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Women's Liberation in the Church
The Church and Human Rights

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Theology Ought to Add Up

Two years ago I received a letter that ran in part:

"Abraham was 99 when God spoke to him in Gen. 17:1 and made the announcement of Isaac. I noticed that it was 990 years from the birth of Isaac (in 2050 After Creation) until God appeared to Solomon when the temple was complete (in 3040 A.C.). 990 years from this date Christ died (in 4030 A.C.) and Christ called himself 'this temple.' These intervals of 990 years established a number pattern that perpetuated itself to 7000 A.C. though not falling on any other significant dates. If I added 990 years to 7000, it simply became 7990 or two times Christ's birth date of 3995 A.C. Almost as though we can express Rev. 1:17 mathematically."

I think it was the "almost" that relegated that letter to the unanswered pile, but **Ruth Bretscher Ressmeyer** nearly pulled me out of my chauvinist slumbers when she mailed me the enclosed essay on woman's liberation. It is not anti-Scriptural or even anti-male to be pro woman's liberation, she reminds us; in fact, it is un-Christian not to be for it. She writes in pain and hope, calling on all of us to set aside the biases that hamper our getting at the mop-up job which must be done if the church is still to be the church to Christ's women. Picture with her the new parish, the new home, the new community, church and world, in which hallowed sexism has been uprooted.

Why should we be for human rights? Does the prodding come from natural law or biblical anthropology, or from the laws that people make? **James M. Childs, Jr.** provides answers for these questions and explores the compromises we are forced to make when human rights smack into political reality. Why, finally, human rights? It is the purpose of the church's ethics, Childs argues, to anticipate — in the midst of alienation and suffering — the promised kingdom of human fulfillment by seeking *now* for all people those values implicit and explicit in the kingdom promise.

Process theology is related to the philosophical understanding of a mathematician, Alfred North Whitehead. **Lyman T. Lundeen**

defines "process", its emphasis on "becoming", and its understanding of history and reality as a living, changing combination of diverse factors. For some people process theology seems to be too indebted to philosophy and too beholden to change, even in God. Others — including other Lutherans — find new elucidation in it for the common distinction between the natural knowledge of God and special revelation. Process thought offers unique resources for understanding our God who suffers,or for recognizing that the truths necessary for faith are known in the middle of the tensions of life.

All authority comes from God, and it is transmitted to us through the resurrected Christ. **Goerge F. Lobien** demonstrates this important truth via a study of the word "authority" in the New Testament. The Christian community, too, claims authority, not the right to lord it over others, but the authority to heal, to forgive, and to suffer! We use God's authority legitimately when our actions and words reflect the Spirit of Christ within us, when we use our God-given authority to alleviate the suffering of all people.

With this issue we begin a three-part discussion of infant communion by **David Pearcy.** There was a time when communion was merely the final stage in a three-part rite of Christian initiation: baptism, anointing or confirmation, and communion. One reason why infant communion was dropped in the Western church was because the bishops weren't able to get around to confirm people as infants or even as children. Another reason stemmed from the fact that infants and children communed often only via the chalice. When it was withheld from the laity, communion for infants became impossible. Rethinking this complicated question provides the opportunity to reassess the purpose of confirmation, the nature of faith, and the prerequisites for participating in the Holy Supper.

Bruce V. Malchow contributes an article on Micah for the series dealing with "those lively prophets." In Micah's day social injustice was blended with a love for "religion," and this called forth

incomparable lawsuits from God against his people. But the book of Micah also tells of a God matchless in his forgiveness, who promised a messiah from the hick town of Bethlehem and assured the people of a day when his loving rule of the world would obviate the need for war. In its canonical form, the judgment of which the historical Micah spoke becomes illustrative of the continuing plan of God. Both judgment and salvation lie in the future as much as in the past.

Kurt K. Hendel begins the first of a five-part series on "Augsburg Confessors," designed to bring fresh light on the people who helped shape the irenic and ecumenical document whose 450th anniversary falls this June. Hendel adds up, this month, the plusses and minuses of the confession's author, Philip Melanchthon. We are indeed happy and proud to announce that *Currents* has been selected as the place for publishing "The Augsburg Confession in the United States: Commemoration and Self-Examination," a position paper prepared by leading theologians from all the North American Lutheran seminaries. Watch for this memorable document in the April issue.

Late in October I received a letter from **Carol Lois Haywood** in response to last June's article on the ordination of women, by no means the only communication on the subject. Her supplements to our faculty's statement on how women will contribute to the ministry merit careful reading. In fact, we would encourage readers to provide statements of opinion on a variety of topics for an ongoing series of in-depth letters to the editor.

How are we going to express Rev. 1:17, if not mathematically? Who is this one that tells us not to fear, who lays his right hand upon us and assures us that he has the keys to Death and Hades? The one who's first and last, who died and behold he lives — he's the one!

That figures.

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

The Case for Women's Liberation in the Church

By Ruth Bretscher Ressmeyer

East Northport, New York

Feminism. Women's liberation. Equal rights. Mere words. Neutral words, until each of us brings to them our own pain, fear, anger and — for some of us — the hope that lies within. Hope that implies change and correcting, that rests on the vision of wholeness, mutuality and oneness for all humanity.

Christian people are understandably confused about the women's movement, for it is still among the numerous issues the church is not really dealing with. Much that is good begins in the secular world and it is only the prolonged build-up of outside pressure which finally forces a heel-dragging church to face up to a situation for which it *should* have assumed early leadership. It is customary among religious people to maintain the schizophrenic dichotomy which says that anything "of the world" is "bad" and all within the church is "good." Feminism, society's latest insubordinate step-child, is considered by many as a peripheral concern at best. Traditionalists, not a few of whom are members of institutional religions, think of the women's movement as one of the diabolic evils which flow out of a heartbroken, hurting world.

Sanctified Sexism

That the worldwide women's revolution may in fact be the scream torn loose by sanctified sexism is little perceived. A sacred, sexist philosophy still has the protection of paternalistic religions, of long entrenched half-truths, of a society where leadership is reserved for the male half of humanity, of an inadequate constitutional and judicial system. And it has the endorsement of countless women who do not evey know they betray self, sister and daughter whenever they admit to finding male conversation more stimulating than female without asking whiy; when they never puzzle over the paucity of prominent women in history books; when they dutifully cultivate male attention and approval rather than self respect.

Institutional Christianity often scoffs at pietistic fundamentalism in theory. But in the area of liberating women, churches often support through silence the voices of pessimistic pronouncement which enthrone narrow thinking, usually the product of insufficient study and biblical scrutiny. Mostly we buy into simplistic solutions and easy generalizations; second-hand answers that retreat from facing another's suffering, that judge before listening, that condemn without confronting the more complex questions at issue.

Such are the superficial, cover-up solutions of the head-shaking Phyllis Schlafleys, Anita Bryants, Bill Goddards, Mirabel Morgans, and yes, even Jean Gartons (*Affirm,* 3/30/79) who focus our attention on the dark side-effects



and transitional excesses of the women's movement rather than on the basic causes. There is insidious danger in permitting such thinking to continue unchallenged, for it is based on guilt arousing sentimentality and unexamined prejudice, in addition to text-snatching biblicism.

Revolutions are spawned by prolonged human abuse. They are messy and costly as they flood over the carefully placed, restricting sandbags which can finally no longer hold back the swelling tide of frustration and outrage. Change is frightening but inevitable when oppression and repression can no longer be tolerated. "Enough! No more!" becomes the battle cry.

This article is written in pain and hope, calling on all of us to set aside the biases and gut feelings hampering us from getting at the mop-up job which must be done if the church is still to be the church to Christ's women. Five years of working with women's groups in the church and discussing women's issues with women and men in convocations, workshops, and other gatherings bring me to this writing. The sinful hostility which separates women and men and impoverishes us all must be recognized, repented of, and set aside once and for all. Acknowledging a cancerous growth can be the first step toward healing and wholeness. Growing pains are the forerunners of budding maturity.

A Larger View

Fortunately, the would-be non-reformers who point us back to a hallowed but uninspected past do not speak for the whole church. Nor are their reinforcing views of male dominance and female subservience the only alternatives Scripture offers.

Christians can rejoice that there is a larger view, a more optimistic profile of Christ-pleasing personhood being lifted high by theologians: Hans Küng, Krister Stendahl, Rosemary Ruether, Phyllis Bird, John Reumann, Letty Russell, Letha Scanzoni, Nancy Hardesty, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Paul Jewett, Margaret Wold, Leonard Swidler and countless more.

Women of God have been bound long centuries by a theology which has, in effect, echoed the covenant of circumcision (exclusivism and male privilege) in the church rather than the non-differentiating sacrament of holy baptism. Though the New Testament has always clearly stated that the gospel message of freedom and rescue in Christ is the same for the uncircumcized and the circumcized, for women and men as well as for Greek and Jew, paternalism from the surrounding cultures crept into the infant church even before the close of the biblical era and has determined lifestyles ever since.

We cannot sit in judgment on earlier generations who lived in other space and time. But today the gospel light, so long ago released over Bethlehem, is finally fall-

ing upon the women of our planet. Fresh winds of the Spirit introduce a changing climate that will not be stayed. The long medieval night which has kept countless women stunted and functioning at only partial efficiency, contrary to the uniform mandate of baptismal calling, is ending as the renaissance of women dawns at last. It was never the Lord, the giver of all good gifts, who told women to neglect, bury or destroy so much talent and potential for greater service.

Christian Feminism

The thelogy of Christian feminism hinges on the gospel message of new creation, of a new covenant in Jesus Christ through his life, death and resurrection. In their public dealings with women and their acknowledgments of women's worth, both Jesus and Paul were feminists. (Definition: "By a *feminist* is meant a person who is in favor of, who promotes, the equality of women with men, a person who advocates and practices treating women primarily as human persons — as men are treated — and willingly contravenes social customs in so acting." Leonard Swidler in "Jesus Was a Feminist," *Catholic World,* January, 1971.)

Equality in terms of autonomous individualism may not be a Christian goal, since the church is a community of differently gifted believers, (though not a male fraternity, as it so often would seem). Equality does not erase created biological differences, but it means sameness of calling, of forgiveness and salvation, of opportunity to respond individually to God's commands to care for the world and to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus. In that sense equality and oneness are synonymous terms. No one must impose artificial barriers upon any woman's Spirit-guided interpretation of her unique vocation in Christ.

Jesus again and again defied the structures which separated women and men politically, socially, and religiously. He *had* to be male, because men raised in the macho mystique of that era would never have listened to a woman. The Savior taught that *women and men* were to seek to acquire "feminine" traits; lowliness of heart; meekness, humility, turning the other cheek; voluntarily becoming servant and slave; selflessly and sacrificially nurturing the very young and the old, the sick, the lonely and the hungry; taking the lower seats at the table; accepting ridicule, abasement and scorn with forgiving patience; making peace, and so on. Only a man could be that revolutionary message for men; women were already living those virtues, unnoticed and unapplauded, for centuries.

The very qualities being bred out of men but into women were meant for both. Christ did not ask women to be

more sacrificing, more self-demeaning, more servile than men. Women are not to imitate men, in the final analysis, but men, women. Give away your acquisitive, gentile-copied traits, your power, your wealth, your prestige and social status, self aggrandizement, competitiveness, your double standards regarding divorce and sexual permissiveness.

The message of submissiveness emphasized throughout the book of 1 Peter is not intended to be narrowed down to a heavier concentration on the verses regarding women in the third chapter. We are all to be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21), regardless of our sex. The day is here for men to reenact the humility of foot washing for their mothers and wives, sisters, daughters and secretaries, not just to other men. Selfless love, not power, is to be the constant motivation for all.

Conversely, when authority, courage and leadership are necessary or appropriate, they too must be the property of all humans, not just the male half. There are no exclusively male or female traits, other than the inherent biological differences in strength, or those that flow from such functions as child bearing and nursing. Such limited differentiation does not and must not be permitted to define and limit roles and occupations, nor dictate how one is to exercise faith. The makers of wars might think twice if daughters and wives had to stand by men's sides in battle!

Something is radically wrong whenever the church of Jesus Christ functions as an exclusive male club where women are only tolerated as observing guests, as at two recent papal installations. A sea of lay and female spectators watching a privileged few men officiate impoverishes the family of God since many of heaven's gifts for the church lie dormant.

Full Mutuality

Mutuality and full membership for all without discrimination, must be the framework of Christ-centered community. Only when men of the church can learn from women, follow women, and work with women will women's gifts become more than tokens. Sermons on humility and meekness are not what women need, but reminders about the sins of burying talents and being disobedient to God's wider call. Jesus knew the woman who washed his feet needed approval and encouragement, not further belittling. A crying world needs more direct involvement of every believer and the creative, imaginative gifts and potential of every member. As the church frees the second half of its membership for greater response to the call of stewardship, its total ministry will be much more effective. Putting self second, unrewarded and unrecompensed, must be part of the voluntary service of all.

Imagine what that will mean, when the same rules and standards apply to everyone! Martha can let Lazarus take over the kitchen some of the time while she joins Mary in learning about Christ's concerns for a suffering world. The woman at the well can consult Jesus not only about her marital status but on the intricacies of redemption and worship, after which she can go and tell the good news to others. Fathers, as well as mothers, can bring children to Jesus for blessing. Mary Magdalene can witness of the resurrection to men, and women everywhere can be co-workers in the gospel, taking their rightful, responsible place as decision-making co-caretakers of God's people and his earth. Men can no longer define women's needs and their way of life and how they may or may not respond to the Lord who lives within them. Women must do that for themselves, just as men have always done for themselves.

Parochial School Casualties

The idealistic, long-suffering coeds of parochial educational systems represent only a fractional minority of the women in most parishes, but they may well be some of the greatest casualties of sexist injustice in the church today. For it was in our Christian schools, high schools, and colleges that many young women first became victims of ecclesiastical dualism. It was here the flames of zeal and dedication and eagerness to serve were fanned only to leave women forever frustrated in a church structure which has never made room for their full involvement as it does for men of similar preparation. Satisfying ways for women to pour forth their carefully honed sense of calling and consecration have often been lacking. The loss of service to the church from unfulfilled women is tragic and irreparable, not to mention the high toll paid by sexism's victims in their own disappointment and defeat.

Maturing Christians

We women have remained half-grown children, most of us, in playing out our prescribed lives of unquestioning subservience and male expectations, and in the process, we often become only partially developed human beings. It is not the God who endowed us with more who tells us not to invest, though that notion has also been included in our careful, brain-washing indoctrination. With a hurting world needing more from all of us, half-hearted accountability is very wrong. Homemaking is no longer a full-time job for many women, and it can be sinful to try to make it artificially so out of deference to outmoded traditions. Many women need help to re-think their lives and prepare for new ventures.

Identifying with women's liberation does not mean trying to elevate women by downgrading men; it is not joining in

a sexist battle for supremacy, or freeing women from marital and mothering responsibility, or moving women from pedestal to unisex. What has been right for men down through the ages cannot be so wrong for women. It is not anti-scriptural, anti-male to be pro-women's liberation. It is unchristian *not* to be for it.

It is time to salute all the maturing, visionary women and the understanding and supportive men who, together, are juggling home, job and school, who are taking on more because they see greater challenge and necessity, and who know they can and should be all they were meant to be. Our peers, our daughters, our granddaughters, and our kindred sisters everywhere deserve our prayers for God's blessings. They are attempting brave, new things, and most of them are motivated not by selfishness or any desire to "show up" traditional women or make them feel inadequate, but by high idealism and realistic hope. With initiative and creativity, with discipline and imaginative devotion, *we can do both:* uphold the Christian home *and* contribute directly to the needs of God's other children around the earth.

This is the vision of hope emerging from the women's revolution: women and men together, as co-breadwinners, full church workers, joint community servants, united and complimentary homemakers, not only birthing, but parenting and housekeeping and child-sitting together, so that each can give of self both in the hallowed haven of home and in the larger world without. Singles, too, are free to develop their total personhood in widening dimensions. The alternative being offered by misguided traditionalists is deadly.

The Not-so-Glorious Past

While men have been the nominal heads of the house and family, their position securely reinforced by patriarchal tradition and teaching, women have often wielded indirect and sometimes unhealthy power under the guise of accepted "momism." Forced to exercise strength in devious ways, many women have tried to gain control over men by keeping them dependent and insecure boys ("I know what's best for you"). Such manipulation contributes directly to many men's resentment of women and to the undercurrent of competitive hostility between the sexes. It is defeating for all to continue to extol relationships which have been subtly harmful for both men and women.

Neither men nor the more male-chauvinist women can decide for other women whether or not they need freeing, anymore than women can prescribe further freeing for men based on female understanding of male needs. The fact that *aware* women and men are still a minority in no way lessons or eradicates the gospel imperative for spreading the

good news of human liberation.

We women become our own worst enemies when we let ourselves be divided over feminist issues. It is time for everyone to cast aside, once and for all, sexual stigma and hierarchical lopsidedness and to relate to one another as "we," not as "he" and "she." Not lack of accountability or irresponsibility motivates the true Christian feminist, but the opposite — true stewardship of gifts in obedience to God's calling in baptism, coupled with loving empathy and compassion for one another.

