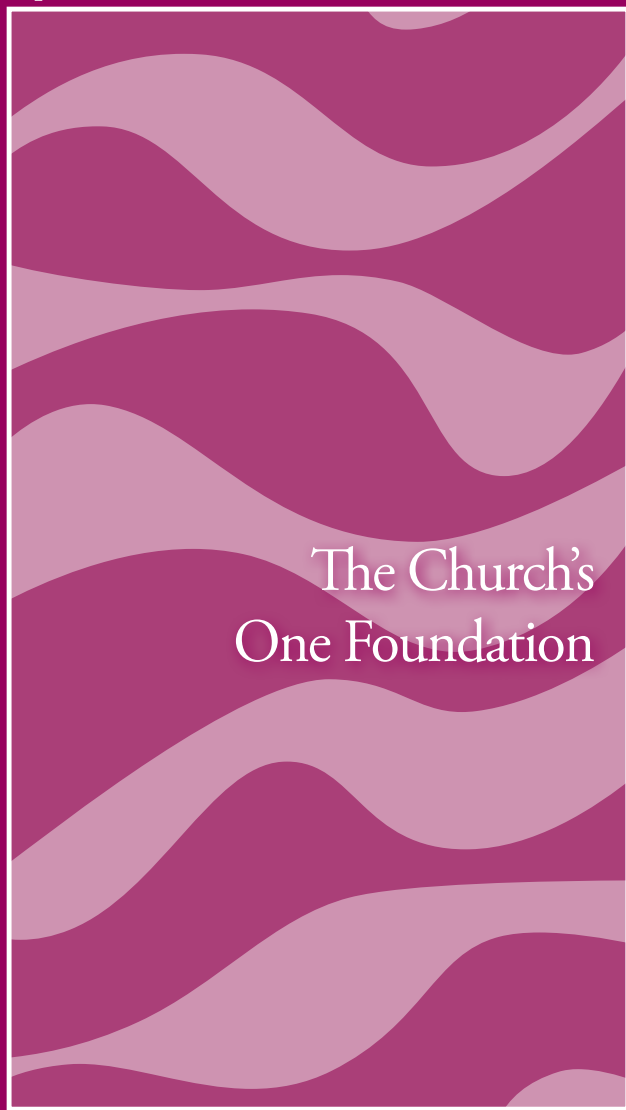


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The Church's  
One Foundation

**CURRENTS**  
in Theology and Mission

# Currents in Theology and Mission

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# The Church's One Foundation

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Christ Seminary–Seminex evokes a variety of memories, impressions, and responses in its participants and observers. This issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* provides glimpses into the Seminex story and, more importantly, explores the faith that still inspires God's people to make a bold witness of Christ, who is the church's one foundation. The majority of the materials offered here were presented at the celebration of the 35th Anniversary of Seminex, which took place at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in June, 2009.

**Daniel Aleshire** recounts five personal stories that link his own experiences as a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with the Seminex story. In the process of doing so, he offers keen theological and biblical insights that shed light on the nature and consequences of ecclesiastical conflict. Among the conclusions that he draws are that “conflict appears because beliefs matter”; “denominational conflict leads to change, but not the change that either side presumes”; “seminary-church conflicts occur...because theological schools are deeply connected to the church”; and “hope comes slowly,...but it comes dependably, faithfully, forcefully.”

**James Wind**, who was one of the student leaders at the time, describes specific student actions that were an immediate impetus to the formation of Seminex. He summarizes the students' motivations in the following way: “Drawing on American traditions of democracy and our own Lutheran confessional understandings of the centrality of the gospel and the freedom/duty of a Christian to protest wrongs in the church, we came to the conclusion that our consciences mattered, that authority could and at times should be challenged, that ethics... revealed character, that new knowledge was not the enemy, and that the gospel should not be bound. So we acted.” Wind also places the students' activities and the founding of Seminex into their historical setting and insists that they were not isolated or unique events but part of a “...great global argument about what the church was.” The Seminex story is, therefore, not finished. It continues, and so do its consequences.

**Edgar Krentz's** essay focuses on a crucial aspect of the conflict that gave birth to Seminex, namely, the normative role of Scripture in the life of the church. While the question of the legitimacy of historical criticism inspired heated debate, for the seminary faculty the crucial issue “...was the relationship of the Bible to authority in the church,...the relationship of Bible to theology,...[and] the priority of gospel to Bible in the life and work of the church.” As he explores the Bible as the church's Book of Faith, he weaves together his own methodological and interpretative insights with those of Martin Luther and emphasizes both the diversity of the biblical message and the centrality of

Christ. He notes particularly that “...the biblical gospel always makes Christ necessary and gives glory to God.”

**Susan Ebertz** shares the interesting story of the Seminex library in her article, thereby celebrating the scholarly and pedagogical importance of this collection as well as the courageous ministries of its staff, especially its director, H. Lucille Hager.

The remaining contributions are sermons, reflective essays, and a tribute, all prepared by former Seminex students and faculty as a part of their celebration of the 35th anniversary of Christ Seminary–Seminex and its living heritage.

I want to express a special word of thanks to Dr. Everett Kalin who served as co-editor of this issue.

