, $7.95). Seven essays by the famed Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture in Oxford University, dealing with issues such as narrative and history, fundamentalism, and the Bible's relationship to political images and religious communities.

Prophets Denied Honor. Edited by Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo. (Orbis, $12.95). The 100 essays in this book are all written by Hispanics in the United States and they offer the reader a profile of the powerful forces summoning them to a new articulation of their catholicism. The essays recount the genesis of the Hispanic church and sketch out its unity and diversity. Not surprisingly, thirteen essays deal with Liberation theology.

Catholic Politics in China and Korea. By Eric O. Hanson. (Orbis, $9.95). Catholics offered no substantial service to the state in the early years of the People's Republic of China and

elaborated no ideology of state support. While the isolation of the Catholic community canceled out any immediate danger of insurrection, its institutional unity and tradition of martyrdom made its suppression difficult. Hanson judges Korea to be the world's most dangerous area. The oustanding native Korean clergy should be competent to mount the eminent ecclesiastical statesmanship required to interact with the political system.

Interpreting the Gospels for Preaching. By D. Moody Smith. (Fortress, $4.50). After surveying the historical, form critical, and redactional issues in the Synoptic gospels, Smith gives "paradigms and specimens" of preaching on each of them. A final three-chapter section deals with preaching on John, where the twin dangers of historicism and allegorization constantly dog the preacher.

Faith and Freedom. By Schubert M. Ogden. (Abingdon, $3.95). Here is a popular and thoughtful answer to the question, "Can Christian faith in God be so understood that it positively includes the concern for human liberation in this world?"

St. Paul in Greece, St. Paul in Ephesus and the Cities of Galatia and Cyprus, St. Paul's Last Journey, and **St. John of Patmos and the Seven Churches of the Apocalypse,** all in the series **In the Footsteps of the Saints.** By Otto Meinardus. (Caratzas, $5.95 each). People interested in the value of cultural history and archaeology for the understanding of the New Testament will appreciate these four paperbacks by Meinardus, pastor of the St. Andrew's American Church in Athens (and before that a pastor in Cairo). Each volume is liberally illustrated with black and white illustrations, correlated with the text of the New Testament. They are in general conservative in outlook: Meinardus adopts the south Galatian theory, holds that Romans 16 was a letter to Ephesus and that 2 Corinthians contains portions of several letters to Corinth, accepts the Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians, suggests that the tradition about the site of the shipwreck in Acts 28 may be Mljet in Dalmatia, and seems to support the tradition that the John who wrote the Apocalypse is also the Evangelist. While these volumes are in no sense original and contain what is primarily common coin, they are gracefully written. Arm chair travellors may find them interesting. (Edgar Krentz)

Christian Ethics. By R. E. O. White. (John Knox, $10.95). In an earlier volume White, a Baptist theologian, surveyed *Biblical* ethics. The purpose of the present book is to learn the Christian ethical heritage and to discern what is permanent and what is transitory. Chapters are devoted to Abelard, Augustine, Aquinas, Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin. The post-Reformation period appears topically: inner light, social gospel, situation ethics, and the like.

Theologians in Transition. Edited by James M. Wall. (Crossroad Books, $14.95). During 1980 and 1981 **The Christian Century** published a series of twenty-one essays entitled "How my Mind has Changed." In case you missed them, this book of reprints gives you a second chance. About half of the book is given over to theologians who do not follow middle-class, male, Western models, including the likes of Harvey Cox, Rosemary Ruether, Jose Miguiz-Bonino, Letty Russell, James Cone, and Robert McAfee Brown. But there are also folks like Peter Berger, Carl Henry, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Schubert Ogden, heavy hitters in a more traditionalist mode. And then, finally, there are theologians whose product is primarily literary: Elie Wiesel, Nathan A. Scott, Jr., and Frederick Buechner.

The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Volume XIII, Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, Esther. By Roland E. Murphy. (Eerdmans, $12.95). This is the first volume of a unique commentary series designed to make the latest in form critical research available to specialist and beginner alike. Twenty-four paperback volumes are planned for FOTL. Discussions begin with the largest units (the genre and structure

of the book itself) and then work backwards to progressively smaller units. After a discussion of the genres of wisdom in the Bible and the Ancient Near East, Father Murphy provides a crisp and clear discussion of six biblical books, punctuating the text with splended bibliographies. A thirteen-page glossary to the genres discussed in the book completes the volume. This series has been fifteen years in the coming, and M.'s volume demonstrates that the wait was worthwhile. One warning: FOTL deals only with matters of structure and form; it lacks almost all other interpretive aids associated with commentaries. But FOTL makes clear why form criticism is the great new exegetical fact of our century.

Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology. The Complete Sacramentum Verbi. Edited by Johannes B. Bauer. (Crossroad, $32.50). Published in German in 1959, this series of 209 word studies by continental Roman Catholic scholars first appeared in English in 1970. While the bibliographies are now somewhat out of date, the reissue of this reference work in one volume instead of the original three keeps a modern classic alive. It contains solid biblical interpretation, which is often correlated to the concerns of systematic theology.

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