Misleading either-or's are often the false alternatives offered by prominent "non-career" women who make a career of telling other women in speaking and writing to stay home and preserve the family. The fact that economic necessity has forced many families to move beyond the dated issue of career vs. homemaking doesn't seem to come up. Holy Christian martyrdom is still the device of internal restraint taught young girls. It is the stronger but misguided women who are the survivors, who retain at least some autonomy by becoming our "supermoms."

The celebrated, over-sensitive male ego — that insult to men which frustrated women impose on husbands and sons — must no longer be used as a means to perpetuate and masquerade seductive female control. Experiencing the discomfort of realistic re-education regarding human sexuality is something none of us can evade. Kindness and patience must temper the period of relearning.

What is so right, though largely untried, about the goals of the feminist movement is what has been so wrong with the status quo of women in home, church and community. The current tragic deluge of divorces, divided families, abandoned children, unwanted pregnancies and single sex households will not be stemmed by re-emphasis upon dominating men and subservient women, by addressing symptoms instead of root causes. So long as women must make men their vicarious career, all of us are in for trouble.

The hardships of the wilderness we now face cannot be eased by a frightened return flight to the earlier oppression of Egypt. The church deals treacherously with us all when it continues to extol the home traditions which have turned so many into misshapen products of Super Bowl paternalism and super-mom wifeliness. It is here that festering, growth-stunting resentment as well as crippling dependency between the sexes has been bred. We are paying the price of dualism, church taught and fostered, in the way men and women deal with one another. To insist all will again be well if women are again submissive to men imprisons us all in dubious duplicity. Both men and women need to — *should!* — revolt against that unholy regime.

Unrealistic yearning for the simpler,

more secure feelings of the past have glamorized "home-sweet-home" far beyond recognition. The purpose of this writing is not to condemn lifestyles or make anyone feel "not good enough." No one's past way of living or thinking is ever good enough, but — praise God! — we are freed in Christ to know forgiveness and acceptance none the less, to risk honest self-appraisal and group evaluation, to research new directions and possibilities. But before we have answers, we must not be afraid to confront the painful "why's." It is just as wrong to reaffirm blindly, uncritically, the old as it is to condemn without contemplating the new. What is needed is a knowledgeable blending of the best of the past with the best that the newer working models have to offer.

Besides momism, there are other dangers of the typical American home which must be exposed and avoided in the future: the thankless, soul-destroying attention to trivia; the "little grey home in the west" exclusiveness and deliberate isolation; the "waiting on" or being waited upon syndrome which promotes selfishness and ingratitude toward one another; power plays over money; the elevation of salaried work over unrecompensed tasks and volunteer work; "house beautiful" materialism; "perpetual youth" investment; TV-prompted passivism (but not pacifism); "I'm helpless" and rationalized self-indulgence; the feeding of pets but not people; dieting, but little prayer and fasting; biased judgment without political participation and sharing in the responsibility of citizenship; housekeeping which mistakes busy-ness for meaningful, enriching family care; delinquent fathers . . . preoccupied mothers . . . neglected marriages . . .

All of that, and yet we are told —

> if wives all stay home and let their men continue to carry alone the heavy financial burdens; if women continue to abandon God's charge to care for the earth (Gen. 1:28); if mothers turn on the electronic babysitter — which makes the real and the make-believe interchangeable — instead of searching out and helping develop good, stimulating nursery school and day-care centers; if we continue to elevate quantity parenting over quality in daily child tending; if fathers and mothers alike persist in limiting their concerns to the manipulative enticement of department store brochures; if we remain content to serve only our immediate own and use our ever-increasing leisure only for self-centered pursuits; if we do not teach our children by example to be caring and sacrificially giving Christians —

we shall be blessed and be a source of strength and stability to all around us and to the church and all of society.

All of us must fight such stereotyped

views which divide us on the nature of true, God-given liberation and feed us simplistic rules, and which perpetuate indefensible selfishness instead of "freedom-for" servanthood. True understanding of the Savior's claim upon us and our lives demands many major changes in family lifestyles, and God's time is now.

We women must acknowledge our sins of the past and of the present, but must rightly refuse to accept more than our share of responsibility for today's faltering homes and marriages. We cannot solve all the problems of the hearth and heart by continuing to play out a preconceived, male-directed concept of womanhood. We must take into our own hands the definitions and decisions for fulfillment and wholeness as full members of the body of Jesus.

Being Woman

Being woman today means recognizing the validity of, and need for cultivating a nurturing sisterhood: women looking out for one another, encouraging one another, restraining one another from extremism, helping one another gain healthier, more mature self-respect and needed skills. It means rejecting firmly the false premise which equates becoming greater as persons with becoming less responsible as wives and mothers. It means relinquishing the culturally sponsored momist tendencies within us which continue to engross and divert us from a wider view regarding self, family and Christian accountability.

Countless women of all ages, in many innovative ways, are making real, unprecedented, unselfish contributions in ever-widening areas today. Of them Jesus might also say, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me." (Matt. 26:10) It may be our sins of omission, far more than those we actually commit, which will include also us in the longer roster of contributors to global pain and evil. It will take much more than women's staying home and serving husbands and children for all of us to stimulate healing. We can begin by teaching our families to join us in demanding more of self for others, to unite in effective work as fellow partners of Christ while it is day.

We can help further by refusing to take black-and-white stands on complex moral issues, since so often those stances are used to justify judgment and callous cruelty, also in the church. Can we be flexible for a while and withhold condemnation of our sisters until we see where they are hurting, why many must work, why equal pay for equal work is so essential, until we listen more and learn more? Instead of just reacting along suggested paths to upsetting news items, can we urge our church to help us grow in first-hand theological, social and political perspective and in understand-

ing the grey areas in such involved issues as child abuse, abortion, equal rights, homosexuality, changing sexual morality, the arms race, displaced homemakers, prostitution, holocaust lessons, inclusive language, refugee placement, environmental concern, family-abandoning fathers and mothers?

We cannot afford the luxury of rigidity anymore. Responsible Christian citizenship in today's topsy-turvy world demands more of all of us, the pooling of our God-gifts of income, time and eduation.

Hope for Tomorrow

Picture a parish — and there may be some — where true oneness in Christ reigns, where the only criteria for assigning the varied tasks is "who can do the job well"; where no one counts or notices the ratio of female to male workers; where women become involved not by default when men are not forthcoming, but because sometimes they are the right people for the various tasks; where cooperation, not competition, is the byword between the sexes; where there are no off-limit areas for the female fifty-two percent; where, in a mixed gathering, "she" does not hold back so "he" can dominate, but all are mutually encouraged, heard and respected as co-workers in the gospel. The wealth of people-power and the increase in human resources would enrich and enhance the total program and outreach of such a church and bring blessing to the entire congregational family.

Much more might be attempted, new ideas implemented, because everyone could identify with all activities and duties as potentially one's own. Being male or female would no longer be a criterion for determining involvement, nor would that factor serve as either shoe-horn or excuse-slip for any position or assignment. The common enemy demanding mutual attention would be human lethargy and disinterest. All could move together in one direction of mission and ministry.

Picture a home — and there are some — which draws from the strength of yesterday but is unafraid to venture into new beginnings; where housekeeping tasks are only labeled as "ours"; where success and income are separated concepts and family status and power are not related to earning capacity or Bible-quoted half-truths; where family members help free up and support one another so that each, regardless of age, might have some space and time and financial support for further learning and development, for necessary relaxation and outside friendships; where all, not just some, are encouraged to attempt new challenges, to bite off more for church and community toward mercy and justice for all; where boy/girl or male/female differentiation is not stressed, but wholeness and oneness in Christ and the using of "all that is within me" ability.

Picture a community, a church, a world made up of many such families

and churches, where servanting and leading, earning and volunteering, following and chairing, are alternating roles for all; where responsible stewardship to God and to people is the basic motivation, not the living out of confining roles; where a healthy balance between work and recreation, study and rest challenges everyone to be the maximum the Lord intended in the areas where each is planted.

To the church and to all in positions of authority on every level, there comes the challenge to assume leadership in helping uproot hallowed sexism, to work for constructive change in man/woman relationships. The first step lies in daring to confess complicity in sexist problems in the religious community, through both private and public repentance. Only then will those in positions of authority receive the caring strength needed to break the ominous silence amounting to ecclesiastical white-washing of prevalant male privilege in Christian circles.

It is the responsibility of the church to create a climate of growing awareness among its membership of the evils of sexism in our midst, even if this means a reversal of teaching in some cases. Left on our own, few of us acquire greater understanding and compassion in any area of human injustice and suffering. It is the task of Christian leaders everywhere to make all of us more aware, to convince us of how very involved we really are in the problems of women's liberation, to help us become feminists in the best sense of that term. Most people need guidance in growth for it to occur.

In a church which is still heavily male-dominated, the challenge to the male hierarchy is to take up this crusade because women, however qualified or convinced, have no power platform from which to speak. We need our brothers in Christ to take up our cry and give serious consideration and support to this issue. Individual personhood must no longer be asked to bow to stacked majority, male rule.

Men must help women become doers, not just hearers of the Word, must help them overcome their "my father/my husband says" distrust of their own thinking, must release them from over-respecting male points of view, from subconsciously perpetuating — in so very many ways — masculine superiority and dominance.

Pastors especially must help put an end to the church's discrediting and defaming of women in theory and practice while at the same time exploiting them. It is time to guarantee women full status religiously, socially and also legally. To the church, not society, must fall the task of proclaiming the full ministry of women — also the Lord's gift to the family of believers. For the final unleashing of full woman-power in our midst will profoundly effect every other issue about which the church should be concerned.

The Church and Human Rights: Reflections on Morality and Mission*

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From the perspective of the Christian ethic, human rights stand at the intersection of morality and law, and of church and society. As a dimension of justice, human rights are one of love's vehicles for advancing the human good in the historical, corporate structures of human society. Human rights, therefore, are an appropriate subject for Christian ethical reflection and a concern of the church's mission in the world.

Whence Human Rights?

According to the prevailing view, the concern for human rights is primarily a product of Enlightenment humanism. However, the expression of human rights even in that modern tradition is rooted in the ancient idea of natural law, a common ground shared both by classical humanism and by at least one major tradition in the history of Christian thought.[1] Thus, a number of Christians have long held that the basic freedoms and protections of human rights doctrine are divinely revealed in and through the natural order of creation. As such, they are available to all people of sound reason and good will. Thomas Aquinas spoke of ". . . the light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of natural law." It is "nothing else than an imprint on us of the divine light."[2] Among the things which natural law teaches is justice, the chief virtue. And justice, said Aquinas, is to render to each one his *right*.[3] In this view, human rights have the character of an eternal standard, transcending the relativities of human philosophies and cultural differences. So it is that Pope Pius XII speaking out of this Thomistic, natural law tradition, was able to say in a 1950 address,

> . . . individuals — each and every one — and families have certain rights and liberties which the State must always protect; which it must never violate or sacrifice to a pretended common good. We have in mind, to cite a few examples, the right to honor and to a good reputation, the right and freedom to worship the true God, the inherently primary right of parents over their children and their children's education. The fact that some recent constitutions have

*An earlier version of this paper was offered on March 31, 1979 at a forum on "Human Rights and Economic Realities" at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio, jointly sponsored by The International Law Society of Capital University Law School and Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

[1] T. Austad, "The Theological Foundation of Human Rights," *LWF Report: A Lutheran Reader on Human Rights*, ed. J. Lissner and A. Sovik (September 1978), p. 58.
[2] *Summa Theologica* II/1, Ques. 91, art. 2.
[3] Ibid, II/2, Ques. 58, art. 1.

adopted this conception is a happy omen which we joyfully acclaim as the dawn of a renewal of respect for the true rights of man, such as they have been willed and established by God.[4]

Of course, not all Christian tradition embraces the idea of natural law as the source of its ethics. However, even those whose ethic is informed more by biblical traditions are able to embrace the fundamental understandings of human rights expressed in the natural law tradition and to see their antecedents in biblical anthropology.[5] Therefore, while most biblical scholars would recognize that the Bible does not contain a definitive body of human rights, many would maintain that it provides the foundations. As an example, the Lutheran Church in America has issued a statement on human rights that sees the Ten Commandments as referring to essential aspects of the divinely created humanum which, in turn, are the basis for human rights.

In connection with the First Commandment, the statement asserts that, "Humans Have Been Created for Divine Fellowship." From this flows certain human rights. Among them, that, "All have the right to celebrate, practice, and witness to faith through communal and public acts of devotion and service without fear of interference or persecution." In connection with the Fourth Commandment, the statement affirms that humans are familial and political beings. Therefore, "All children have the right to parental care and affection," and "All have the right to equality before the law and to protection from the arbitrary use of power."[6]

In addition to other statements concerning the church's commitment to human rights and the cause of justice, the Lutheran World Federation at its Assembly in Dar Es Salaam (1977) urged its member churches to take necessary and possible steps toward:

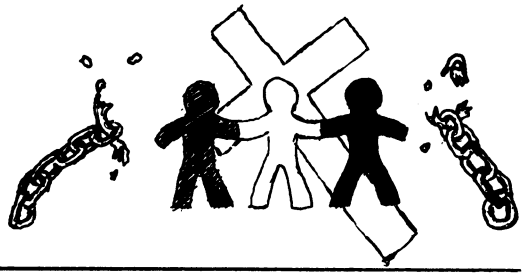
— furtherance of the comprehensive implementation of human rights, including the elementary rights to work, to education, to social services, etc.;

— promotion of rights of underprivileged population groups, such as women, youth, the aged and minorities;

— representation with governments and authorities in favor of dispossessed and tortured citizens;

— legal aid and protective measures for those persecuted or displaced, and for the stateless;

— consultation with judges and lawyers concerning the full use of the possibilities offered by the legal system, and the practical impact of the international conventions on human rights in each country.[7]



These Lutheran statements echo a growing tradition of human rights concern in modern Protestant Christianity worldwide. The World Council of Churches in its first Assembly called upon its members, ". . . to press for the adoption of an International Bill of Human Rights making provision for the recognition and national and international enforcement, of all the essential freedoms of men, whether personal, political, or social." The Evanston Assembly of 1954 called for the protection of "God-given rights which are his will for all men."[8] The Fourth Assembly at Uppsala went on record as saying, "The application of social justice to all human relations demands a common understanding between nations for the recognition and protection of the inherent dignity of man, and of full human equality between men of all races and nations, and respect for the adherents of all religions and ideologies."[9]

If one were to read the full texts of the various churchly declarations on human rights that have appeared throughout the years, one would quickly see that they reflect the fact that human rights doctrine undergoes development and change throughout history. Each declaration displays an awareness of the crucial issues of its own time. There is, nonetheless, an abiding sense that this change and development are simply a process of continual updating and explicating for new circumstances what is a constant body of changeless essentials about human rights. In sum, the perceived roots of human rights doctrine in the traditions of Christianity and the ongoing articulation of human rights in each new situation are, for many, a reinforcement of the moral authority of human rights doctrine. At least in theory, human rights are not a product of mere prudential considerations but they are a transcendent norm incumbent upon all. Even those who ground human rights in humanistic philosophy rather than divine revelation would want to say that these rights are somehow self-evident, universally accepted truth that transcends pragmatic impulses to the contrary — witness the presuppositions, hopes and expectations associated with the 1948 United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

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[4] Cited in H. Thielicke, *Theological Ethics,* Vol. 2, ed. W.H. Lazareth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 67.

[5] So, J. Moltmann, "The Theological Basis of Human Rights and of the Liberation of Human Beings." *The Experiment Hope,* ed. and trans. by M.D. Meeks (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 147-157.

[6] "Human Rights: Doing Justice in God's World" The Lutheran Church in America, adopted by the Ninth Biennial Convention, Chicago, Illinois, July 12-19, 1978.

[7] *LFW Report,* p. 54.

[8] E. Duff, *The Social Through of the World Council of Churches* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1956), pp. 276ff.

[9] *Uppsala Speaks* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), p. 63.

Human Rights and Law

However, at the same time that we may speak of human rights as having the moral appeal of transcendent norms or ideals, we need to acknowledge that, in practice, they also have the character of law. That is, despite a nations' or a society of nations' decision to affirm a human rights policy, that policy does not in fact represent the confession of faith or conviction held by and practiced by all its members. Human rights, by one definition, constitute a minimal norm proclaimed by human societies as a political action designed to protect the freedoms of individuals from the power of the state.[10] Put another way, human rights doctrine is established not simply for philosophical reasons but for the practical purpose of protecting ourselves from ourselves. Thus, we have the irony that the assertion of human rights is at the same time a recognition of human dignity and a recognition of human evil.