**Kurt K. Hendel**  
*Editor*



*Seminex walkout,  
Concordia Seminary,  
St. Louis, Missouri.  
ELCA Archives photo.*

# Watching Hope Grow: Distant Reflections on Seminex June 2009

Daniel Aleshire

*Executive Director, Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada*

This is a storied gathering. It is storied because the exodus from Concordia Seminary in 1974 was arguably the most dramatic moment in twentieth-century theological education, but that is not the story that I have most in mind this evening. This is a storied gathering because this event is about the personal stories that have been draped around that historical event. All of you here have a story of how your lives and ministries have been fashioned and formed by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) controversy. You have a story about your decision to process off the Concordia campus, as the tower bells were ringing. You have a story about your decision to attend Christ Seminary—Seminex, and in that choice, separate yourself from a future in the church body you knew best. Stories of human beings seeking to be faithful are sacred stories, and I am honored to have been asked to share in this event.

I am not a Lutheran, although my Christian life bears ample evidence of *simul justus et peccator*. I am not a Lutheran, but I have struggled with law and gospel and the permeable boundaries between these two gifts of grace. While not a Lutheran, I want to share some stories from my life that, at least from a distance, overlap with your stories and reflect with you on denominational conflict, theological education, and ministry.

1.

Tom Graves is one of my closest friends from student days at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He ended up a professor at Southeastern Baptist Seminary, and I became a professor at Southern. We both imagined that we would retire from the faculties of which we were a part, but as a bumper sticker I once saw read, “Vicissitudes happen.” Controversy hit the Southern Baptist Convention in the late 1970s and did not leave the entire time the two of us served on these respective faculties. I joined the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) staff in 1990, and Tom became the founding president of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, the first seminary to be formed as a result of the Southern Baptist conflict. Tom’s father, Allen Graves, was vice president at Southern Seminary in the 1970s and served on the 1972 ATS accrediting committee that visited Concordia Seminary responding to concerns about patterns and practices of governance and academic freedom. My association with the Missouri Synod controversy has been from a distance, but from my student days at Southern, the Concordia story intersected with parts of my story.

I dug out the report of that visit from the accrediting archives at ATS and read

it. In fact, I read every report prepared for the Commission on Accrediting between 1972 and 1980 related to Concordia Seminary, Concordia-Seminary-in-Exile, and Christ Seminary–Seminex. There were several. As best I can tell, ATS accreditation didn't make many Lutherans very happy during those years. ATS placed Concordia Seminary on probation for issues related to governance and academic freedom in 1972, and, after considerable work to change policies and correct procedures, ATS removed that probation in spring 1974, just months after the exodus from the 801 campus. At the same meeting that ATS removed the 1972 probation, it imposed probation for another set of reasons related to educational capacity following the exodus. Missouri Lutherans were upset that probation had been imposed, removed, then re-imposed for different reasons, and Seminex Lutherans were upset that accreditation was not withdrawn from Concordia Seminary after the exodus. In 1975 and 1976, the Commission moved with more speed than it ever had to grant accreditation to a new seminary: Christ Seminary–Seminex. Missouri Lutherans were upset that Seminex was accredited in such a short period of time and probably thought that ATS was playing favorites. Seminex Lutherans were upset because Concordia Seminary was removed from its second probation in 1976 and its accreditation reaffirmed. The ATS archive does not include all the correspondence, so my perceptions about everyone being upset may not be accurate, but I think that, for the most part, they are. Concordia Seminary was visited again near the end of the decade when it sought initial accreditation by the North Central Association in addition to ATS. North Central appointed John Dominic Crossan to that joint visiting committee. (Accreditation is usually boring, but not always!)

*Theological schools are hybrid institutions: they are simultaneously creatures of the church and creatures of higher education. Both are social systems with particular conventions and methods of procedure. It is usually the church side of a theological school that creates the most complex problems, and theological schools often turn to their higher education side for a remedy to those problems. My perception is that the solutions offered by one side of a school's identity never satisfy the problems caused by the other side.*

## 2.

In 1975, I joined the staff of what is now Search Institute in Minneapolis. The organization had just completed a major study on Lutherans, *A Study of Generations*, and I was hired to work with three projects that formed the focus of the Institute's work during the middle and late 1970s: the Readiness for Ministry Project that was commissioned by ATS, the Lutheran Seminarian Project, and a project for the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) colleges that was seeking to identify what made these Lutheran colleges "Lutheran" as their faculties, student bodies, and boards were increasingly non-Lutheran.

The Lutheran Seminarian Project involved the American Lutheran Church (ALC), LCA, and LCMS seminaries in an effort to understand how entering students understood ministry. I visited Concordia Seminary during the 1975–76 academic year (probably because I was the only non-Lutheran on the research team). My task was to interview students, and as best I could tell as a researcher, the students were reticent to talk. They were cooperative and polite, but seemed unsure about what was safe to say and to whom it was safe to say it. I can only imagine how hard it was to be a student at Seminex—preparing for ministry knowing that the old English District congregations could never absorb



all those Seminex graduates and uncertain about the degree to which the LCA and the ALC would be open to extending calls to them. I can only imagine that it was also hard for students at Concordia who had cast their lot with one side when it was not clear which side would ultimately prevail.

*In denominational struggles, pastoral careers are at risk, and seminary students are especially put at risk. Church bodies don't split like teenage boyfriends and girlfriends split up. Church bodies split like forty-year-old couples get divorced—with property to fight over, with children's lives upended, with a history in contest, and with a future unclear. Like the children of divorce, seminary students feel the tension of the fighting and experience the loss of a future they thought they were called to serve. The Apostle Paul and his missionary partner Barnabas parted company as a result of their disagreement about whether young John called Mark should accompany them. I wonder what Mark thought as he watched Paul walk away. What would ministry be like with Barnabas? The text gives us no clue. There are times when roads diverge, and the paths in either direction are equally risky.*

### 3.

While working on the Readiness for Ministry project, I became both friend and colleague of David Schuller, the ATS staff member responsible for that project. David was a Concordia Seminary graduate and was a faculty member at Concordia when he joined the ATS staff. He watched his former colleagues process off the 801 campus from his ATS office. David kept his clergy credentials in the LCMS, although in many ways his heart was with his former colleagues who left. During the 1980s, David and I continued to work on one project or another and often talked about my pain with the Southern

Baptist Convention (SBC) struggle and his with the LCMS. David grew up in a Congregationalist family, and joined a Missouri Synod congregation in late high school. He told me he was drawn to the confessional, theological character of the Missouri Synod and to its high Lutheran liturgy. In the LCMS, he found a home where his faith took root and grew into a calling to ministry, and a setting in which that ministry was practiced. David never left the LCMS and never felt completely comfortable about staying. He retired from ATS in 1990 and died suddenly a few years ago. At the time of his death, he was serving as the interim pastor of an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregation. I attended his funeral, which was conducted at the LCMS congregation where David and his wife had been members. About ten LCMS clergy were there, vested and sitting as a group in the pews. The associate pastor of the ELCA congregation that David had been serving was also there. She did not sit with the LCMS clergy, but she did speak from the lectern about the many contributions that David had been making at the congregation they both served.

*Church battles tend to replace nuanced positions with hard-edged, binary categories. A person is on either one side or the other, in sympathy with one leader or another, committed to one position or the other. Middle ground collapses. People like David, burdened with the ability to see some good in both sides, tend to lose. They are like Laodicea, "neither hot nor cold." David could not abandon the LCMS in which his faith and ministry took hold, and he could not embrace the direction that the LCMS had taken. I think David would have been pleased to see the vested LCMS men at his funeral listening to an ordained ELCA woman. It was the perfect metaphor for the Lutheran that David was. Maybe ministry is like our*



*salvation, and we are called to work it out with fear and trembling.*

#### 4.

The SBC struggle of the 1980s involved the word “inerrancy.” If I have read the documents in the ATS files correctly, it was an important modifier for Scripture in the LCMS struggles as well.

The word “inerrancy” does not occur in the 1932 LCMS statement on the Holy Scriptures, and it occurs primarily as an explanation of infallibility in the 1973 statement on “Scriptural and Confessional Principles,” adopted in the heat of the denominational storm. The most typical linguistic formulation in the letters I saw about the Concordia controversy was that the Scripture is “inspired and inerrant,” not inspired and infallible. The statements of faith that the SBC adopted in 1925 and in 1964 did not use the word “inerrancy.” After the SBC struggle ended with conservatives fully in control, the Statement of Faith was revised. While the 2000 statement tightened the language about Scripture,<sup>1</sup> the term “inerrant” does not appear. Roy Honeycutt, an Old Testament scholar who was president of Southern during most of the SBC struggle, commented one time that the problem with the word is that if you are not an “inerrantist,” you must be an “errantist.” The word creates binary categories. He reckoned that very

few biblical errantists would ever win a Baptist battle.

*I have had the opportunity to observe three denominational conflicts, and all of them have led me to conclude that the rhetorical and doctrinal concerns on the surface are not necessarily the animating forces of the conflict. These struggles are more likely a function of fault lines and fissures far below the surface. That's why I think a protracted struggle in the SBC over “inerrancy” can occur and the word not be given a privileged place in a subsequent statement of faith by the individuals who advocated the term in the struggle. Maybe it was all theology and biblical studies in the LCMS struggles of the 1970s, but I am quite sure it was not all “inerrancy” in the SBC struggles of the 1980s. Inerrancy was an important proxy for viewing the Bible as the unique, revelatory, word of God that is best understood as literally true with regard to history and miracles, and theologically true in all matters. It was a critical issue, but not the only one, and perhaps not the deepest one. The fault lines that shook the denomination involved an old SBC system that pushed some leaders to the margins while privileging others at the center, the residue of inadequately addressing theological differences that had their roots in the fundamentalist-modernist struggles of the 1920s, and the persistence of a tendency to perceive anti-intellectualism as a friend of faith.*

#### 5.

My last year on the Southern faculty was 1989–90, and John Tietjen was the speaker for our fall faculty retreat. He reflected with us as a pastor about the Concordia story fifteen years after the exodus and shortly after the ELCA had formed. Tietjen seemed “whole” to me. There were scars, but no open wounds. He was able to talk about what happened, about what he wondered might have been done

1. In the 1964 SBC statement, Scripture “is the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man” and in the 2000 statement, Scripture “is God’s revelation of Himself to man.” While both the 1964 and 2000 statements say that Scripture “has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter,” the 2000 statement adds, “Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.” ([www.sbc.net/bfm/bfmcomparison.asp](http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfmcomparison.asp))

differently, and about what consequence another course of action may have had.

*Two things seemed evident to me as I listened to him. The first is the apparent inevitability of some denominational conflicts. There are times, it seems, when irresistible forces result in struggle—like the “spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle” (2 Samuel 11:1). Strong personalities are always players, and they may use the struggle, but the struggle is ultimately fueled by forces beyond personalities. While the struggle might be managed for a time, the underlying forces will prevail. Four of the six Southern Baptist seminary presidents tried different strategies during the 1980s and early 1990s—from aggressive resistance to accommodation—and none of them succeeded in preserving what came to be identified as the moderate presence in the SBC seminaries. The second is that there is life and ministry after the struggle. We experience these painful struggles as if they have more power than they actually have, as if grace were held by the structures rather than by the Spirit. Tietjen was whole.*

### Conclusion

I’ve told you parts of five stories and shared along the way what I have learned. I want to conclude with a few final observations.