As Helmut Thielicke would put the matter, human rights are an emergency measure in a fallen world. When we recognize this, we are not surprised when we see human rights doctrine not only violated as laws are violated daily, but also proclaimed purely for purposes of expediency. As Thielicke says, ". . . there is no guarantee of the constancy of human rights, even though all men should desire them and even though this common will should find expression in written constitutions. For everything depends on the *way* in which men desire them: as ends or merely as means, because they exist or merely because they are useful."[11] In a similar vein, Jürgen Moltmann has asserted that declarations of human rights, ". . . are effective only insofar as there are men willing to take upon themselves the rights and duties of men and stand up for the oppressed for the sake of humanity. The rights of freedom are effective only insofar as there are free men who intercede for the liberation of enslaved men."[12]

Human Rights and Political Reality

These warnings are less than sanguine about the effectiveness of human rights declarations, and there is much evidence to justify such concerns. George Brand recently offered some examples of how political aims compromise human rights policy.[13] One of these involving the Soviet Union illustrates Thielicke's point particularly well. In a desire to obtain Western recognition of the legitimacy of the post-World War II situation in Europe, the Soviet Union took initiatives to convene, with the Western powers, the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe,* the *Final Act* of which was signed by the participants at Helsinki in 1975. The Soviets wanted to gain formal acceptance of the present borders in Europe, including the division

of Germany, and to consolidate Soviet supremacy in Eastern Europe, which they considered vital to their security. In order to achieve such gains, they, in turn, had to agree to Western proposals on human rights. The *Final Act* reads,

> ". . . and to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion;" and, "to promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and other rights and freedoms, all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development."[14]

However, the *Act* also pledged the signatories to a policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the respective sovereign states. It soon became apparent that it was the Soviet intention to use this proviso to limit the operation of the provision on human rights. Thus, the Soviet leadership lashed out at Western leaders for supporting Soviet dissidents and accused the West of violating the non-interference agreements in the *Final Act.* Obviously, the Soviet agreement to the human rights provisions of the *Act* was pure political expediency.

Although we as Americans might be inclined to regard the Soviet position as reprehensible, we might also be inclined to justify the weakening of our own human rights position toward other nations if such concessions appear to prove more advantageous to us than sticking to principles would. Therefore, it might be considered "responsible" to soften our stance on human rights, let us say, to keep detente and SALT alive with Russia for the sake of world peace and United States security.

Such a prudent "ethic-of-ends" approach may have been operative in a recent speech on human rights by New York congressman, Stephen Solarz.[15] Mr. Solarz was quite forthright in his praise of President Carter's renewed attention to human rights. Solarz called for U.S. movement from a position of benign neglect to a position of affirmative action on behalf of human rights in South Africa. He made his case for this on general principles, as well as on the practical ground that a racial war in South Africa could adversely affect relations in our own multiracial society. In addition, he cited his own legislative

[10] Thielicke, 2:231.
[11] Ibid, Vol. 2, p. 68.
[12] Moltmann, p. 152.
[13] H. Brand, "Human Rights: Rhetoric or Reality," *Human Rights: Rhetoric or Reality,* ed. W. Forell and W.H. Lazareth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 10-13.
[14] Ibid, p. 11, note 8.
[15] A speech given to the 7th Annual IMPACT/WISC Briefing on Issues Before the 96th Congress, Washington, D.C., March 12, 1979.

endeavors that would enable us to expand the number of refugees we admit, thereby making some contribution to the spread of human rights. However, despite these affirmations, Solarz was candid in saying that the South Korean situation must be treated differently. As is well known, the Park government in South Korea was guilty of numerous violations of human rights, while yet continuing to receive support from the United States. As lamentable as this may be, Solarz argued, a U.S. pullback in protest would be ill-advised for two reasons. First, based on his own visits there, he was convinced that even the opposition to Park wanted us to continue support, for they feared encroachment from the North even more than the continuance of the Park regime. Second, if we should withdraw from South Korea, it would cause consternation of our ally, Japan, and might even result in the rearming of that nation.

Currently it is illegal to grant military and economic aid to countries who grossly violate human rights unless a) such aid goes to the neediest people, or b) the President believes it to be in the interest of security. The congressman was providing a rationale for why Korea retains its status under the security provision. One might put the best construction on this sort of reasoning by saying that we, as a people, are genuinely committed to human rights *but,* in the push and pull of international politics, we are forced, as are individuals in their personal moral decisions, to choose the lesser of evils. Thus, if a course of action based on human rights policy threatens an even worse human rights situation, we must, tragically, compromise. Such are the agonies of moral decision in an imperfect world. We are not, after all, morally deficient; we are simply victims of circumstance.

The fact remains that much of what happens in our world tends to reinforce Reinhold Niebuhr's thesis in his book *Moral Man and Immoral Society:* the collective will is never as capable as the individual will in desiring and achieving high levels of morality. In order to compensate for this, it is necessary for governments to adopt political policies which would be morally offensive or embarassing to the personal ethic of the individual. In short, don't expect too much from governments and power groups. We can perhaps work with this situation if we have no illusions about it and recognize it for what it is. However, even though compromise may be a tragic necessity at times, when we begin to *justify* such compromise as being somehow moral or above the canons of morality, we risk raising the ambiguity of an evil world to the level of a system, and we are able to justify almost anything.

Human Rights and the Church's Mission

Many Christians have taken Niebuhr's rather pessimistic assessment as addi-

tional evidence to reinforce their position of withdrawal from active participation in the concrete concerns of justice and public policy. Such involvement, it is argued, is outside the proper scope of the church's task and, by its very compromising nature, is an ever-present threat to the integrity of the church's message and mission. People in positions of political and economic power have frequently been all too happy to have the church confine itself to the ghetto of personal spirituality. However, many other church people and theologians, including Niebuhr, have seen it as integral to the church's witness to the world to speak with a clear voice for the cause of justice and human rights and to work toward their implementation on the highest level possible. Indeed, Jürgen Moltmann has suggested that we as Christians should virtually redefine human rights, not in terms of universal ideals, but in terms of our commitment to the liberation of the oppressed.[16]

Human rights belong at the very heart of the church's mission agenda. Christians, individually and collectively, may be described in their mission as "agents of the kingdom of God." What is revealed and promised in the victory of Christ is not simply the salvation of the individual but, more fully, the kingdom of God as the future of history. In the triumphant Christ we have a vision of the ultimate fulfillment for humanity that is part and parcel of the promise of the kingdom. In him we are granted the hope of perfect unity with perfect love, between God and humanity and within humanity. At the same time that we affirm this glorious hope, the crucified Christ reminds us that the world in which we live is still shot through with evil and disunity. It is the church's call and the purpose of its ethics to *anticipate* in the midst of alienation and suffering, the promised kingdom of human fulfillment by seeking *now* for all people those values implicit and explicit in the kingdom promise. Even though our results may seem ever so proximate, we prize every little, fragmentary gain, for it is a vital component of our proclamation of God's grace and salvation. By seeking the values of the kingdom of God, we witness to its coming and help to concentrate in a fuller way its meaning for all people. Among those kingdom values are human rights and the fruits of justice. They are the clear corollary of love's drive to unify the separated, to overcome alienation. In the cross, as a symbol of human brokenness, we view the reality of human sin and are prevented from a starry-eyed, naive vision of changing the world single-handedly. But in the resurrection victory we view the power and resolve of God to establish life and overcome evil, which keep us from despair.[17]

[16] Moltmann, p. 152.

The church has a number of advantages and opportunities, as well as a number of unfulfilled obligations, in the quest for human rights. First of all, the church is a tangible, organized network of structures and relationships. Through its congregations, co-operatives, agencies, auxiliaries and individual members the church joins people in their daily struggles and problems. It is well-placed to develop an understanding of the human situation and to advocate for its needs. It can play a significant role in identifying and updating the shape of human rights as special needs emerge at different times and places.

Secondly, the church is trans-national, multiracial and generally pluralistic in its makeup. This frees it from allegiance to any special interest and provides it with a self-correcting factor within its own membership.[18] Such a situation *should* help the church to be a keener and more honest, if not more effective, proponent of human rights than other agencies. But it must actively seek to overcome its own internal partisanship, racism, class prejudice and sexism.

Thirdly, the universal and pluralistic character of this church, together with the transcendent nature of its Lord and his message, offers it credibility as a representative of the people as a whole, rather than of any political, economic, or ideological power group. Its power is in its powerlessness. But, that is power, nonetheless. Involvement in political matters means *de facto* that one becomes "political." In this we require vigilance in order not to become the unwitting ally of that which we oppose. It is easy for the church to succumb to the temptation to offer itself as the guarantor of human rights and turn the gospel into the servant of a given political ideology.[19]

Fourthly, the church can serve the society in which it finds itself by enabling, whenever possible, the sort of realistic self-criticism which Christian honesty demands. It is easy for us to criticize the abuses of human rights in Russia or Korea or Latin America or South Africa. And we might even be able to make a morally plausible cause for why we don't act more consistently and resolutely in these situations. However, the lie is given to our pretenses to human rights advocacy when we allow our own minorities to suffer economic inequities, when we continue to squander resources essential to life, and when our budget priorities in government spending demonstrate a lack of resolve for human programs at home and abroad. Obviously, the promise of rights and freedoms has a hollow sound if the conditions for sustaining a minimal quality of life don't exist for millions of people. We have the painful task of re-evaluating our own human rights tradition and questioning whether or not our emphasis on the rights and freedoms of the individual has not resulted in an "ethic of selfishness" at the expense of the common good.

Fifth, in our own society the church

has opportunities through its people and organizations to affect the outcome of legislation that serves to implement human rights. This is a logical adjunct to the church's public proclamation.

Sixth, in order to do any of these things effectively at all, the church needs to consolidate its best theological insights so that the struggle for justice and human rights is, after all, an integral part of its mission in the world. Morality and law, love and justice, need to be distinguished but not separated. At least for Christian ethics, morality springs from the total commitment of faith in that which is infinite whereas law is born of a finite situation and can only make limited claims. Morality informs, judges and supports law. Law, in turn, has profound effects on morality. Moreover, the two also have the same end, the good of mankind. For this reason, Christians belong in the arena of public policy. We have made much progress toward that goal but there is a great distance yet to go and a continual need to analyze and evaluate our opportunities and our obligations. Because the nature and extent of the church's participation in social-political concerns is frequently an ambiguous prospect, constructive debate among Christians is inevitable and necessary. In the end, however, we cannot let the ambiguities dictate the terms of mission.

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[17] I have developed the thoughts expressed in this paragraph more fully in my book, *Christian Anthropology and Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

[18] This and the previous point are, in part, points also made by R. J. Niebanck in *Human Rights: Rhetoric or Reality,* p. 40.

[19] Thielicke, 2:68.

Process Theology and Lutheran Priorities

By Lyman T. Lundeen

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Pick up almost any book or article on theology these days and you are likely to run into the term "process." The word might be combined to make expressions like "process thought," "process philosophy," or "process theology." These expressions point to general patterns of thinking and to more technically precise components of contemporary theological discussion. Process can indicate a broad approach to issues, or it can refer to certain individual thinkers or schools of thought. In order even to read contemporary theology, let alone assess the relative importance of various positions, one needs some grasp of the significance of process theology.

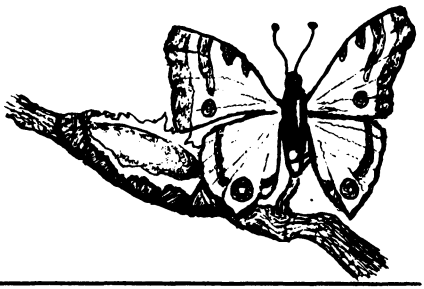
The situation is complicated for most of us by the way theologians tend to load such labels with the freight of strong feeling. Process becomes either a pejorative indication or a sign of affirmation. Oversell and negative prejudice are all too common. As a consequence, a sympathetic understanding requires not only descriptive clarification but also appreciation for the concerns and hopes associated with process.

The purpose of this article is to give initial clarity to this matter and, moving further, to relate process thought to some central Lutheran priorities. Along with other Christians, Lutherans have been interested in the possibilities process offers for the contemporary expression of the gospel. Honest recognition of both the critical and positive reaction to process suggests that a look at the relationship of "process" to an evangelical "theology of the Cross" might be helpful. So let's stand back from some of the leading stereotypes and take an exploratory look at "process."

Process Thought

The use of the term "process" refers initially to our experience of events as dynamic and complex. We live through processes in which interaction, duration and development are all evident. Instead of encountering only finished products in life we are also aware of the ways these factors or products have come into being. Sometimes people have made them; sometimes they are the result of natural and environmental combinations; sometimes historical interactions and developments have been decisive.

In a broad sense "process" simply points to this awareness of the way things occur. It is a common sense reference and does not depend on a great deal of technical sophistication. Process thought puts its emphasis on creative activity rather than on given results. It even applies the same focus to the classical issues of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. "Becoming" is seen as more basic than "being" or "substance." The living, historical, and social features of reality are taken to be fundamental. Process theology involves some acceptance of this stress on becoming as the key feature of human existence, also in relationship to God. Such theology can be seen as



elevating the natural potential for *human* becoming, but it can also move toward more clearly eschatological emphases in which becoming is set in the cosmic context of *God's* reality.

An illustration may be helpful. In group dymanics it has been recognized that the outcome of a meeting has more to it than just the decision or task completed. The way things come about may be exceedingly important, both in making decisions and in the utility of those determinations. People who feel intimidated by a group's process will not have the necessary confidence in the outcome. The result may be resentment and a low investment in following through. So we have "process people" to help us gain a decent balance between the way groups work and the results required. It's just this shift in vision that all process terminology reflects.

One can get a concrete feeling for "process thought" by considering two ways of looking at a motion picture. Much of Western thought has tended to think about the world as a film that could be slowed down. Such a film consists of still pictures combined to produce a sense of movement and continuity. Its separate frames suggest that the complex dynamics of all reality are merely the combination of isolated and unchanging components. This vision of reality could be applied to social groups, history, and the sub-atomic investigation of matter. In every instance, complexity and development reduce to isolated identities. Social groups are made up of independent individuals; history is just a collection of brute facts; matter is understood as constituted of minute particles. Philosophically, reality is conceived in terms of substance.

Process thought looks at the motion picture differently. The single frames are not the ultimate constituents of the picture, but they themselves are the result of events of simplification and stabilization. The still shots can be traced back to activity in which complex and dynamic reality was made manageable; only selected components were reproduced. Photography enables us to stop the movement of life and utilize selected elements for specific purposes. For the process thinker, the moving richness of history with all its connections is always more fundamental than any particles, facts, or individuals that can be wrenched from it. There is simply no way to get at isolated realities that exist without some influence or purpose. So "process" finds reality as a living, changing combination of diverse factors — including intention and values.

Alfred North Whitehead

The key philosophical figure associated with process thought is Alfred North Whitehead, an Anglo-American thinker whose contributions stretch from pure mathematics to metaphysics and social analysis. It is Whitehead who gave a precise historical and conceptual

definition to the more technical uses of process terminology.

Whitehead's main contribution was the emphasis on "becoming," combined with a very sophisticated appropriation of contemporary knowledge. He was able to apply the insights of modern science to the entire range of human experience as no one had done before him. He started by showing how pure mathematics depends on simplification to make calculation fruitful. Moving to the philosophy of science, he was among the first to see the conceptual implications of evolutionary categories and relativity theory. Finally, he developed an interpretation of the whole of reality in his masterpiece, *Process and Reality*.[1]

For Whitehead, evolutionary theory provided ways of thinking in terms of change and interaction. The conceptual model was the living organism, experiencing things from a particular temporal and physical location, but also contributing to the shape of the future. The result: anticipation is a basic ingredient in the present. Whitehead used evolution to view the moving, creative thrust of our experience, but it would be wrong to see him as naively optimistic. For Whitehead, as for many contemporary evolutionary thinkers, change does not necessarily mean change for the better. Instead, evolution implies that random events can lead to either progress or decline. There is a risk in evolution since certain aspects of reality are unpredictable and inexplicable in scientific terms.

What is decisive in Whitehead's use of evolutionary theory is his claim that reality is always hurling up genuinely new creations in its own history. Novelty is a feature of both mundane and sophisticated experience. "Becoming" is the bearer of life. Each moment and every perspective on the process add new elements of continuing significance.

Whitehead's philosophy is pluralistic because it affirms the importance of particulars enmeshed in a unified process. Yet relativity theory leads Whitehead to stress the network of connections in life and the necessity of partially exclusive points of view. All of our experience emerges in a web of relationships which allows no neutral ground on which to stand. One cannot get outside the process of becoming to look at it with a completely objective eye. Such involvement reflects historical and physical location, but also a type of selection. Whitehead views everything as alive and value-oriented even though not necessarily conscious or thoughtful. Built into the relativity of the universe is a dimension of importance.

Evolution and relativity combine, for Whitehead, to illuminate the social and historical character of reality. The process of change in relationships becomes a way of thinking about any aspect of experience. This approach has a definitely holistic thrust, pulling together factors that Western thought has often separated.

First, process thought puts physical and mental relationships together. The physical is given priority as it defines the location of any experience. There is no way to deal with reality without taking bodily factors into account because they make thinking and expression possible.

Secondly, "process" ties feelings and thought together so that no data can be totally separated from emotion and value. Facts and ideas are always shaped by a particular perspective. It is within certain relationships, circumstances, and communities that relevance is "felt."

Thirdly, Whitehead's view puts the particular and the universal together. In dealing with a part, one is forced to take some posture toward the totality. Conversely, the parts offer more or less helpful clues to the nature of the whole. Some features of reality may be disclosed equally in all particulars, but the emphasis on novelty implies that selected particulars will illuminate divergent features.

It is this emphasis on the whole of reality and its anticipated reflection in unique events that open up Whitehead's thoughts for serious appropriation by Christian thinkers who have a similar appreciation of decisive historical events in which the meaning of the universe and the purpose of its Creator are revealed. So, too, the holism of Whitehead suggests possible parallels with the biblical concern for the whole person and for the "meaning" of the whole of life.

It is in this context that Whitehead himself interpreted religion. Indeed, his view of reality as fundamentally historical and social was profoundly influenced by religious insights. He was not restricted to his acquaintance with math and science. As a philosopher he found it necessary to talk about God as a factor in all the processes we have been describing. He took the religious dimensions of human life as reflections of the real influence of purpose and value. As a consequence, he wedded his philosophy to an idea of God which has been both an embarrassment to some of his philosophical followers and an attraction for theological appropriation. Faith for him is not primarily a deceptive, superficial, or primitive expression, but a profound reflection of the deepest dimensions of the process of becoming.

Whitehead treats God as limited in some respects. The limitation of God is goodness.[2] He shapes a universe where some freedom is always a factor. In that sort of world God is vulnerable to feeling the world's struggle even though there is no way for God to be superseded or destroyed. So, becoming is an aspect of

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[1] A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960.) A critical edition of the 1929 text is being published this year by Macmillan Publishing Company.

[2] A.N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1960), 147.

God's reality, too. God experiences the world and its history. God influences the world, but the world also has some impact on God.

Whitehead explicitly sets this understanding of God against some aspects of the theological tradition. He is critical of those who treat God as a static, self-sufficient reality immune to any influence from outside himself. At this point one can see Whitehead on the side of the Hebrew-Christian emphasis on a living God, or one can worry that in his criticism of traditional notions of divinity Whitehead has adopted an inadequate understanding of God.

Charles Hartshorne

Process theology develops Whitehead's conception of God. A key figure here is Charles Hartshorne.[3] He interpreted process themes around theological concerns and has influenced many process thinkers. Hartshorne stresses God's perfection as his supreme relatedness, rather than his isolated self-sufficiency and immutability.

Hartshorne tends to put great weight on logic and may give a kind of scholastic twist to the entire Whiteheadian scheme that is hard to find in Whitehead himself. Whitehead put forward his metaphysics as a kind of provisional pattern of thought, to be checked against further experience, and modified as required. Some of his followers have wanted to develop a more exact and definitive system. This leads them into more argumentative and imperialistic styles as they try hard to show how process thought can be the last word in philosophical discussion.

Many of the so-called improvements in Whitehead's system stem from the directions indicated by Hartshorne. In a number of cases it is just these "improvements" that raise specifically Christian concern. For example, Whitehead has God not only exemplifying the fundamental conditions of reality but also establishing them in a primordial decision. Some process thinkers want to modify Whitehead just at this point, making God strictly limited by the metaphysical conditions. When this happens, the process approach becomes extremely confining with respect to God, and its elaboration in philosophical terms takes on a similar finality.

One gets a sense for Hartshorne's role by noting the posture of Lewis Ford. Ford sees subtle and important differences between Whitehead and Hartshorne and says: ". . . where they differ I find myself siding with Whitehead."[4] It should be apparent that process thought includes a variety of positions. One cannot simply evaluate process thinkers in a monolithic manner, just as one would not want to give *all* existentialist thought a kind of sanctified or threatening role with respect to Christian theology.

Weaknesses?

We have noted several points at which theologically concerned Christians might be critical of process thought. Perhaps it would help to summarize some of these critical concerns.

First of all, just because it is explicitly philosophical, process thought runs into suspicion. Concerns that rational speculation will take over the normative role of the gospel cause many people to turn from any philosophical approach as an inherent enemy of theology. Here one needs to remember the difference between autonomous philosophy and the use of philosophical reflection in the service of faith. The diversity of process thought needs to be taken into account. While one theologian, influenced by process, may be in danger of subjecting the faith to alien norms, another can utilize philosophical resources in a way that is quite responsible.

A second major concern about process thought has to do with its general commitment to view God as somewhat limited and even changing. Certainly if process thought makes God a victim of the process in the same way that we are, then some features of the gospel have been undermined. However, not limiting God can itself be an anti-Christian motif. The Neo-Platonists were experts at setting God so far above all human limits that no conceptual or linguistic specifics could apply. The major thrust of Greek philosophy tended to make the permanence and immutability of God decisive factors without dependence on Christian revelation. So even apart from process thought Christian theologians have felt compelled to distinguish the "living" God from the "static" god of the philosophers. The process emphasis on change and limitation in God can be seen as doing something similar. In the end, the Christian faith has an important stake in a definite God who is *this* and not *that.* In this sense, the process approach does not simply diverge from Christian themes, but may represent some of them in an explicit philosophical form.

A third question about process follows from its pervasive emphasis on change. Is this type of thought so relativistic that no truth can be discerned, revealed or held? If everything is grasped from some limited point of view, how can any claim to knowledge be dependable? The point of process thought is that there is adequate stability in the midst of change. An emphasis on relativity need not lead to scepticism. Einstein's theories certainly enabled scientists to know and do more. Similarly, Luther's stress on a

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[3] Important representative works would include: *Reality as Social Process* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1953) and *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1962).

[4] *The Lure of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), x.

knowledge of God given only relationally *(pro me)* is obviously effective in the life of faith.

God In Process Thought

In order to show why certain Christian and even Lutheran theologians are interested in process thought let me follow through on the way God can be seen as a factor in process views. Whitehead introduces God into his philosophy as the reality in which all definiteness and possibility are grounded. God sets the conditions for all other realities. God is a factor in every moment of the "process of becoming." Whitehead calls this general involvement of God his "primordial nature." It is God considered in the most general fashion. In this sense God makes it possible for anything to be something in particular. This aspect of God compares with the very minimal natural theology expressed even by such a critic of philosophy as Luther. *That God exists* is somehow a factor in everything. *What God is* remains open and must be disclosed in specific experiences. In no way does a general discernment of God, for Whitehead or for Luther, allow us to fill in the content of his disposition toward us or the particular vision of purpose that he offers.

Moving from God's primordial nature, Whitehead indicates that any specific view of God needs to rest on particular experience. Some events must be taken as decisive clues to God's nature, intent, and character. Since all human interpretations are made from some point of view, the risk of understanding God on the basis of a limited sample is necessary. In this way, the process involvement of God in nature makes some response to him essential. The issue then, even in Whitehead's thought, becomes a question of inadequate, distorted views of God or claims that are authentic and dependable. Already one can see parallels with the framework in which Christians develop their focus on the particularity of Jesus.[5] God is a generic feature of all human experience, but this general view of God is deficient in terms of content. Any claim about the actual nature of God must rest on special events. Secondly, everyone must deal with God no matter what they choose to call this factor. There is no neutral ground with respect to God. In these two respects Whitehead sets up a philosophical perspective in which key Christian commitments can be expressed.

Whitehead speaks of the actual involvement of God in specific contexts as his "consequent nature." This is God reacting to a history that makes a difference to him. It is God influencing the world by direct involvement, sharing in its struggles, suffering, and fulfillment. In technical terms, Whitehead calls this a "dipolar" notion of God. God is both a general factor in reality and a concrete,

living participant. This twofold understanding of God allows stress on both his structuring impact on the world and his persuasive engagement in history. An intriguing comparison is suggested with the biblical God who speaks two distinguishable words of law and gospel.

Process and a Theology of the Cross

It is here that Christian theologians have seen exciting interpretive possibilities. Luther's "theology of the Cross" provides a crucial link. For Luther all people deal with God in some fashion. The decisive issue is whether they find him in the obvious, that which is available to anyone with clarity, or if they find him hidden and at the same time revealed in the particular event of Calvary.[6]

Luther's emphasis on radical incarnation reversed the usual order of understanding Jesus in terms of an already given notion of God to a different approach in which God was to be understood in terms of the human Jesus. In Jesus the general conceptions of God are seen to be misleading. The very suffering of Jesus is an event which calls into question ideas of God which prohibit such historical involvement with the world. A theology based solely on the common features of life gives only a God of glory, power, and wrath. A theology based on the word in Jesus gives a God of victorious love.

Luther knew that philosophy, especially in Aristotle, had exalted an idea of God untouched by history. He saw the specific events of Christ's human life as correcting this erroneous view of God that had dominated much of Western thought. The self-sufficient God, that could neither care nor suffer, had led to self-salvation attempts on the part of humans who would be like this God of so-called "glory." In Jesus another view of God was effective in which God's radical grace becomes the key to his nature. The actual, intimate involvement of God in Jesus led Luther to a view of God's relation to the world that is radically different from that prevalent in much Western theology.

So one can see in Luther — more accurately in the gospel — both the priority of actual, particular historical events and the assertion that God is not strictly beyond all change and vulnerability. God's reality is not contingent on the creation per se, but God's character includes his identification with the world

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[5] See E.W. Gritsch and R.W. Jenson, *Lutheranism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 106: "The Christology of the entire church is an assault on inherited pagan ways of conceiving God and his relation to us; it seeks to interpret the reality of God by what happens with Jesus; by his "flesh," the historical actuality of one man."

[6] "Heidelberg Disputation of 1518." *D. Martin Luthers Werke.* Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimer: 1883-), 1, 361-362.

in suffering.

At the risk of over-simplification here, one can see three reasons why Christians standing in the Lutheran confessional stream might be drawn to insights articulated by Whitehead and other process thinkers.

First, the dipolar, twofold description of God fits the combination of very limited natural knowledge of God and the contrast of special revelation in Jesus. Instead of God being an optional factor in human experience, the issue is whether God is dealt with in terms of law and creation (universally available experience) or gospel (particular dependence on the historical events associated with Jesus). All people live under the experience of limitation that can be treated as God's exercise of power and control. This general knowledge of God is not redemptive. The specific knowledge of God in Jesus transforms our experience of God. The power that God exercises is now seen from a new standpoint. Jesus Christ fills the void of an unknown "abstract" God and transforms the "God of wrath" into a God whose love is so overwhelming that even the wrath and power experiences do not deny that love. So, the framework of a Whiteheadian dipolar God fits this basic contrast in a theology of the cross better than most available options.

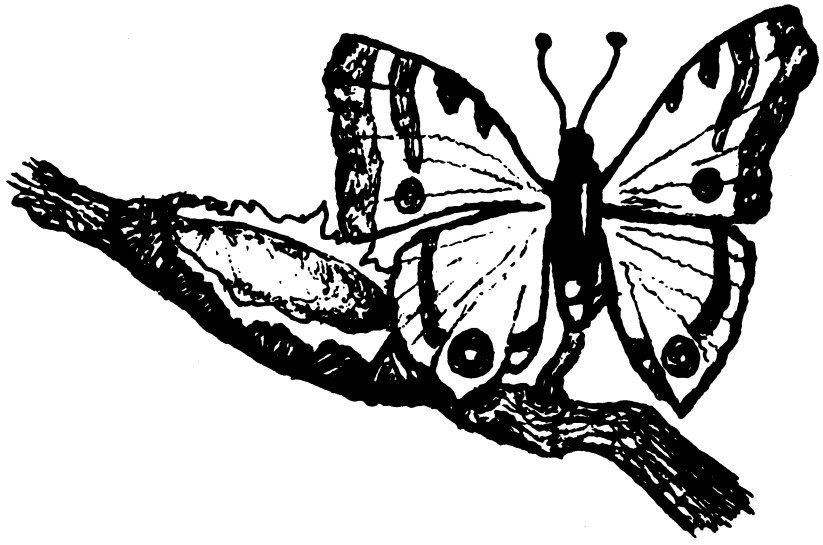
Secondly, the claim of process thought that God's perfection is not his distance from the world but his immanent relatedness also suggests compatibility with the theology of the cross. Obviously, the Lutheran Confessions and Luther himself do not settle the philosophical issue of *how* God can suffer. What they do is assert the suffering of the divine in Jesus and leave it for us to figure out what this does to transform our understanding of God and reality.[7] In most philosophical systems a God who suffers is not God. In process thought there are conceptual resources to help us think through the implications of understanding God in terms of the cross of Christ.

Thirdly, the appreciation in process thought for relational modes of knowledge can help us come to terms with the way a theology of the cross resists once and for all abstract expression. Luther's respect for the mystery of God even in the revelation, his use of paradox, and his elevation of the spoken word all get support from process interpretation. Living truth is what is experienced in human encounters that are always more complex than any expression of them. Whitehead's use of relativity at this point can be seen not as a denial of the truths necessary for faith, but as the insistence that those truths are always known in an actual context. They are not to be found by arguments based on some universal, rational criteria. They are experienced in the middle of the tensions of life, in the movements from the "already" to the "not yet." In this cognitive sense, too, Whitehead's

glimpse of process offers some affinities to the theology of the cross that are highly interesting.

Most process thinkers would see Whitehead as a philosopher and not as a theologian. Personally, I like to call attention to particular philosophical moves Whitehead makes that may have been the consequence of his encounter with the Christian faith. When operating on a very general level, Whitehead sets aside all specific religious convictions to deal with God and reality abstractly. But, since his philosophy sees some bias in regard to particular events and decisions as necessary, when he is pressed to characterize the actual role of God, he turns quickly to the suffering of Jesus, or the tenderness of the Galilean.[8] He claims the superiority of the Christian faith is its roots in particular experiences rather than in abstract principles.[9] He finds in those events associated with Jesus an actualization of the relationship with God which is a powerful and accurate correction to other understandings of God. His emphasis on a God who is patiently working with the creation, limited by his own love, "a fellow sufferer who understands" is one that has a basis much deeper in the gospel than in abstract reasoning or speculative thought.[10] Perhaps this points to why some Lutherans feel free to utilize selected process insights in the service of Christ.

[7] *Formula of Concord.* Epitome. VIII. affirmative 7, 8, and 9; negative 12.
[8] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 520 and 525.
[9] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making,* 50-51.
[10] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 532.



Whose Authority? For What End?

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As those of you familiar with Greek know, the word *exousia,* authority, is derived from the word *exestin* which denotes the "ability to perform an action" or "to be able to." Originally the word denoted the possibility of an action. It was used to describe those guaranteed rights which parents had over their children, which masters exercised over their slaves, which owners claimed over their property — rights granted by the law. It also refers to the authority of kings, judges, priests and prophets. The authority of all these people was derived from God and their authority could only be used legitimately when they acknowledged that fact by their words and deeds.

Authority is valueless apart from the power behind its bearer to make it effective. Hence the distinction between authority and power — although very important — is also fine. Sometimes that distinction is overlooked by Bible translators. On occasion, I myself have used the words interchangeably in this paper. The context of such instances will disclose why.

Nothing in heaven or on earth is done apart from the authority of God. *Exousia* is given to Christ according to his human nature. The authority which Christ received from the Father, he gave to his followers. Thus the Christian community was formed and empowered to act on Christ's behalf. The legitimate use of authority will reflect the person and work of the one who is Lord in the kingdom of God.

A Journey Into God

A quest for the nature of legitimate authority is a quest for God. The famous writer Anonymous once stated, "Every man would like to be God if it were possible; almost all find it difficult to admit the impossibility."

Perhaps a story will illustrate the point.

> A man stands in front of a desk with his hands tied behind his back. You can see that he has been roughed up a little. His upper lip is absurdly puffed out and one eye is swollen shut. He looks unwashed and smells unwashed. His feet are bare — big, flat peasant feet, although the man himself is not big. There is something almost comic about the way he stands there, bent slightly forward because of the way his hands are tied and goggling down at the floor through his one good eye as if he is looking for something he has lost, a button off his shirt or a dime somebody slipped him for a cup of coffee. If there were just the two of them, Pilate thinks, he would give him his carfare and send him back to the sticks where he came from, but the guards are watching, the fat, powdered face, the toothy imperial smile, so he goes through the formalities.

"So you're the king of the Jews," he says. "The head Jew," because there hasn't been one of them yet who hasn't made that his claim — David come back to give Judea back to the Jews.

The man says, "It's not this world I'm king of," but his accent is so thick that Pilate hardly gets it, the accent together with what they have done to his upper lip. As if he has a mouthful of stones, he says, "I've come to bear witness to the truth," and at that the procurator of Judea takes such a deep drag on his filter tip that his head swims and for a moment he's afraid he may faint.

He asks it half because he would give as much as even his life to hear the answer; and half because he believes there is no answer. He would give a good deal to hear that too because it would mean just one thing less to have to worry about. He says, "What is truth?" and by way of an answer the man with the split lip doesn't say a blessed thing. Or else his not saying anything, that is the blessed thing. You could hear a pin drop in the big, high-ceilinged room with Tiberius grinning down from the wall like a pumpkin, that one cigarette a little unsteady between the procurator's yellowed fingertips.[1]

The truth stands before Pilate with a swollen eye. It is too late for words. The truth that Jesus Christ is cannot be stated. He simply is. Under the gaze of the Roman overlord, Pilate rises to his finest moment. "I find no crime in him," he tells the Jews. Having fulfilled his duty to Roman justice he seeks to placate the Jews by scourging Jesus, by having him roughed up some more, by humiliating him with purple robes and a crown of thorns. Surely the people have a sense of humor, he imagines, and Christ's tortured and emaciated figure will strike their funny bone. Then he can return his attention to his vacation plans.