1. Conflict hovers around theological schools because they operate at a certain intellectual distance from the church, and both the church and the school are driven by theological meaning. Theological commitments are intrinsically value-laden and since Acts 15, the history of the church is one in which opposing sides have perceived issues worthy of contest. Denominational conflict is painful because both sides presume they are fighting from the high moral ground. They are contending for truth with a capitol “T,” as Tietjen stated during
2. Denominational conflict leads to change, but not the change that either side presumes. When you enrolled at Concordia Seminary or Christ Seminary, you could not have imagined that your ministry would be housed in the ELCA, or that so many former Missouri Synod scholars and students would have the leadership and respect they have experienced in the ELCA. Three of the eight ELCA seminary presidents have Missouri Synod backgrounds. And the Missouri Synod now is not what the contenders of the 1970s thought it would be decades earlier. They argued for theological issues that don’t have much power to attract these days. Last summer about this time, I visited an LCMS congregation for worship. The church was growing, the praise band was good, there were no vestments, the liturgy was on the light side—much lighter than my United Methodist congregation, and we all know about Methodists—and nothing was said that would suggest that I should not commune at the table. This is certainly not what all LCMS worship is like, but the LCMS is influenced by the same factors that influence the rest of American Protestantism. A congregation that wants to reach this culture will store many of its theological affirmations far from the front door.
3. If Charles Dickens were around to write about my years at Southern Seminary, he would likely write about them as “the best of times” and the “worst of times.” Southern was doing many things better in the 1980s than it had at any time in the twentieth

century—but no good counted if the faculty didn't have the right answer about Adam's belly button or whether the ax head floated. It was as painful a time as I have ever experienced. I left Southern happy to be able to join the ATS staff and restrict my future connections to the school side of theological schools. The church side had proven very painful.

However, over the years, I have concluded that these painful conflicts are the occasional consequence of an important aspect of theological schools. Seminary-church conflicts occur from time to time because theological schools are deeply connected to the church. The church, in fact, is about the only public that cares about what goes on in theological schools. The seminary cannot have a viable existence if it only provides a place where theological disciplines are studied for the intellectual joy of study. The best schools are about equipping leaders who serve the gospel by serving communities of faith and extending God's mission for the church in the world. If a seminary is only good as a school, it risks being good for nothing. The seminary has to be connected to the church, even at the risk of occasional painful moments of conflict. The alternative is far worse than the pain of the conflict.

4. Most of all, I have learned that hope grows slowly. That famous Seminex

image of the new shoot growing from the stump of the large tree is powerful. I noticed that you incorporated it in the art for this event. The hope that grows slowly is not that the old tree will re-grow, but that a new forest will grow around the stump. Tectonic plates shift; the stress recedes; new structures are built, perhaps more seismically sound than the old ones. Denominational conflict, painful as it is, is not determinative. It does not have the power to alter the future. It may bend the direction, but it does not change the destination. These conflicts may retard the work of grace for a season, but the grace that is greater than our sins is also greater than our conflicts. Ministry continues; people find ways to bring meaning to chaos. Hope does not take away the memory of the struggle or the pain it induced, but it does take away the fear that good might not win. Hope is not a sentimental dismissal of what happened. The Bible's most ancient image of hope, set in the sky after the flood, is possible only when the rainstorm is gathered on one side and the sun is shining on the other. Hope comes slowly, I have learned, but it comes dependably, faithfully, and forcefully.

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:13).*

# How My Mind Has Changed

---

Mark Bangert

*John. H. Tietjen Professor Emeritus of Pastoral Ministry  
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*

Frankly, it would be much easier to talk about how my body has changed during the past thirty-five years, but it's too painful to go there.

At regular and appropriate intervals, mostly prompted by mileposts or re-engagements with folks from the distant past, I have asked myself what that thing called *Seminex* was really all about. What were the deep passions that drove it through unbelievable resistant weather to places no one would have imagined? What forces were behind the banners that evoked salutes from bodies ready to give up goods, fame, child, and wife?

The answers that readily come to me are nearby; we have heard some of them during these days:

1. *Seminex* resulted from an internal Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) conflict about biblical interpretation, a conflict that had been brewing for several years.
2. *Seminex* is about the gospel—what is it, and how does one live by it?
3. *Seminex* aims to model an evangelical alternative to ecclesiastical structures overrun by political machinery with supercharged high horsepower.
4. *Seminex* is a small but true witness to ecumenical stirrings within Lutheranism.
5. *Seminex* is a lifeboat in the midst of ecclesiastical debris leftover from an encroaching wave of fundamentalism that overtook society in general during the '70s and '80s.

6. *Seminex* is how God answers those who protest the church's treatment of its prophets.

For years I believed, and in some respects still do believe, that one or the other, perhaps all, of those answers succinctly account for the experience we know as *Seminex*. And even if we cease asking after the energies zigzagging across our lives that spell *Seminex*, these descriptors are adequate and constitute a story that rings true.

I believed all those things during the '70s and early '80s, even while during those years there was, at least in my life, a parallel universe, as it were, taking shape. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say "parallel universes," since I would guess that for each of us, even for those who entered the experience in the '80s, a common by-product of our allegiance was the cost incurred among our personal universes of family and friends.

But I refer to still another universe. Consider this:

In the year 1965 the LCMS in its Detroit Convention issued an invitation to other Lutheran bodies to jointly work on a new resource for worship, including liturgies and hymns. In 1966 the first meeting of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) was held here in Chicago, and LCMS pastor Herbert Lindemann was elected chair. Three years later, 1969, in this very building the entire Commission, together with all the

presidents of the six churches involved and publishing house editors, met to consider the first drafts of a new Eucharistic rite. Weeks later John Tietjen was elected president of Concordia Seminary and several weeks after that, still in 1969, J.A.O. Preus was elected president of the LCMS.