But the stubborn crowd will not let him off the hook. "Use your authority. Crucify. him," they cry. If this fellow knows what truth is, maybe he has some idea about how to save his own neck, Pilate reasons. Now bent and bleeding, the peasant looks forlorn in the prelate's presence. Pilate feels like a giant. He fires questions in rapid succession, "Who are you really?" "From where do you come?" Silence. There is nothing to hear but the roar of silence. "You won't speak to me? Don't you know I have the authority to release you? More importantly — don't you know I have the power to kill you? Answer me!"

The head with the dirty blood-matted hair raises and with incredible effort a part of the truth is spoken: "You would have no power [authority] over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin." (John 19:11)

Although he had been trying to give up smoking, Pilate lights up immediately. He paces. He walks to the balcony window and tries to be reasonable with unreasonable people. They were only scum — what did they care for his predicament. If only he could be certain that the official portrait of Tiberius Caesar — the one with the toothy smile — was not bugged, he might let the peasant go. But suppose the shouts were heard in Rome, "We have no king but Caesar"? It was too late. Though his arms were too short, he was destined to

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[1] F. Buechner, *Telling the Truth: the Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy and Fairy Tale* (New York, 1977), pp. 12-14.

box with God.

All authority — even secular authority — including pagan Roman power comes from God. It sounds absurd when you place the words of Paul into their historical context: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." (Rom. 13:1) The more imaginative of us look for exegetical loopholes to smooth the cutting edge of the assertion. But all who tamper with the sharp and jagged truth of that statement are mortally wounded by it. The dilemma is solved not by denying that Roman power is God's power but by admitting that George Bernard Shaw had it right when he wrote, "Power does not corrupt man; fools, however, if they get into a position of power, corrupt power." Too bad, that so often we must view God's authority through the distorted lenses of the lives of fools.

When God exercises his authority personally, he is irresistable and his use of authority transcends human judgment. The irresistable authority of God was apparent in Old Testament times. Nebuchadnezzar blessed God with these words, "For his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing; and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What doest thou?' " (Dan. 4:34-35)

The same teaching is found in the New Testament. In his letter to the Roman Christians, Paul claimed that Pharaoh was raised up to demonstrate the power of God. Paul illustrated God's right to do what he did with Pharaoh by citing the example of the authority of the potter who has the right to make from the same lump of clay a beautiful vase or a jiffy john.

The Lord God needs no consultants. He has absolute authority — so absolute that he can afford to keep secrets from us. As the eager little band gathered around Jesus before his ascension, they thought perhaps they ought to know something about the end times. After all, knowledge is power. Their question about how God was going to run things once Jesus was no longer physically on earth was answered, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority." (Acts 1:7)

It is particularly in the eschatological interpretations of world history that we encounter the limitless authority of God. As human history draws to a close, it will be known that God gave the authority to the angel of fire to work destruction on the earth (Rev. 14:18). The pale horse whose rider's name is Death, is given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword, with famine, with pestilence and with wild beasts. (Rev. 6:8)

Even insects are instruments of God's authority in the eschatological interpretation of history. In the last days, locusts will be given authority like the power of scorpions on the earth (Rev. 9:3). Even the unbelievers will know the power of God, though this knowledge will not lead them to conversion. St. John wrote, "Men were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power [authority] over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory." (Rev. 16:9) But God's faithful people will be called out of fallen Babylon prior to its destruction by "another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority." (Rev. 18:1)

In God, right and might are synony-

mous. What more can we say in God's presence than Jude said: "To the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 25)

The Authority of Jesus Christ

Humiliation

It wasn't just that he had big feet and smelled like a peasant. A significant problem with which Jesus lived was that none of the Jews of his day believed in the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth. That Joseph was not the father of Jesus seems not to have been the best kept secret of his day. It probably would not have made much difference if he had kept his nose to the sandpaper. But he fancied himself a teacher and a healer, and it would not be denied that he did notable signs. He acted like a reformer, chasing people out of the temple. It was understandable that a man of his questionable background would desecrate the Sabbath. A "glutton" and "wine bibber" would not hold the law in high regard. But he audaciously told people that their sins were forgiven.

There were many questions which hung over Christ's life but none loomed larger than the question asked repeatedly by all Israel's professional religious: "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" (Mark 11:28)

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was very forthright about the subject. While healing in Jerusalem, John reported, Jesus made himself equal with God (John 5:18). And to his dumbfounded inquirers he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also, the Son gives life to whom he will." (John 5:19-21)

But it must be understood that as a thoroughly human being, he had no authority intrinsically within himself. The authority he exercised was *given* him. His authority was limited by and reflective of his sonship. When Jesus Christ emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of human beings (Cf. Phil. 2), he emptied himself of divine prerogatives. That is clear from what Jesus said of himself from the beginning of his ministry to its end. Do you remember how that agonizing prayer in the garden reflected the givenness of sonship? "Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, since thou has given him power [authority] over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou has given him." (John 17:2)

If Christ's authority was "given" authority, it was nonetheless powerfully apparent. It was the authority given from God the Father that made the difference in the Bible classes taught by Jesus. How different they were from the lectures of the scribes and Pharisees. He taught them "as one who had authority, and not as one of their scribes" (Matt. 7:29) because he spoke the truth when he said, "All things have been delivered to me by my Father . . ." (Matt. 11:27) Jesus was not bound by the cacophony of commentators who could only say what Rabbi ben Ezra said God had done yesterday. As the one to whom authority had been uniquely given, he could recite the very Scriptures themselves and begin his commentary with the word "but." Perhaps the most thrilling words of the Sermon on the Mount are the words,

"But I say unto you . . ."

The Unrestricted Authority of the Son of God

Jesus was true man and he was also true God. One of the great ironies of the divine comedy which ends in our salvation is that the demons had more spiritual insight about Jesus Christ than those who claimed to be sanctified sages. The demonic powers that possessed people knew that when confronted with Jesus, they were in the company of more than a totally human being. The devils were among the first to acknowledge his authority as Son of God. People were amazed that the unclean spirits obeyed him (Mark 1:27, Luke 4:36).

The authority which Jesus possessed as Son of God extended even over the dead. And his incarnation and ministry ushered in the promised final age. "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." (John 5:25-27) That is what Jesus said and that is the way he lived.

The authority of Jesus Christ was not the result of some political bargain struck between himself and God — like the power Pilate exercised in his office as a representative of the Roman government. As authentic Son of God, the one willing to give himself completely for his people, he possessed authority even over his own life and death. Pity Pilate judging the person who spoke in truth, "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power [authority] to lay it down, and I have power [authority] to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father." (John 10:17-18)

The Authority of the Victorious Christ

When Jesus Christ became obedient unto death and resurrection, he resumed the exercise of that creative and universal authority which he had with God in the beginning. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," the post-resurrection Christ claimed. This unrestricted claim to authority, together with the promise of his continued presence, "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:18ff), became the source of the surging power of the church, moving it from isolation to mission.

Peter claimed that baptism saves us on account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ "who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities and powers subject to him." (1 Peter 3:22) The resurrection was a conclusive demonstration of authority over death and all deathly powers, shared by Jesus with all who are baptized into him.

Paul painted the same picture of a risen, glorified Christ who now administers the authority of God. He wrote, "For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority . . . He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him." (Col. 2:10, 15)

We live in an age of fulfillment, when Jesus Christ exercises limitless legitimate authority for the benefit of his body, the church. While we are still a struggling and embattled people we move in agonizing concert toward the one who has already plotted and won the spiritual victory for us. Already we begin to sing with the "loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and the

kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down . . ." (Rev. 12:10)

Satanic Authority

Though Satan is the father of lies, it appears that he spoke the truth when he said to Jesus during the wilderness temptation experience, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory (the glory of the kingdoms of the world); for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." (Luke 4:6, 7)

The authority of Satan and the authority of demonic power — it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the two — are real. The hour of Pilate and the crucifiers which began with the betrayer's kiss and ended with the death of the Son of God is an outstanding example of the authority of demonic power. Jesus said to the chief priests, the captains of the temple and the elders: "Have you come out as against a robber . . . When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power [authority] of darkness." (Luke 22:52, 53) To this very day I shudder to read those words.

In the "not-yetness" of our life in Christ, we must all contend against "the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12) Not only must we contend against such powers but we must be bearers of the gospel to people "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power [authority] of Satan to God . . ." (Acts 26:18) Paul taught that those who were not believers in Jesus Christ, were captive to "the prince of the power [authority] of the air." (Eph. 2:2) Only through the gospel is it possible for us to celebrate that God has *already* "delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son . . ." (Col. 1:13)

The book of Revelation indicates that as the end-time draws to its conclusion, the authority of Satan will be unleashed with more vehemence. Evil authority is compounded in John's vision of a beast rising out of the sea. "And the beast that I saw," John wrote, "was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority." (Rev. 13:1-2)

The beast is "allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months." It is also allowed "to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation . . ." (Rev. 13:7) Yet that beast with all of its authority shall not be able to conquer those whose names have been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life. Nor will those who persevere in Christ be conquered by the second beast of whom it is said, "It exercises all the authority of the first beast . . . It works great signs . . . It deceives those who dwell on earth." That beast, of course, is the one whose number is 666. (Rev. 13)

If its number was the sum of the name of Neron Caesar in John's day, if its number was associated with the papacy by Lutheran commentators of the past, if today its number is equated by some with atheistic Communism, I can only assure you that the number 666 will have relevance in the future as well. Our only hope and consolation is that Satan's authority is God-given authority. Satan

is judged; the deed is done. The kingdom ours remaineth.

The Authority of the Christian Community

The Christian Church owes its existence and its nature to Jesus Christ. Christ brings the kingdom of God to people and apart from him, we cannot enter into it. "To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave authority to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13)

Before Jesus sent out his disciples he gave them authority over all demons and over all diseases (Luke 9:1, Matt. 10:1). Their authority was to be used to proclaim the Kingdom's presence in the person of Jesus Christ, to heal, to raise the dead, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out demons from the demon-possessed.

The compassionate Christ who was so concerned for the suffering of humanity gave authority over sin to his community. The keys to the kingdom of heaven were offered to the disciples with the promise that their actions in forgiving and binding sins would have validity in the heavenly courts (Matt. 16:19, 18:18, John 20:23).

The disciples would be tested concerning their stewardship of God's authority, and servants found faithful in a little would be given "authority" over much (Luke 19:17, Mark 13:34). They learned to curse anyone who came to them saying, "Give me also this authority, that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:19) They would give God the glory when people honored them as gods because of their powerful deeds of healing. They were instructed to have no anxiety when they were brought before the authorities because the one who gave them their authority would teach them what to say before worldly rulers (Luke 12:11).

Apostolic authority was indispensable to apostolic action in the first century of the church's life. Paul spoke of it with great awareness. To the Corinthians he wrote, "For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame." (2 Cor. 10:8) But he wrote like that to forego the necessity for severe action which he was prepared to take upon the basis of his authority. He said, "I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down." (2 Cor. 13:10)

Knowing that they were people of authority, children of power, the post-resurrection disciples could submit to unjust authorities in the name of Christ or they could resist the government for whom they prayed and bear the punishment of worldly authorities for the advancement of the gospel. They did not count suffering as defeat, but as an opportunity to witness to the world for Jesus Christ. When Paul was imprisoned, the whole praetorian guard learned to know Christ. And in the face of death, Paul turned the threat of losing life in this world into a dilemma in which continued life in this world seemed the lesser prize. "To live is Christ. To die is gain." Only people of authority can speak like that. Only people of authority can live like that.

Created Supernatural Powers

There is a special manner in which the word *"exousia"* is used in the New Testament, usually in connection with words like archangels, principalities, and dominions. Here the word seems to indicate cosmic powers which may have some mediating function between God and people. As powers of the created world, on the one hand, they may represent the carnal side of fallen nature, and, on the other hand, they belong to that part of creation which is created in Christ. Paul makes the point that these authorities cannot separate us from God (Rom. 8), nor can they lead us to Christ, who is far superior to them in his exalted state.

In a magnificent passage extolling the supremacy of Christ in the universe and in the church Paul wrote, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities — or authorities — all things were created through him and for him." (Col. 1:15-16)

Paul described Christ's exaltation "Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come . . ." (Eph. 1:21) And in the great resurrection chapter Paul spoke about our own being made alive in Jesus Christ — each in our own order. He concluded with the thought, "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. 15:24-25)

A passage in Ephesians seems to indicate that the church exists not only to proclaim the gospel to the world, but also to the authorities. Paul wrote, "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers [authorities] in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord . . ." (Eph. 3:8-11) The mission of the church, then, is to disclose God's secret to the authorities in heavenly places. This we do as we love, forgive, and heal one another by Christ's authority.

Conclusion

The story is told of a salty old commander who walked into the post headquarters shouting, "I'd like to speak to someone with a little authority around here." "You may as well speak to me, sir," the young recruit responded, "I have as little authority as anyone."

Perhaps it is a misconception about the nature of humility and the essence of the servant role which has led some Christians to live as if they had no authority. All who have been baptized into Jesus Christ have received authority. All who can call Jesus Christ Lord in faith, have great authority. All who eat the body of Christ and drink his blood have as much authority given to them as they shall ever need to conquer life and death.

On the other hand, others within the church seem to exude authority. It squeaks from their shoes as they walk. It flashes from their faces. Their words demand attention. And in their presence all but the foolish show appropriate

honor and respect. They live as if to turn the symbol for the trinity into a square. They act as if they were the author in authority and its sole dispenser.

There is a legitimate authority which we have received from God. Such authority can be used with humility. I speak of our God-given authority to forgive the sins of the penitent and to bind the sins of the impenitent. I refer to our God-given authority to proclaim God's kingdom in Jesus Christ, to heal, to cast out demons, to overcome the world, to preach, to teach, to minister to the poor, to witness to Jesus Christ knowing God makes his appeal through us, and above all, to live in unity with one another.

We use God's authority legitimately when our actions and words are reflective of the Spirit of Christ within us. We use God's authority legitimately when we freely limit our exercise of freedom so as not to put a stumbling block in the path of people God seeks to save. We use God's authority legitimately when we *edify* and build up the body of Christ.

Strictly speaking, *all authority,* since it is God's authority, is legitimate authority. We need that wisdom which is from above to use the legitimate authority of God in a legitimate manner. Once we accept the fact that we have authority from God, it is the imitation of Christ that must become our consuming passion.

In closing, I shall share one quotation from Robert Greenleaf. He applied his understanding of legitimate power and greatness to many institutions in our world, including church bodies.

> The Catholic Church in the United States is a minority religion, but I regard it as, potentially, our largest single force for good. It fails to realize its potential for good in the society as a whole because, I believe, it is seen as predominantly a negative force. The issues on which the Church is in opposition, such as birth control, abortion, euthanasia, divorce, and Communism, are specific and precisely defined, and the actions of the church are vigorous and sustained. The issues on which the church is affirmative, such as peace, justice, and charity, are broad idealistic generalities and the actions are sporadic and imprecise . . . One must oppose those things that one believes to be wrong, but one cannot *lead* from a predominantly negative posture. One can lead an institution or a total society only by strong, specific, sharply aimed affirmative actions.[2]

If a church body is to exercise legitimate authority in God's world, it must strive to keep the gospel of Jesus Christ central in its life and teaching. Furthermore, it must not allow negative emphases to put stumbling blocks in the paths of people whom God wants to save through us. And in addition, it must use its authority to alleviate the suffering of all people.

For me, it remains a part of the miracle that the authority of God and of his Christ, is *ours* to use and to abuse. What love! Personally, my most satisfying experience of the authority of God continues to happen in the context of the Holy Communion, when in the stead of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I forgive the sins of penitents and am myself forgiven by my sisters and brothers in Christ. Each Lord's day, I marvel with the crowds of Jesus' time, that God gives such authority to people.

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[2] R.K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York, 1977), p. 236.

Infant Communion
Part I: The Historical Practice

by David L. Pearcy
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Raise the subject of infant communion and immediately there are strange looks and strong feelings expressed. If the historical practice of the church is mentioned, and it always is, the arguments are frequently casual, sweeping and parochial. As a first step in our examination of infant communion, therefore, we must ask what in fact has been the church's attitude toward this practice, and when and why was it discontinued.

Infant communion was the practice of the church catholic for over a thousand years and continues to be the practice of the Eastern Church. E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 1970) and J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West* (London: SPCK, 1965) provide two of the best collections of documents related to the practice of infant communion. The Whitaker collection reveals that the rites and practice of Christian initiation in the early Church almost always included a progression of baptism, anointing (with laying on of hands), and first communion. It is important to note that for several centuries the rite of initiation was seen as a single event consisting of several actions. The anointing and laying on of hands, which only much later became known as confirmation, were not seen as a separate event. The anointing was considered a baptismal rite, while the laying on of hands took place before the eucharistic altar. There was no sense of moving from one separate rite to another, as is demonstrated by Jessie of Amions (c. 800): "Last of all the [baptized and anointed] infant is confirmed with the body and blood of Christ, that he may be a member of him who suffered for him and rose again." Although the early rite is often referred to as a three-fold rite, it actually was a single rite of initiation. Even letters and sermons on the subject of baptism end by discussing participation of the newly baptized in the sacred meal of the eucharist. In fact, about ninety-five percent of all the baptismal documents collected by Whitaker conclude with the eucharist.

Without becoming entangled in the debate between Joachim Jeremias and Kurt Aland on the origin of infant baptism, it can be stated that infant communion is linked to the increased practice of infant baptism in the early part of the third century. Two of the earliest documents available on Christian worship, the Didache (c. 100) and the First Apology of Justin Martyr (c. 160) refer to the eucharist as following or concluding the rite of initiation. For the first several centuries the question was not one of determining whether communion followed baptism since it almost always did. Rather, the question was: how old was the person going through the baptismal-eucharistic initiation?

In North Africa (c. 250), a certain Bishop Fidus voiced the opinion that

parents should put off the baptism of infants until the eighth day, because of the Old Testament pattern of circumcision. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage at that time, referred the question to a synod of over sixty bishops representing the whole of Christian Africa. This Council of Carthage unanimously decided that no one should wait until the eighth day, but that babies of Christian parents should be baptized immediately. From this, it followed that children would not undergo any formal preparation for the rite of initiation. Cyprian, in his letter to Januarlius, pointed out that the second element of the initiation, anointing, took place within the eucharist; and from his work *De Lapsis 9,* we further learn that it was customary to admit little children to communion. In the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, it is obvious that infants participate in an initiation rite which appears to be addressed to adults. The instructions direct children to answer for themselves if possible, and through a parent or other family member if they cannot. The rite here concludes with the eucharist. St. Augustine, in his letter to Boniface, discusses the baptism of infants. "For we ask the sponsors who bring the children, and say, 'Does he believe in God?' And although the child is of an age when he does not even know whether there be a God, they reply, 'He believes.' "

St. Augustine clearly states, in *Sermano 174,* that infants are brought to baptism because it confers spiritual grace, as do confirmation and communion. All three rites are seen as the realm of *God's* activity, requiring no preparation by the infant. If infant baptism was not the common practice of the church in the late fourth century, it surely was nearly universal by 425, the end of the acute Pelagian controversy. Since infant baptism was part of the three-fold rite of initiation, infant communion was also nearly universal at this time. In John the Deacon's letter to Senarius, written in Rome (c. 500), he says, "all these things [of the rite of initiation] are done even to infants, who by reason of their youth understand nothing."

The practice of infant communion continued unhindered until the eleventh century. Two major developments ultimately brought about the decline of infant communion: first, the development of a new eucharistic piety; and secondly, the dismembering of the three-fold rite of initiation.

The dismembering of the three-fold rite of initiation actually had nothing directly to do with the communion of children, but with the meaning and practice of the post-baptismal anointing and the laying on of hands. The central issue was the insistance that only the bishop should anoint or confirm the newly baptized. Since it was only within the Western Church that bishops maintained this prerogative, it was only within the West that the rite of initiation broke down into separate elements. Even when anointing was delayed until a bishop arrived, infant communion remained unaffected. If no bishop was available, infants were communed immediately after their baptism and confirmed when a bishop was finally found.

The use of the Roman rite, with its restriction of confirmation to the bishop, created many problems as it came into use throughout Europe. While Italy enjoyed a relatively large number of bishops, they were scattered so thinly elsewhere that even an annual visit was precluded. Episcopal sees often remained unoccupied for three and four years, and even when filled, the bishops were often not always diligent in their visita-

tions, a practice condemned by several councils. The infrequent visitation of the bishop, for whatever reason, led to the depreciation of confirmation. Several councils throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries warned against the neglect of confirmation and even threatened parents and priests alike with punishments and fines if children were not confirmed by a certain age. The intent was to keep the interval between baptism and confirmation as short as possible. Each council chose an age by which time confirmation should have taken place, varying from one to seven years of age.

The Council of Cologne (in 1280) took the seven year pattern and reversed it from "not later than seven" to "not before seven" years old. The reason for this change is believed by many to have been due to the large size of the diocese. The Cologne rule of "not before seven" became widespread in the sixteenth century.

In 1281, the Council of Lambeth, under the leadership of Archbishop Pechham, responded to the neglect of confirmation when it was discovered that many people had grown old without receiving it. A new regulation was established that no person could be admitted to the eucharist unless they had received confirmation. The obvious intent was not to prevent anyone from communing but to insure that everyone received confirmation. This regulation, however, found its way into the Sarum Manual and eventually into the Prayer Book of 1662. The Constitution of the Church of Lucca, in 1351, offers an interesting contrast to the Peckham solution and demonstrates that the real concern was neglect of confirmation, not the achievement of a certain age, level of physical maturity or mental capability. Under penalty of excommunication, the clergy were to warn parents to insure the confirmation of their offspring, whether they were still infants or mature adults. The trend, in any case, could not be reversed and the interval between baptism and confirmation continued to lengthen, while the interval between birth and baptism became shorter.

About the eleventh or twelfth century, a new eucharistic piety began to express itself in a realistic understanding of the eucharistic elements. Apparently the concern was not with "worthy participation," but rather with a scrupulosity in dealing with the physical elements of the eucharist.

Several new developments occurred, almost simultaneously. First, children were communed only from the chalice *(sub specie sanguinis)*. The doctrine of concomitance (the whole Christ was present under one kind) allowed the church to continue communing infants only with wine, which the infant could ingest much easier than the bread. By the twelfth century, the practice of intinction became established wherein the presbyter would dip his finger into the wine and then place it into the infant's mouth. When the chalice was finally withheld from the laity, it meant that infants no longer could receive communion at all, since the church had become accustomed to communing infants only under the form of wine. The conclusion was simple: no wine, no communion for infants. Infant communion, at least as a common practice, disappeared in the Western church during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Fisher documents several instances which attest to the continued practice of infant communion in spite of all the obstacles. It was not until the Council of Trent that infant communion came to a

complete end. While denying that infant communion was necessary for salvation, Trent disputed those who contended that the practice was useless or ineffectual. The Council declared that infant communion was only inexpedient. Had this settled the matter completely, there would have been no need for the Council of Narbonne to make a similar statement in 1609.

The competence of children to commune was not seriously questioned until practical problems and a specific type of eucharistic piety made it undesirable for children to be confirmed and communicated in infancy. Until then, the children were prepared for the full rite of initiaton by prayer, exorcism and blessings. Even Thomas Aquinas believed that the measure of maturity was in the laying on of hands itself.

Confirmation originated in the early church as the post-baptismal anointing and laying on of hands in the three-fold rite of initiation. The Reformation inherited confirmation, not as a post-baptismal anointing, but as a maturity rite for seven year olds which had come to stand as a prerequisite for first communion. Martin Luther, who questioned the dominical and biblical basis for confirmation, held the rite in very low esteem but used it to emphasize preparation for first communion.

It would appear that the confirmation issue has nothing to do with the question of infant communion in American Lutheran circles since confirmation has been removed as a prerequisite of first communion and given a new definition. The 1970 Report of the Joint Commission on the Theology and Practice of Confirmation, approved by the LCA and ALC in the same year, simply transferred all the "baggage" of confirmation to preparation for first communion. This report consistently refers to the "child's own level of understanding" and offers several examples of what it means by the level of understanding necessary for communion: 1. At his own level the child understands and celebrates the sacrificial life of Christ, his death, resurrection and ascension. 2. He must have a simple acceptance of the words and promises of Jesus at the institution of the sacrament. 3. He understands, at his level, what God wills for him and his own failure in keeping it. 4. The child is aware of and appreciates the life we share in Christ. 5. The child recognizes that God's words of forgiveness in the sacrament give him strength for daily living. 6. The child receives the sacrament with the expectation of one day seeing his Savior, anticipating this event with joy in the eating and drinking.

That a ten-year-old child should understand all this indicates that the report expected a great deal of children. Even granting that a concern for cognitive understanding and the transmittal of information may be a healthy development does not resolve the difficulties revealed here. To have even a minimal understanding of the sacraments implies grasping a number of abstract concepts such as church, sacrament, and community, that may be beyond the comprehension of a ten year old and probably beyond a fourteen year old as well.

The contrast between the present requirements for first communion and other historic practices raises many questions. Are we using non-biblical, intellectual requirements to preclude infant communion? How far can the church go in its educational emphasis before faith becomes intellectualized? How is the church to exercise its formational responsibility without doing

violence to the bibilical and patristic understanding of baptism and eucharist?

The history of the Church provides no easy answers to the concerns and issues surrounding the question of infant communion, but it does provide a perspective and insight with which these issues might be seriously addressed.

The next installment will discuss some of the basic problems which seem to stand against the practice. A third article will deal with the reasons in favor of recovering the practice of infant communion. — ed.

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The Rural Prophet: Micah

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The form of this article will be an interview with an imaginary person interested in learning about the book of Micah. In the course of the conversation that person and I will discuss issues of importance in the current understanding of the book.

During what kind of time did the prophet Micah live?

Micah 1:1 places the prophet in the reigns of the Judean kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This period extends from 742 to 687 B.C. Although Micah probably did not prophesy during this entire period, his message fits well within it. Since 1:5 is directed against Samaria, Micah must have begun his work before 722, when the capital of the northern kingdom fell. Jer. 26:18 corroborates that he prophesied in the time of Hezekiah.

Micah lived during a tense time. Prior to the reign of Ahaz over Judah, Micah's homeland had prospered, but the wealth had been concentrated in the hands of a few. Particularly the poor farmers were often oppressed and unjustly treated.

During the reign of Ahaz (735-715), conditions worsened in Judah. Ahaz became an ally of Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian emperor, at the price of an enormous tribute. Tiglath-pileser conquered Syria in 732, and his successors destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722. Judah felt insecure knowing that she might be the next victim. In addition, idolatry became widespread in the country and economic problems were increasing.

Judah's next king, Hezekiah, was one of its best rulers. He carried on a gradual reform of the nation, combatting the idolatry which Ahaz had encouraged, including the worship of the Assyrian gods. In the eyes of the Assyrians, repudiation of their gods was political revolt — precisely what Hezekiah intended. The Assyrians could not let this revolt go unrequited. In 701 and possibly again in 688, Sennacherib attacked Judah. On one of these occasions, the Assyrian army was stopped miraculously, possibly by an epidemic, and it returned home.

Where was Micah during this time of turmoil?

According to Micah 1:1, Micah was from a town called Moresheth. Modern scholars identify this place with Moresheth-gath in the hill country of Judah, twenty-two miles southwest of Jerusalem. Moresheth was near the border between Judah and Philistia, open to attack from the south or west. Micah's message shows the international concern and the fear of invasion typical of a border dweller. Micah's location also made him a man of the country, and so his message reveals a rural outlook. It is unlikely that he was a professional prophet (cf. 3.8). We have no evidence about what he did for a living but he

may have worked the land like his neighbors.

Even if Micah began prophesying in Moresheth, it is likely that he went to Jerusalem and did most of his speaking there. Jer. 26:19 suggests that his preaching influenced Hezekiah, who ruled in Jerusalem. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah though there is no evidence that they ever met.

Does all of the material in the book of Micah come from the preaching of the prophet himself?

Knowledge of the outline of the book is helpful in answering that question. The book alternates sections of threat and promise: 1:1 to 3:12, except for 2:12-13, threat; 4:1 to 5:15 promise; 6:1 to 7:7 threat; 7:8-20 promise.

In the 1880's Bernhard Stade argued that although most of chapters 1 to 3 was traceable to Micah, none of 4 to 7 came from him. Critical scholars generally followed Stade's conclusions in the following years. Today most scholars have modified Stade's position. Some believe that the threat sections (1:1-2:11, 3:1-12, 6:1-7:7) are from Micah but that the promise sections (2:12-13, 4:1-5:15, 7:8-20) are later additions.

One reason used to support these conclusions is that the seriousness of the threats would be watered down by the addition of promises. Would the hearers have been moved much by the threats if they knew that the threats were temporary? This does not seem to be a convincing reason to question whether the promise sections are from Micah. Micah's threat of the decimation of the population would have been weighty even if he added promises for the time when the decimation was over.

A stronger reason for challenging whether Micah spoke the promise sections is that there are expressions in those sections which would have been more comprehensible for later readers than for the hearers of Micah. The mention of a fallen Jerusalem (4:8), the gathering of the exiles (4:6-7, 5:7-9), and the rebuilding of the walls (7:11) presupposes an exilic audience. Since Assyria was the major threat in Micah's day, why would he talk about Babylon as the place of exile (4:10)? The expectation of the first destruction of the nations (4:8-14) or an influx of the nations to Jerusalem (7:12) became much more common after the exile. Followers of Micah may have added these sections when they were more relevant.

What is the message of the parts of the book which most think come from Micah?

Micah proclaimed the judgment of God against his country. Judah was the scene of social oppression where the higher classes took advantage of the lower classes. The rich deprived the less fortunate of their fields, homes, and even their clothing (2:2, 8-9). Bribery (3:11, 7:3) and false weights and measures (6:10-11) were devices used to cheat the poor. The political and religious leaders of the people condoned the actions of the rich and took part in the oppression (3:1-3, 9-11).

But such immorality did not dampen the country's enthusiasm for "religion." Prophets were in demand but only those who comforted people without reproaching them (2:6, 3:5). The people were happy to bring sacrifices but they had no desire to change their everyday lives (6:6-8). Why should they? They were God's people and he would surely protect them (3:11).

In the face of this false security, Micah warned the people of God's impending

judgment. One day soon, Jerusalem, the center of their life, would be a heap of ruins (3:12).

What are some of the ways that Micah conveyed this message?

The beginning of the book of Micah takes the form of a lawsuit (1:2-9), which pictures God bringing his people to trial for their transgressions against him. The lawsuit begins with a summons to the witnesses: the people of the earth and God (v. 2). But God has another role here too — he is also the accuser. Micah pictures God coming out of his heavenly temple and trampling through the earth on his way to the trial. The mountains melt and the earth trembles under his feet. At the trial God announces his accusation: The center of sin in Israel is its capital of Samaria. The center of sin in Judah is its capital Jerusalem (following the Septuagint). Micah, the rural prophet, can proclaim this accusation on the basis of first-hand information. He has been among the poor people of the country who have suffered at the hands of the rich of Jerusalem. Following this accusation, God's judgment is announced: Samaria will be destroyed (vv. 6-7). The section ends with a lament by Micah (vv. 8-9). He bemoans the fact that Samaria's disease has infected Judah. Judah is becoming as corrupt as her northern sister.

Micah again uses the lawsuit form effectively in 6:1-8. He begins again with an appeal to the mountains as witnesses (vv. 1-2). God's accusation of the people is that they have forgotten the significance of his past saving acts for them (vv. 3-5). After the accusation, Judah replies to God with questions (vv. 6-7). Judah asks whether vastly increased offerings will please God. Then the prophet replies (v. 8). God's primary concern is not sacrifice, but religious and moral faithfulness. Micah sums up such faithfulness in three phrases that recall the primary themes of three former and contemporary prophets. Judah is to do justice, as Amos urged. She is to love the idea of being faithful in her love, which was the major theme of Hosea. And she is to walk humbly with her God, showing the faith called for by Isaiah.

I would also like to know more about the promise sections of the book of Micah. What is the message of those parts of the book?

The promise sections assume that Judah has been punished, as Micah predicted. Once the punishment is over, there is hope of good for the future. Judah will dwell in her own land with Mount Zion as the center of her life (4:1-2, 7). She will be a victorious people, overcoming the enemies of the past and the countries attacking her in the future (4:10-13). She will be an extensive nation again, as she was in the golden days of King David (4:8, 5:5). After all of her trials of war, she will be a country at peace (4:3, 5:4).

In that glorious time God will restore Judah as his covenant people and his law will again be central in her life (4:2). A king like David (the messiah) will come and be the shepherd of God's people.

Would you say a little more about this book's expectation of the messiah?

The primary passage dealing with the Messiah is 5:2-4. It addresses "Bethlehem Ephrathah" and says that a ruler will come from that town. Bethlehem was the boyhood home of the greatest king of Israel's past, David. When the ideal king of the future arrives, he will come from David's town. God has given up on David's royal

descendants, but is willing to go back to Bethlehem and start over again.

When Matthew quotes this passage and applies it to the birth of Jesus (Matt. 2:6), he makes a significant change in its wording. Although the book of Micah said that Bethlehem was "little to be among the clans of Judah," Matthew insists that Bethlehem is "by no means least among the rulers of Judah." The Scriptures are important to Matthew, important enough to be quoted as significant promises of the future. But Christ is even more important to Matthew than the Scriptures. Matthew is not bound to the ancient wording of the texts. Because of the decisive importance of the coming of Christ, Matthew can alter the wording of the texts in the light of that crucial event. Bethlehem was little at Micah's time but Christ's coming has made it great.