In 1970 *Contemporary Worship*, volume 2, (CW 2) was published for use by Lutherans of all bodies—the first common Eucharistic rite ever to be shared by all North American Lutherans. Stop for a minute and imagine that Lutherans in 1970 could find enough common ground about the Lord's Supper to commit themselves to publishing a common liturgy.

Three years later, in 1973, came the fateful New Orleans Convention of the LCMS (during the last days of which I was writing my Ph.D. examinations in Paul Manz's Minneapolis office) and the death of Arthur Carl Piepkorn. This was also the year during which the ILCW sponsored a theological convocation to find resolution to emerging issues with respect to CW 2.

Early in 1974 John Tietjen was suspended, *Seminex* came into existence, and the post-Vatican II Roman Missal was published in English translation.

ILCW's revision of CW 2 appeared in 1975, and one year later the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches was formed. In 1978 the *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)* appeared, the same year the LCMS withdrew from the project it had initiated thirteen years earlier.

Additional items could be added to these imaginary columns tracing parallel histories, but this is enough to prompt some musing, maybe even a change in mind.

Were the parallel universes just described coincidental or are there heretofore unrecognized connections that helped to birth *Seminex*, or at least infuse it with life-

giving sustenance during those generative years?

Let me suggest some symbiotic relationships.

First, methodologies employed for the development of new liturgies and a hymn collection, known later as the *LBW*, compelled us to recognize that our roots were far deeper, more distant and more complex than simply Perry County soil. Signing on to such a project freed us to be far more open to an expansive church world and to the Spirit at work beyond the small pond known as the LCMS. That these visions surfaced in routines weekly and daily practiced in worship hastened the overhaul needed for God's plans.

Second, new liturgies and hymns, together with the fresh visions they brought, afforded us palpable experiences of the fresh stirrings of the Spirit, preparing us, perhaps making us hungry, for what that same Spirit could and can bring to tired, even lifeless, systems and structures.

Third, the process of embracing and assimilating new liturgies and hymns provided the enterprise of biblical interpretation with a necessary context. If I may be so bold, biblical interpretation means nothing unless it is applied in community; it needs purpose and a tradition of piety over against which it can be challenged and tuned. To put it another way, Bible interpreters were not subtly invited to converse both with systematicians and with *all* Christians at worship.

Fourth, with the introduction of a three-reading lectionary and of a preferred pattern of Eucharistic prayer, talk about the centrality of the gospel and of its essence and use had to reckon with the gospel at work in ways not experienced before. New liturgical practices, more importantly the theology behind them, called for new or renewed understanding of how the gospel works. Theology was brought from the

classroom to the altar and vice versa. The altar increasingly served as the crucible in which passions were ignited.

Finally, the new book and its development provided a tangible site for seeking

and experiencing churchly unity. In the more restricted sense, the *LBW* led to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but it also led us to brothers and sisters across the whole church. It provided us with the language and structures for conversing with and praying with all the fellow baptized. Perhaps it made us blessedly impatient as we hungered for tangible encounters with the family we knew was ours since baptism.

If my mind has been changing over the years, it is in this growing recognition that the Seminex experience was far more complex than the tired reductionistic explanations we are prone to produce.

Reality check. The *LBW* is history, retired mostly from pew racks and ushered to dusty bookshelves. Seminex is history, though in spirit operative in many and various ways, not the least of which is in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

If any religious upheaval is worth the Spirit it claims as its author, then look for that Spirit mixing it up in liturgy and song. Beware the prayers of the day for Advent. When we pray for the Lord to stir it up, such will happen everywhere, beginning with perhaps, but surely along with, the worship of the church.

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# The Afterlife of Exile

James P. Wind

*President, Alban Institute*

What a privilege it is to gather to reflect on an experience that changed all of our lives. Our shorthand for that experience is one word, one name: Seminex. Now from a vantage point informed by thirty-five years of hindsight, we have a rare opportunity to remember (literally to put back together) our lives, or portions of them, in the presence of each other. Together we can call back into our midst sainted ones like Tietjen, Bertram, Graesser, Caemmerer, Von Rohr Sauer, Weyerman, Piepkorn, and many others. We can and will recall turning points and then see how our many stories have turned out. This is our time to see what happened to our classmates and teachers, to ask, “Have you heard from Kenn, or Lee, or Aaron?” and to catch up on families, careers, and personal journeys.

Admittedly, we begin—and will end our time together—with an incomplete picture. Most alumni gatherings of colleges, universities, and seminaries, particularly when the anniversaries start climbing into the 20s and 30s, have built-in structures of continuity. The alma mater provides a central reference point. For those who graduate from major universities, anniversaries take you back to the same spot; cohorts of graduates frequently follow five-year rhythms of reconnection. Elite schools occasionally hear from a class historian, and alumni, if for no other reason than the voracious fundraising needs of their schools, can count on a discrete alumni organization that tracks the graduates. That is not true for us. The institutional upheaval in our

shared story does not allow those natural continuities. Instead, the Seminex story is about dispersion into other institutions and absorption into other narratives. Initially, we entered the narratives of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) and other Lutheran seminaries and then became part of the narratives of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). But over thirty-five years the Seminex Diaspora has gone much further.

On February 19, 1974, when we left the campus of Concordia Seminary at 801 DeMun, we embarked on a series of migrations that continues. The guiding metaphor we chose that day—we would be a seminary in exile!—was a signal that we were setting out for unknown territory. Nevertheless, even that name carried hints of return, the possibility that one day we would go home, back to a familiar place. However, for most of us, history carried us beyond the metaphor. Instead of returning home from exile as Nehemiah or Ezra did when they brought the Jews who had been exiled in Babylon back to Jerusalem, we blended into other stories, leaving behind even our temporary names like Concordia Seminary in Exile and Christ Seminary–Seminex. We are a scattered bunch. So our reunion has many missing faces—some due to death, but others are not with us because of an inability to be present, or an ambivalence about marking this occasion, or because we do not know what happened to them.



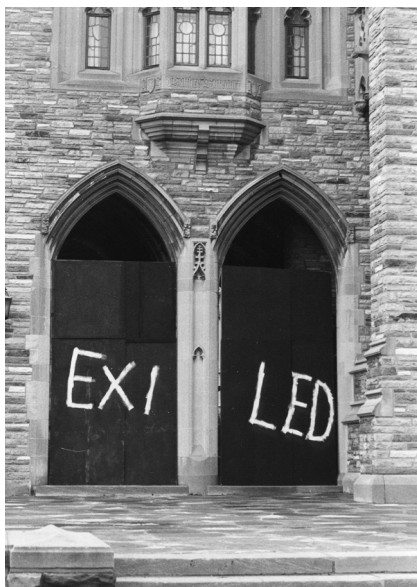
So what became of those of us who stepped into exile thirty-five years ago? That is the work of these three days, to discern our early legacy.

How to begin? We do have a good story. As I prepared for this presentation, I mentally retraced many of the steps that we took back in 1974. And as I did that, I wondered how often each of us has had the opportunity to tell our own story. My now grown children, Joshua and Rachel, have chided me about how little they know of the Seminex story. They know something very important happened to me—and to Kathleen, their mother—back there in St. Louis. But they do not know the rich, intricate story that changed our lives. Are we like the vanishing generation of GLs, who returned to the U.S. after World War II and kept the powerful stories they were part of to themselves?

It would be presumptuous, and impossible, for me to attempt to bring our whole

story into view here. Instead, I want to lift up a short list of things we did that might elicit a “you did what?” response from my son and daughter. It is my hope that as I share just a few recollections from my student experience, that the doors of your memory vaults will swing open and that we will hear your parts of the story in the days ahead. Consider these audacious events:

- Because the President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Reverend Doctor J.A.O. Preus, violated the ground rules of a meeting with the soon-to-be graduating class of Concordia Seminary (1974) when tensions were at their peak about the future of the seminary, its President, John H. Tietjen, and our pending calls into the ministry, several of my classmates and I walked out of our first face-to-face meeting with the head of our church body.
- On January 21, 1974, in response to the jury-rigged suspension of Dr. Tietjen from his position as president of our seminary, 274 students (a population that is larger than the total student population of many seminaries today) declared “a moratorium on all classes until such time as the Seminary Board of Control officially and publicly declares which members of the faculty, if any, are to be considered as false teachers and what Scriptural and Confessional principles, if any, have been violated.”<sup>1</sup>
- Less than a month later, on February 19, 1974, at 11:10 a.m., we adopted a resolution that ended our moratorium (or did it become eternal?). While our beloved faculty members who had risked



“Exiled” on doors of seminary, *Seminex* walk-out, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. ELCA Archives photo.

1. “A Student Resolution by Students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri” is produced in full in Frederick W. Danker, *No Room in the Brotherhood: The Preus-Otten Purge of Missouri* (St. Louis, Mo: Clayton Publishing House, 1977), 198–199.

and lost their jobs as they honored the student moratorium looked on, we declared that “we will continue to pursue our calling as students in preparation for ministry in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod under the (recently) terminated faculty.” Further, we stated that “we believe they are innocent of any charge of false doctrine and, in fact, are faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.” Then came the punch line: “We therefore resolve to resume our theological education in exile, trusting in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

- From the seminary’s Field House where we had met on the morning of the 19th, we immediately marched across the seminary campus, planted crosses with our names written on them in cemetery-like rows in the quadrangle, and proceeded to the arched entrance to the campus, which was closed with two black panels that read simply “exiled.” Then as the bells of Luther Tower tolled in the background, we walked off the campus and were welcomed into exile by Eden Seminary Dean, Walter Brueggemann.
- The next day we began classes on the campuses of St. Louis University, a Roman Catholic School, and Eden Seminary, a seminary of the United Church of Christ. Diaspora had begun.

Those were the headline-making things we did. Before, during, and after these pivotal moments we did many other things:

- We wrote documents—many of them, debated them endlessly, signed them as if our lives depended on them.
- We organized Operation Outreach and sent student representatives all over

the United States to tell our story to the church.

- We moved the Faculty Majority and all their books and worldly goods out of their offices and campus homes in a matter of weeks.
- We reorganized our student government to deal with a fully engaged student body that needed to raise a lot of money, respond to the media, handle rumors, and deal with the anxieties of protest and risk.
- The entire student government (aka, the Moratorium Coordinating Committee) traveled to Chicago to interrupt a meeting of the Missouri Synod’s Council of Presidents and lay the students’ concerns about their seminary and their futures individually before each of the District Presidents.

Those were our collective acts. Individually, we did all kinds of other things. We told spouses and parents that we were risking our futures—and why that was necessary. Many of us moved out of student housing. Almost all of us risked losing precious financial aid. And all of us talked with each other—endlessly.