How can we understand the present shape of the book of Micah?

Recently James Mays proposed a division of the book into two major parts. In 1:2-5:15 a universal audience of all peoples is addressed. Yahweh's past judgment of Samaria and Jerusalem (1:3-3:12) and his coming redemption of Zion and Israel (4:1-5:9) bear witness to the nations and will bring them either to submission (4:1-4) or to punishment (5:10-15). Part II (6:1-7:6) addresses Israel and depicts her as under judgment (6:1-7:6), but also in the presence of the salvation of God (7:8-17) which comes through divine forgiveness (7:18-20).

Others have pointed to alternating sections of judgment and salvation: oracles of judgment — 1:2-2:11, salvation — 2:12-13; oracles of judgment — 3:1-12; salvation — 4:1-5:5; oracles of judgment 6:1-7:7, and salvation 7:8-20. In this canonical shaping, according to Brevard S. Childs, the judgment of which the historical Micah spoke has become illustrative of the continuing plan of God. Judgment and salvation lie in the future as much as in the past. The liturgically shaped materials in 7:8-20 suggest that the community of faith stands between God's judgment in the past and his coming salvation.

What is the relevance of the book of Micah to Christians today?

The book brings a message of judgment and consolation to us, as it did to its first readers. America is as much a scene of social oppression as ancient Judah. Here also the higher classes gain wealth at the expense of the lower classes. The upper and middle classes, who have enough education to use the law, employ it to protect their gains. They fight the use of their taxes to provide relief for the lower classes. But many of the people with money are quite "religious." Like the Judahites, they go to worship regularly, but the ritual does not affect their actions toward society. Why should they get upset about their treatment of poor people today? Some clergy, like some of the prophets, contribute to the problem by preaching only of spiritual values while ignoring social sins. Modern Americans can get distorted ideas of the faith because they hear only an affirming gospel, without relevant demands of the law. Micah calls upon us to repent, to reverse our present actions.

The book also speaks to us in its message of consolation. The awaited messiah has come and has won salvation by his death and resurrection. Through him we have forgiveness for our past oppression of the poor and the power to reverse our actions. Together with the book of Micah we still await the golden

age, but we know that by the action of God one day we shall live in peace. Then there will be full justice for all people.

For further study:

Allen, Leslie C., *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976), an insightful commentary from the "evangelical" camp.

Childs, Brevard S., *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 428-439, an excellent discussion of the issues in dispute and the canonical shape of the text.

Mays, James Luther, *Micah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), the best, full length commentary, with an intriguing analysis of how the oracles from various periods were united into the present book.

Augsburg Confessors
Philip Melanchthon: Controversial Reformer

Kurt K. Hendel

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"No one living is gifted with such talents. He is to be esteemed. God himself will despise anyone who despises this man." With these lofty words Martin Luther expressed his deep admiration and respect for Philip Melanchthon. In spite of Luther's glowing praise, however, Melanchthon has been a controversial figure whose words and actions have not only been opposed but, in fact, despised, especially within his own ecclesiastical community.

Melanchthon was a highly gifted individual. His mind was quick and his intellect critical and incisive. He gained a reputation as a respected teacher whose breadth of academic activity was impressive. As an able linguist he mastered Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Although he was called to the chair of Greek at the University of Wittenberg, he soon lectured also on theology and other subjects. His writings were both extensive and diverse. They include classical grammars; textbooks on theology, psychology, history, physics, ethics, logic and rhetoric; theological treatises; discussions of church government; poetry and much correspondence. Because of his academic accomplishments he has rightfully earned the title *praeceptor Germaniae,* "teacher of Germany." But Melanchthon was not only an academician. He also became the most important theological diplomat and confessional writer among the Lutherans. His irenicism and his ability to articulate matters of faith in a clear, concise and systematic fashion made him the logical choice for this crucial role. In this, and in numerous other ways, he capably complimented the charismatic, creative spiritual leader and publicist of the Reformation, Martin Luther. It was especially his activity as official theologian and diplomat of the Reformation which inspired bitter criticism and has made him a controversial reformer.

Melanchthon's work as negotiator and confessional writer began in earnest at the age of 32 when he accompanied Elector John of Saxony to the Second Diet of Speyer (1529). Melanchthon did not relish his new responsibility: "I was so terrified at first that I almost passed out; it was as if all the miseries of hell would engulf me." While his quiet, somewhat

retiring personality probably never allowed him to be comfortable in the diplomatic and theological limelight, he, nevertheless, was an effective articulator of evangelical theology and a capable representative of the evangelical cause before both the ecclesiastical and the secular communities.

The Diet of Augsburg in 1530 marks the high point in Melanchthon's career as confessor and spokesperson. He was, of course, the main theological voice of the Lutheran party at the Diet. As such, he authored the document which quickly became the normative confessional statement of the evangelical movement and ultimately of the Lutheran Church, the Augsburg Confession. That Confession remains the classic formulation of the evangelical faith, as that faith was articulated by Martin Luther.

On January 21, 1530 Emperor Charles V summoned the Elector John of Saxony to a Diet which was to begin its sessions in April of that year in the imperial city of Augsburg. The main stated purposes of the Diet were to address the problem of the Turk and to deal with the pressing religious issue. With regard to the latter, the opinions of all parties were to be heard and examined and the unity of the faith was to be restored. The Elector was pleased by the conciliatory tone of the imperial invitation and determined to attend the Diet in the company of both secular and spiritual advisors. Luther, of course, had to remain behind in Saxony because he was still under the imperial ban. He, therefore, waited impatiently in Coburg, the area of Saxony closest to Augsburg, while the Diet was in session. Melanchthon was assigned the task of preparing a document which would justify the implementation of the Reformation in Electoral Saxony. At first, this "Apology," as it was referred to initially, was only intended to defend ceremonial changes. The publication of *404 Articles,* a bitter and unfair attack on evangelical teachings by Luther's ardent antagonist John Eck, however, convinced the Lutherans that a careful, precise summary of central evangelical doctrines was also necessary. From April to June, 1530 Melanchthon devoted most of his energies to the composition of what was now envisioned as a confession. He recognized the crucial importance of the proposed document. The Lutheran position had to be faithfully represented, but, at the same time, the Emperor and the Catholic estates could not be alienated further. Therefore, he wrote and re-wrote, refined and clarified what began as a Saxon document but eventually became the common confession of the evangelical estates represented at Augsburg. The final product, which was read publicly before the Emperor and the Diet on June 25, 1530 and presented to Charles both in a German and a Latin version, clearly reflects the personality and the faith of Melanchthon.

The Augustana is a masterful document. It is a precise, lucid and highly effective articulation of evangelical theology. As such it inspired immediate respect and soon achieved confessional status among the Lutherans. The theology Melanchthon summarized in the Confession is clearly and consciously Luther's theology, which was also his own. After he had examined an initial, incomplete draft of the Confession in May, 1530, Luther commented: "I have perused Magister Philip's *Apologia,* which pleases me very greatly. I see no need of changing or amending any part of it; nor should I know how to improve it, for I cannot tread so gently." In later years Luther referred to the Augsburg Confession as "my confession."

Melanchthon intended the Confession to be an irenic one, and he was determined to demonstrate the orthodoxy and catholicity of the evangelical position. Irenicism and catholicity do, indeed, characterize the Augustana and its author. These two seemingly admirable characteristics are also the reasons why Melanchthon became a controversial reformer and inspired so much criticism and animosity. In an age when denominational parochialism and ecclesiastical animosity were rampant, Melanchthon's ideals resulted in suspicion. His willingness to negotiate, his eagerness to listen, his readiness to compromise what he considered to be nonessential or indifferent matters for the sake of the unity of the church were viewed as signs of a lack of conviction and of a readiness to betray true evangelical theology. Melanchthon was sadly aware of the criticism voiced against him within his own ecclesiastical community. Nevertheless, throughout his career he continued his efforts to unite the Catholics, the Lutherans and the Reformed. His conviction of the catholicity and the unity of the church, as well as his innate irenicism, spurred him on.

Melanchthon never compromised what he considered to be the essentials of the evangelical faith. That he did deviate from Luther's theology, especially in the doctrines of the free will and the eucharistic presence of our Lord, must be admitted. Melanchthon was, of course, aware of these developments in his own theology but considered them to be appropriate and defensible. He deeply respected Luther and was grateful for his bold articulation of the gospel. Nevertheless, not even Luther could be the ultimate source and authority in matters of faith. Only Scripture could fulfill that role. As he developed his theology and continued his ecumenical efforts, Melanchthon believed that he continued to explicate and reflect Holy Scripture faithfully. Therefore, he always considered himself to be a loyal follower of Luther and a true exponent of evangelical theology. Many hailed him as such, but others bitterly condemned him as a betrayer of that theology.

Philip Melanchthon will continue to be a controversial reformer. Evaluations of the man, his work and his impact on the church, especially the church of the Augsburg Confession, will continue to be debated. That he was a faithful confessor at Augsburg, however, cannot be denied. The Augustana, which is really his confession, attests to that, and through that Confession alone he has made an indelible positive mark on the church catholic.

A Letter in Depth

Dear Editor:

Your recent publication of "For the Ordination of Women" (June 1979) is most welcome. This paper raises questions on a subject of great significance. Thanks to you for including this position paper on a difficult but timely topic.

In regard to the specific question, "What positive contributions will women, as women, make to the ministry?" I feel prompted to add my observations to those of Rev. Gloria Weber and Ms. Susan Jentes.

1. The theology of ministry (pastoral theology) surely cannot stay the same once we have broken through a hierarchical notion of human creation and human order. Our new theology must reflect the fuller realization of *the Gospel as a principle of church order.*

2. Having women in the public ministry calls for revitalizing the old distinctions between clergy and laity and, even more, between ordained ministry and ministry in general. The more profound realization of women's potential for Christian service will mean a more profound realization of service for all. I believe that the women's movement will lead in fact to a *diversification* of our present concepts of what *gifts* call for ordination.

The selectivity now inhering in notions of ministry is aptly demonstrated by contrasting them (service of the Word and of the Altar) to the abundance of charismatic gifts enjoyed by primitive Christian communities; healing, helping, service, proclamation, explication, tongue-speaking, miracles, and many more.

Women who do aspire to ordination often find themselves attracted to more holistic definitions of ministry, such as in pastoral counseling. This observation suggests that one contribution women's accession to the public ministry may make is a new appreciation for specialized forms of ministry other than the parish pastorate. This tendency is not particularly welcomed by the church; but the women's movement — and other liberation movements — may have an implicit investment in what are now considered 'specialized' ministries.

3. The structure of the present ideals in our Lutheran institutions contributes to perpetuating women's powerlessness. The original and generalized meaning of ministry, as *service,* is subverted under conditions of patriarchy into a public office for occupation by one for whom it is not only a function but (1) a life career, (2) a livelihood, and (3) a profession. As a result, ministry has been shaped to fit the patterns of men's vocational roles in male-dominated societies; that is, the public ministry *presupposes* personal freedom, geographic mobility, extensive formal education, life-long occupational expectations, etc. This is not the self-evident outcome of the development of ministry from the biblical sources. It is the human development of centuries of tradition. Therefore, our idea of ministry is modifiable to better suit women's more diffuse personal commitments than it presently does.

All of the above suggests that women in ordained ministry will help broaden, diversify, criticize, and renew our present attitudes about the meaning of ministry.

Carol Lois Haywood
Waban, MA

A Book Worth Discussing: Brevard S. Childs. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture.**

Ralph W. Klein

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Make no mistake: this is one of the most important books in theology published in the 1970's. The scholarship is often dazzling — extensive, up-to-date bibliographies, a balanced presentation of the major issues in biblical studies, and a breadth of vision that takes American scholarship seriously. In the introductions of Eissfeldt, Fohrer, and Kaiser, Old Testament scholarship seems often to be a German game.

But what marks this introduction as classic is its central theme, presented with passion and erudition, challenging all students of the Bible regardless of their labels as conservative, liberal, or whatever. This introduction seeks to describe the form and function of the Hebrew Bible *in its role as sacred scripture for Israel.* The crucial issue, according to Childs, is how one understands the nature of the Old Testament in relation to its authority for the community which shaped it and preserved it. The relationship between the growing biblical writings and Israel was dialectical: the word gave the community its form and content, but the community affected the word by the way it selected, collected, and ordered it. For Childs, then, the canonical issue is far more crucial than the final dogmatic decisions which decided which book was in, which one out. "The heart of the canonical process lay in transmitting and ordering the authoritative tradition in a form which was compatible to function as scripture for a generation which had not participated in the original events of revelation." (p. 60) The community helped the tradition function for coming generations, and it is this resultant shape which is — or should be — the object of biblical interpretation.

Childs is by no means suggesting a return to pre-critical times. While the current regnant theology in the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod also insists that the exegete interpret the canonical test, the LCMS assumes that the canonical text is identical with the text penned by Moses (for the Pentateuch) or by Isaiah (for chapters 40-55), a position that most scholars today, including Childs, would find intellectually indefensible and untrue. While certain conservative/fundamentalist scholars may seek an unexpected ally in Childs, they are bound to be disappointed in the final analysis.

The people most seriously challenged by Childs will be precisely those historical critics who have used the tools of their discipline to seek the kerygma or message of the Old Testament. Confessional seminary professors have long regaled their students with a view of the Yahwist (J) as a profound statement of the promise tradition to and for 10th century Israel, or they have argued that

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* *Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979. 688 pages. Cloth. $28.50.*

Second Isaiah enunciated a wondrous gospel to Israel in exile in the 6th century B.C. In principle, Childs does not deny the correctness of this historical research although he offers some wise caution about the frequent subjectivity of its results. His central objection to it is that this approach magnifies the hermeneutical gap or problem — what the Yahwist or Second Isaiah said was a message to people 2,500-3,000 years ago: how do you get from "what it meant" to "what it might mean"? Childs argues that through the dialectic, canonical process, important hermeneutical activity took place which made that original document valid for and appropriatable by coming generations. To neglect these hermeneutical guidelines would be the height of folly.

Childs, of course, is not the only one today interested in the final form of the text. In addition to the non-historical approach of fundamentalism, there is the "newer criticism" associated with English studies, structural analysis, and rhetorical criticism. All of these disciplines recognize that a work like the Pentateuch has a meaning as a whole, and that *this* meaning is its primary meaning, rather than that meaning or message extracted from a reconstructed, pre-final phase. But Childs' canonical approach differs from the latter three methodologies by interpreting the biblical text in relation to a community of faith and practice for whom it served a particular theological role as possessing divine authority. Time and again he returns to the peculiar relationship between text and people of God which is constitutive of canon. The final shape of the text often reflects a judgment on or even a transformation of earlier forms of the text; this final text, in his opinion, is the one which continues to exercise an authority on the community of faith. Through the canonical process the traditions from the past were transmitted in such a way that their authoritative claims were laid upon all successive generations of Israel. Historical criticism is demoted by Childs from its role as the primary way to read the Bible. Rather, the interpreter is challenged to look closely at the biblical text in its received form and then critically to discern its function for a community of faith.

When it comes to specifics, the sparks start to fly already with textual criticism. In 1974 I wrote (and Childs quotes me): "Textual criticism is the discipline that tries to recover the original copy (autograph) of a piece of literature by comparing its available copies, all of which inevitably contain mistakes." Is that the goal of a textual critic of the Old Testament as sacred Scripture? "No," says Childs. For such a person the goal is to seek to recover the stabilized canonical text through the vehicle of the Masoretic traditions. That means the text critic seeks to establish a Hebrew text which is closest to the *original text of the first century A.D.*

At about that time the canonical process was at an end and a text form was selected once and for all. Childs by no means denies the great multiplicity of text types before the first century, but he uses them, not to reconstruct a more original or better text, but only to understand the canonical text. At the end of 1 Sam. 1:24, for example, the Hebrew text reads: "And she [Hannah] brought him [Samuel] to the house of Yahweh at Shiloh, and *the lad became a lad.*" Usually text critics — and Childs agrees — hold that the italicized words are a corruption of a more original reading preserved in the Septuagint and in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. But the

canonical textual critic does not restore that original reading; rather he or she observes the effects of this error and attempts to assess the range of interpretation possible for the mutilated form preserved in the Masoretic text. But — and here come our first critical questions — why should this mutilated text be normative for subsequent interpreters? Was every modification of the text, whether intentional or, as here, unintentional, part of the authority-producing process? Is the Scripture authoritative because it is canonical, or is there another basis for this authority? The issue is a crucial one and often much more important theologically than in this reading from Samuel.

If one eighth of the book of Jeremiah arose in the process of textual copying and transmission, as the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate, should we look to the longer Hebrew text as the authoritative word, or should we reconstruct its earlier, shorter form? In the case of Jeremiah one is dealing with two different recensions (editions), and I for one can understand the argument that holds that the longer one has been considered the canonical one from the first century on. But is the text critic really not to remove textual corruptions? Many verses in the "canonical" text of Samuel are so defective as to be nearly incomprehensible. Do the mistakes of copyists supersede in authority the "original" text?

For each book of the Old Testament, Childs' treatment is divided into three sections: historical critical problems, the canonical shape of the book, and theological and hermeneutical implications. Here Childs is at his best and most provocative — and he is also very controversial. His surveys of current scholarship are no mere rehashing of issues, but he charts the new directions, the unresolved questions, and the underlying theological issues. Clearly the climax of each chapter is the section on the canonical shape and the resulting hermeneutical and theological implications. We'll use Second Isaiah to illustrate this.

Childs would not argue with the fact that Isa. 40-55 was written by an unknown prophet of the exile, Second Isaiah, but he asserts that those who transmitted this material in the canon-making process almost totally disregarded the original historical context. Severed from this sixth century context, the message becomes fully eschatological, that is, its message relates to the redemptive plan of God for all of history. Second Isaiah's original announcement of forgiveness is now offered as a promise of God's purpose with his people *in every age*. First Isaiah — according to Childs and other critics — spoke mainly of judgment to pre-exilic Israel; Second Isaiah's message was predominantly one of forgiveness. These historical distinctions have been blurred however in the canon-making process. Since the two Isaiahs have been placed together in one Isaiah book, both of their theologies have been directed to *subsequent generations* of Israelites. "Sinful Israel would always be the object of divine terror, repentant Israel would receive his promise of forgiveness." (327) Childs contends that this canonical Isaiah does not seem so far removed from us latter day Israelites, whereas the message derived from Second Isaiah, aimed precisely at Israel in exile, always needs transforming in order to make it speak to our age.

Consider another specific modification that a canonical reading brings about. The original Second Isaiah frequently

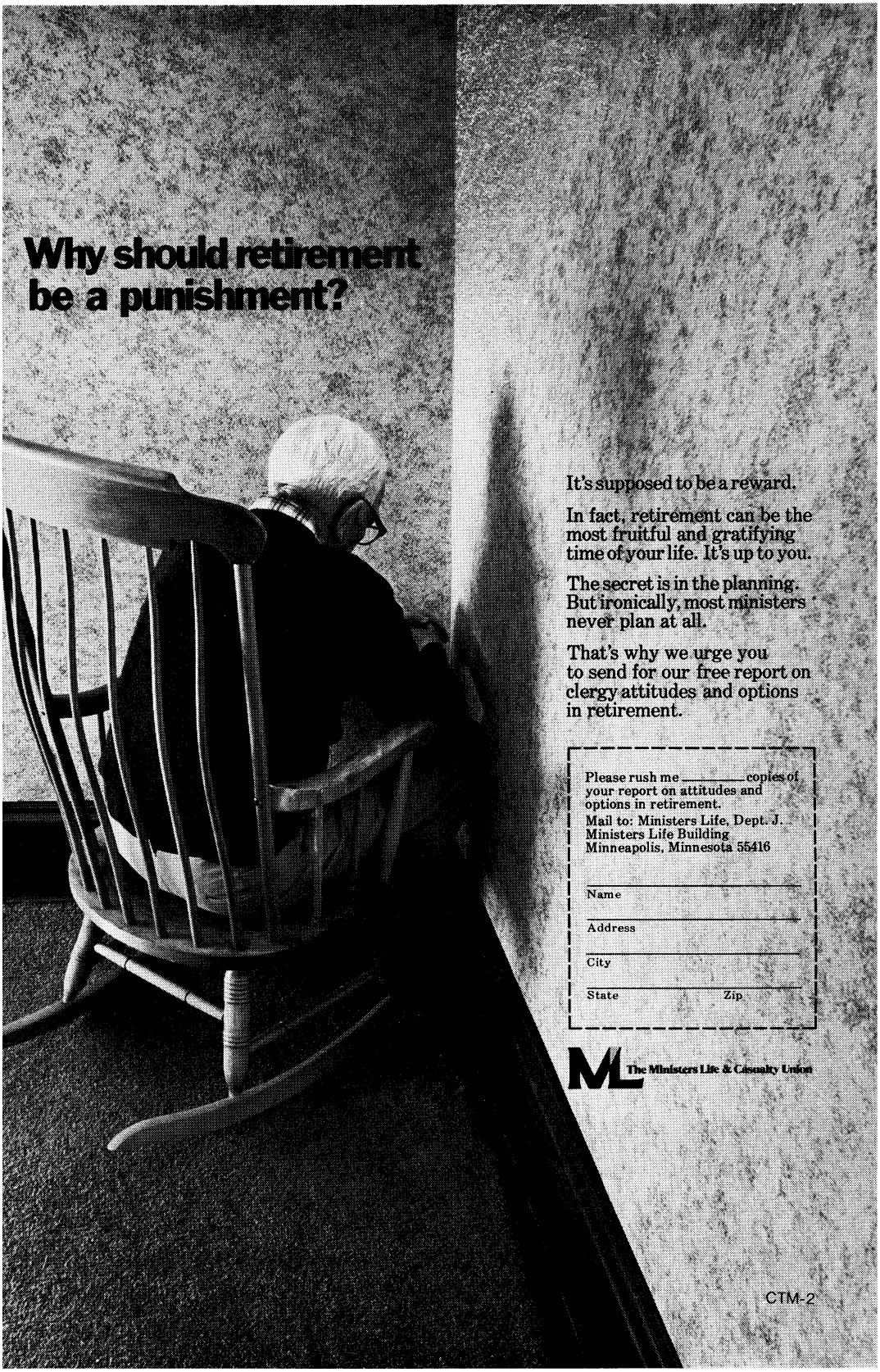
refers to "former things" and "new things." "Former things" in the original, sixth century context, meant the first Exodus, the destruction of Jerusalem, or the early activities of Cyrus, all of which were the former things accomplished by the word of Yahweh. But when Second Isaiah became part of the Isaiah book, former things can only refer, according to Childs, to the prophecies of First Isaiah — this prophetic word has been confirmed. The canonical shape testifies to the continuity of God's plan for Israel.

Who is the servant in Isa. 40-55? The last two hundred years of biblical scholarship have produced a bewildering attempt to discover who was originally meant in the sixth century, and this search remains without a clear answer. How would a canonical critic approach this problem? The canon-producing process made no attempt to identify the servant with any figure in *First* Isaiah, such as the messiah. Rather, the canonical tradition identified the servant as Israel even though some of the descriptions of the servant have led to the many alternate surmises referred to above. The canonical process, therefore, has preserved the traditions of the servant in a form which reflects a great variety of tensions (corporate reality vs. individual; promised new Israel of the future vs. a suffering and atoning figure of the past). Since this diversity could not be resolved in terms of Israel's past experience, the canonical text implies that the past would have to receive its meaning from the future. In this case I think Childs tries to make a virtue out of the unclarity of the text. Granted the servant texts have gained profound — and different — meanings from the subsequent experience of Jews and Christians, but is it not legitimate to try to pin down what the text's original intention was?

If it is the canonical text that is to be interpreted, what tasks remain for historical criticism in studying Isaiah? The main contribution is the discovery of the complex history of the book. Thus the critic detects the community's activity in selecting, collecting and ordering, and seeing this, is forced to come to grips with the theological issues of canon, the community of faith, and the role of the spirit in shaping and handing-on the tradition. Ctiricism also shows that the book is not ordered chronologically, that Isaiah's call is not to be psychologized, and that Isa. 40-55 is not to be interpreted rationalistically as a series of supernatural predictions. Note that Childs does not think historical criticism uncovers *the* meaning or message of the text.

Some years ago Childs wrote a book chronicling the end of "biblical theology," particularly that kind of theology that focused on the mighty acts of God in history. His canonical study on Isaiah demonstrates to him once again that the Old Testament is not a message about divine acts in history as such, but about the power of the word of God. The divine word of God confirms itself in bringing to completion its promise (read: what critics call Second Isaiah confirms the word of First Isaiah and of his God). History receives its meaning from the divine word; the divine word does not receive its meaning from the mighty acts of God.

Critics have often polemicized against regarding the Bible as timeless truth. Rather, they hold that the writers addressed specific situations with specific messages; their message must be understood from the time in which they spoke. "Not so," says Childs. Via the canonical process Isa. 40-55 was severed from its



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original historical moorings in the exile, given a completely new and non-historical framework, and thus rendered accessible to all future generations. Second Isaiah becomes a general eschatological hope addressed to future Israel. It is in this canonical shape that the New Testament employed Isa. 40-55. While this approach to "Second Isaiah" was one the earlier Christians shared with their Jewish colleagues, they — and we — differ from the Jews on the *nature of the promise* and the *identity of Israel.* To breach this theological gap will require some other means than historical criticism, which often acts as if agreement on the meaning "back then" would be a great ecumenical boon.

Space permits only one more brief sample of a canonical understanding. Childs does not basically contest the fact the Deuteronomy is related *in some way* to the 7th century reform of Josiah — though there are many complications on this issue today. But the canonical importance of Deuteronomy lies in its providing the hermeneutical key for understanding the law of the Pentateuch in its role as the sacred scripture of Israel. Moses explains in Deuteronomy the divine will to a new generation which had not itself experienced the formative events of its religious history. How is past tradition to be made alive for Israel? Deuteronomy makes clear that God's covenant is never tied to past history, but through an act of commitment Israel of every age partakes of the selfsame event of Sinai. Deuteronomy teaches that the law demands a response of commitment, and its summary of the law in terms of loving God with heart, soul, and mind is a check against all forms of legalism. The law points to the living will of God whose eternal purpose for the life of his people offers the only grounds for hope and salvation. Deuteronomy's "original" role as a late pre-exilic reform document, calling Israel to radical repentance and the putting away of other gods lest it suffer the curses of the covenant, is *not* its canonical meaning.

In summing up, what are the strengths of this book and what are its weaknesses? Childs brilliantly summarizes the basic critical issues today though he usually refers the reader to men like Fohrer to pick up information on the "nuts and bolts" of introduction. Reading his discussion of scholarly debates helps one see where the stream of scholarship is flowing, without getting bogged down in all sorts of trivia and side-channels. Most importantly, he demonstrates how the canonical contexts transform individual texts greatly. His views on the over-all meaning of the Pentateuch or of the book of Isaiah are clearly great advances, and they can be matched for each of the books in the Old Testament. With Childs one is wrestling with a major figure in biblical interpretation.

Still I have several serious misgivings about the central thesis he proposes. 1) Is it not possible that the power, spiritual insight, or interpretation of God or the human situation was better, clearer, or whatever, in, say, the Yahwist or in Second Isaiah, than in the modifications which the text experienced in the canon-making process? Is there not a sense in which the blurring of the historical particularity is a great loss, a loss which historical criticism gives us the possibility of remedying?

2) What really is the on-going role of historical criticism? Childs himself is an excellent practitioner of it — witness his book on *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis,* or his commentary on *Exodus,* which contain much historical criticism in addition

to his canonical-critical comments. Is historical criticism merely to show *that* the original texts have been collected, selected, and ordered, thus proving the large role of the canon-making process? Is there not a more direct theological task left for historical criticism?

3) What is it that gives the Scriptures their authority? Does their authority reside in their canonical character? Or is it not the word of gospel/promise they contain that gives the Scriptures their authority? The latter formulation is one Seminex has stood for at great expense, and to my mind, this insight, forged in the heat of an altogether different sort of argument, applies to the present question as well. Is it the framework given to Second Isaiah that makes him accessible to Israel of every age, or is it that we read there of a God of promise, faithful to a particular people, and realize that this faithful God of promise addresses us in our particularity, analogously, and as the same promiser? Does not this promiser show up most of all on the cross and there give us the hermeneutical glasses to go back and see the text of Second Isaiah anew. I suspect my criticism of Childs is unabashedly Lutheran, and I can't help but wonder if his approach is not greatly shaped by his own Calvinistic orientation. One suspects that his brilliantly argued and passionately stated thesis will not be universally accepted. But this failure will be no criticism of his intellectual achievement. It merely means that there are many people for whom canon, however defined, is not the source of authority.

4) Finally, one must ask whether Childs' canonical approach really closes the hermeneutical gap as much as he thinks. Do we still not have the yawning chasm between then and now, between there and here, between a message addressed to God's Old Testament people and a message read by us Christians *through* the all-transforming message of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus? That is, is there still not an enormous gap between the canonical Isaiah and the Christian of the twentieth century?

Again, make no mistake about it: this is a very important book. My criticisms reflect the depth of his challenge to me, my exegetical method, and my theology; my enthusiasm reflects the depth of the book's knowledge and synthesis. Not least important is that Childs holds a chair at Yale and has used that secular university position to reopen the question of how the Bible speaks to the community of faith. So there is no mere dead scientism in the Ivy League, nor a cynicism that smirks "For God, for country, and for Yale." In Brevard Childs we have a man who reads the Scriptures *Christo et ecclesiae* — for Christ and for the church! What a refreshing way to get called back to the drawing boards.

Book Reviews

LIVING ROOTS OF REFORMATION. By Jan Milic Lochman. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979. 96 pages. Paper. $3.50.

Lochman examines and interprets the principal themes of the Lutheran, Reformed, and Czech Reformations. He shows how each of these themes has something vital and worthwhile to contribute to the Christian Church as a whole today. Lochman holds four confessions as equally valid: the Augsburg, the Helvetic, the Bohemian (1575), and the Confession of the Czech Brethren.

Even though there are and will be different confessions of faith among Christians, the author contends that the emphasis and priority ought to be on what uniteS rather than on what divides, so that the mission of the church is not hampered. And yet he adds: "It has been my experience that those who lightheartedly dismiss their own confessional heritage do not enrich, but rather impoverish the true cause of common Christian witness and service." Lochman has a sound understanding of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith. He points out that "the biblical understanding of grace . . . is not fundamentally the 'tranquilization' of a person, but rather than *mobilization* of human capacities."

Robert M. Brueckner
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THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MARRIAGE. By David J. Ludwig. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979. 143 pages. Paper. $3.95.

This is an unsolicited review of a how-to-do-it paperback just off the press. My enthusiasm stems from the content and excellence of this analysis of marriage. (But I must admit to possible bias as a colleague and long-term friend of the author.)

Dr. Ludwig is professor of psychology at Lenoir-Rhyne College in North Carolina, a Lutheran clergyman, and licensed clinical psychologist. He distills in eleven easy-to-read chapters his years of experience, and incidents from his own marriage carry the reader along and provide richness and insight. Practical suggestions and handy outlines for analyzing the reader's own marriage promise practical outcomes. This is a book that will be useful for: marriages that are in trouble but in which both partners still want to make it work, marriages that are good but could be even better, pastors and counselors who want to deepen their understanding of marriage counseling, study groups, those approaching marriage or not long married. A friend, whose opinion I value, sent copies to each of his married children.

The author's central thesis revolves around the idea that every interpersonal relationship has a *spirit.* This spirit he likens to a flow of energy between two people. When the spirit is healthy and strong, certain predictable behavioral outcomes are found: contact is frequent, easy, and natural; positive emotions are generated; mutual understanding is present. When the spirit is weak, sick or non-existent, contact is infrequent, painful and lacks empathy and understanding. Ludwig draws a parallel between this use of the term spirit and the biblical concept of God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit, he asserts, is a concept related to freedom, energy, and life itself. If there is a weakness in the book, it is that the author does not develop his use of the term spirit in sufficient depth to please the theologically minded, and he does not specify his usage with sufficient clarity to satisfy a hard-nosed empiricist psychologist, although those inclined toward a humanist-existential psychology may find the term quite to their liking. For the average reader this will be no great problem, since the emphasis of the book is on the importance of working at the marriage relationship, and here Ludwig is at his best. Additional high-



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lights are an intriguing analysis of the Second Table of the Decalogue as it pertains to marriage and a keen insight into the meaning of sin/brokenness and forgiveness/restoration in marriage.

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Harold I. Haas
Lenoir-Rhyne College
Hickory, North Carolina

Briefly Noted

In **Ruth** (Johns Hopkins, $16.50) Jack M. Sasson has provided a fresh, new translation of the Hebrew text, an extensive philological commentary, and a formalist-folklorist interpretation, drawing on the work of V. Propp, whose principal research was on Russian fairy tales. Though this is decidedly a book for specialists, no student of Ruth can afford to ignore the immense erudition here displayed.

Paul A. Zimmerman writes the foreword to a new book by C.H. Kang and Ethel R. Nelson, **The Discovery of Genesis** (Concordia, $3.95). The authors claim to have discovered that Chinese characters embody memories of man's earliest days. These characters, Zimmerman tells us, "reflect elements of the story of God and man recorded in the early chapters of Genesis. Man and Woman, the garden, the institution of marriage, the temptation and fall, death, Noah's flood, the tower of Babel — they are all there in the tiny drawings and strokes that make up the Chinese characters." The authors even manage to find the *devil's* temptation of Adam and Eve though Genesis says not a word about the Tempter's presence. The book, of course, is only a ludicrous curiosity and has now joined others of this genre on my shelf, including **I Have Found an Elephant in the Bible** (by Donald Petry) and **Jesus, Father of Jehovah,** whatever that might mean (by Howard A. Eilar). But permit a historical footnote: Paul A. Zimmerman was chairman of the Fact Finding Committee that conducted the heresy investigation at Concordia Seminary.

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