Most of these individual things went on out of public view. Some were tragic. Some were funny. I recall a mission I was given on a Saturday in February during the height of the crisis, one that I have never mentioned publicly, but do so now trusting that the statute of limitations has expired. Robert Bertram, chairman of the Faculty Advisory Committee, had given me the faculty’s response to President Preus’ “Message to the Church,” an inflammatory document that attempted to offset the public relations impacts of the moratorium. My mission: take the document and deliver it to President Preus. Clutching the precious document to my chest, I drove to Synod headquarters then located at 500

2. “The Seminex Resolution” is reproduced in *ibid.*, 317–318.

North Broadway in St. Louis. Since it was Saturday, the building was closed. So I did the logical thing. I tried every door until I found an open one. After 15 minutes, I had

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reached my goal, and I carefully placed the faculty document on the President’s desk. Then I retreated as quickly as I could. I phoned Bob Bertram to report successful completion of my assignment. There was a pause. When he heard that I had placed the document on a desk in an office that was closed for the weekend, Bertram advised that we needed to get it to Dr. Preus right away since the media would soon find out about it. So I went back into the building, got the document and then hand-delivered it to Preus’ apartment in the Mansion House Towers. In the media the next day, President Preus complained that the document reached him only an hour before the press called him for comment. It could have been worse.

The point of my little confession is that what we did in those days was very human, full of contingency, foibles, and “plan Bs.”

Clearly, we students did not act alone.

We were taught superbly by a faculty and administrative staff that had been under fire for years and repeatedly gave honest testimony about what it believed. In their classrooms, publications, and corporate documents they kept challenging us—and the wider church—to discover the gospel and trust it. Their brave teaching and moral integrity during unfair inquisitions, distorting misrepresentations, and cruel actions of condemnation and termination undergirded all that we did. When the time was ripe, they created with us a seminary in exile, one that partnered in an unprecedented way with a Jesuit Divinity School, a liberal Protestant seminary, and LSTC to give fully accredited degrees backed by the Association of Theological Schools. No one but Seminex’s intrepid Academic Dean John Damm knows what all it took to pull that off.

Beyond the faculty, a significant group of people, first in our own denomination and then quickly beyond it, organized support for us. They created new institutions. First came ELIM (Evangelical Lutherans in Mission). A few years later the AELC became a temporary denominational home. The people at work in ELIM and the AELC raised money. And they did everything they could to produce placements for seminarians who suddenly faced prospects of “no calls.”

We also did deeper things:

- We became a worshipping community of great power and beauty. No one will forget the worship services that provided the animating spirit of all that we did.
- We became a community of teaching and learning about ministry that transcended the barriers of classrooms and textbooks.
- We practiced a type of shared leadership and responsibility that called for each of us to act and to be open to the

leadership of others.

- The challenges of crisis created an opening for us to know each other much more fully than faculties and student bodies normally know each other. Warts and all.
- In many ways, the moratorium and exile experience was an ongoing experiment in practical ecclesiology. As we argued endlessly, improvised like mad, and sang like angels, we were learning what it meant to speak “with one voice” and to “be the body of Christ.”
- We were learning the important lesson that it was possible to be *faithful and critical* members of the church.
- We did not know it then, but we were taking steps beyond the denominational way of organizing religion.

Why did we do these things? There were so many reasons, obviously. Let me offer a few more general factors that shaped our story:

- Collectively we were the progeny of a German Lutheran tribe that came to America in the nineteenth century to create its own Zion on the Mississippi. In the twentieth century that tribe, which had organized itself into the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, met the fate of all immigrant groups who come to the United States. It became American. In the years leading up to Seminex, the close family and ethnic culture that held Missouri together was being stretched by the boom of post World War II Protestantism. What I only discovered in retrospect was that from infancy on, I had been groomed to be part of a clergy elite (let’s call them *Herren Pastoren*) for a church and sub-culture that were moving toward a different model of religious community and leadership.
- We carried a heritage that valued learning and drank deeply—both clergy and

laity—from the wide educational rivers flowing through America. We learned that there were more ways than one to read the Bible, to celebrate the Eucharist, to view complex moral issues. This stunning flow of new knowledge into the LCMS broke the doctrinal and cultural consensus that the denomination had so carefully constructed.

- In the 1960s and ’70s, American culture was in a period of great social and political upheaval. Issues of race, Vietnam, sexuality, political malfeasance, and poverty were in our living rooms every night.
- American pluralism was deepening. It permeated the daily life of all Americans (including those of us within the Missouri Synod) as we moved to suburbia, began to climb career ladders, and encountered more and more differences in our neighbors.
- All of our institutions were being tested by new social, political, and economic realities. Hugh Hecló’s book, *On Thinking Institutionally*, has a four-page list of American political scandals that took place at the federal government level from the Eisenhower administration down to the present moment. Our institutions became simultaneously more powerful, more bureaucratic, and less trustworthy. Including the church.<sup>3</sup>
- America was in the early phases of its culture wars as conservatives and liberals squared off on everything from abortion to prayer in the schools to the use of new medical technologies. America’s denominations were beginning to come apart over these issues—and that trend continues with a vengeance today.

3. Hugh Hecló, *On Thinking Institutionally* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 17–22.

These powerful dynamics roiled the waters in the Missouri Synod's congregations and classrooms. Deep conflict crystallized in the 1960s and the flashpoints became the questions of biblical interpretation and relationships with people of other denominations and faith communities. We happened to be the lucky few who were at Concordia Seminary when the denomination could no longer hold the tension. The explosion became our learning op-

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portunity as we asked in existential ways what it meant to be Lutheran in a world of intensifying conflict, new knowledge, and many options. Drawing on American traditions of democracy and our own Lutheran confessional understandings of the centrality of the gospel and the freedom/duty of a Christian to protest wrongs in the church, we came to a conclusion that our consciences mattered, that authority could and at times should be challenged, that ethics (how you treat people) revealed character, that new knowledge was not the enemy, and that the gospel should not be

bound. So we acted.

Let me push into this larger set of cultural realities (we used to call them modernity) in a different way. I want to step outside our own story for a moment and draw on a new book by James Carroll, called *Practicing Catholic*.<sup>4</sup> Carroll is a widely published Catholic writer who happened to be a Paulist Priest who left the priesthood in 1974.

In his memoir, Carroll recalls growing up in an ethnic enclave: Irish Chicago. He tells of entering an intact Catholic world of piety and patriotism. As he recounts his coming of age and preparation for the priesthood, he ponders his youthful encounters with the American military (his father was a general who advised Defense Secretary Robert McNamara about Vietnam bombing strategies). He recalls the impacts of the Kennedy election—on American Catholicism and on the country. He was in college when Kennedy was assassinated and when John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council. Those two episodes—the Kennedy era, which signaled Catholicism's arrival at full citizenship in the United States—and Vatican II, which attempted a full reform of the Catholic Church, pulled him past his parochial beginnings.

Soon, he was a seminarian in the mid-60s, watching his church deal with new knowledge—about the liturgy, about the Catholic Church's deep complicity in centuries of anti-Semitism, about how its claims to political and theological superiority had overwhelmed everything else it valued, about the Scriptures themselves—and how they, too, carried prejudices against Jews and women, about the truth contained in other religions, about the gifts of conscience, science, and modernity itself.

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4. James Carroll, *Practicing Catholic* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009).

Those discoveries were soon followed by cascading and crushing disappointments that began with the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, but went on to include Roman Catholicism's retreat from its Vatican II breakthroughs beginning with the promulgation by Pope Paul VI of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 and gaining momentum through the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Carroll's formative years, which overlapped with ours, were filled with exciting new voices—Thomas Merton, William Sloane Coffin, Daniel Berrigan, etc. His first call as priest was as a campus minister—most of his time at Boston University was spent counseling conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War. As he watched his church retreat from its breakthroughs, he found a new vocation as a writer and left the priesthood in 1974, our year of exile. Then as a practicing Catholic layman he devoted his life to a critique of papal absolutism, to its abusive system of celibacy, and most recently to Catholicism's pedophile scandal, both its 10,000 known victims and the church's massive cover-up.

As I read Carroll's memoir, I saw our story differently. Although we were a small group in a corner of world Lutheranism, we were participating in something much bigger than we could grasp at that time. As Carroll's story reminds us, the whole Christian church was going through sweeping change, as Paul Tillich said—a shaking of the foundations<sup>5</sup>. Every part of the church's life was being debated—its worship, scriptures, doctrine, polity, place in society. We were participating in a great global argument about what the church was. The largest part of the global church

had just proposed a total reformation.

Our country was going through a similar time of trial. We were rethinking our role in the world, our racism, sexism, and assumed Protestantism. The world was witnessing the collapse of one totalitarianism after another. Recall the Velvet Revolution in Eastern Europe and the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa. We were in the midst of a century of revolution.

Carroll concludes his book with a quote from Pope John XXIII's opening address to the Second Vatican Council. "In the daily exercise of our pastoral ministry, and much to our sorrow, we sometimes listen to those who, consumed with zeal, have scant judgment or balance. To such ones the modern world is nothing but betrayal and ruin. They claim that this age is far worse than previous ages.... Today, rather, Providence is guiding us toward a new order of human relationships, which, thanks to human effort and yet far surpassing human hopes, will bring us to the realization of still higher and undreamed of human experiences."<sup>6</sup>

At bottom, I think that what we were participating in when we created Seminex is what John XXIII spoke of as God's "guiding us to a new order of human relationships." Inside the church, outside it in secular society, the Spirit of God was moving the world to a new order. To be sure, we have not fully arrived, but it was that great movement that we were participating in.

So, what's happened since? If I had unlimited time and money I would deploy a phalanx of LSTC's seminarians to interview all of those who participated in the Seminex story. If they asked the right questions, we would have quite a story about God's re-ordering work.

But since I cannot do that, let me

5. The phrase was the title of an oft-cited sermon by Paul Tillich. See Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948).

6. Carroll, location 4411–4415 (Kindle).



answer my “what happened” question this way. In the world of chaos theory there is a technical term, “the butterfly effect.” Its basic idea is that “small variations of the initial condition of a dynamic system may produce large variations in the long term behavior of the system.” One butterfly’s unusual wing flap in Brazil could set off a tornado in Texas.<sup>7</sup>

If we could track the Seminex butterflies, here is some of what we would find:

- The AELC catalyzes the formation of the ELCA.
- Many Seminex graduates become pastors of ELCA congregations and through countless pastoral actions set off new dynamics in congregations across the country—and in thousands of individual lives. Other graduates do the same within the LCMS.
- Faculties of Lutheran seminaries and universities have felt the impacts of Seminex wing flaps as Seminex faculty and graduates joined their ranks. Their scholarship has created new knowledge used around the world, yielding world-class publications and new scholarly debates.
- Not-for-profit organizations like Bread for the World have been led by Seminex graduates, and their efforts have changed laws, fed people, and altered economic realities. Other graduates have changed the conditions of dying people, prisoners, and health care providers through chaplaincy ministries.

- Confessing movement apostles like Edward Schroeder have crossed the globe to connect with others who seek to live gospel-centered lives.
- A new Lutheran hymnal has Seminex fingerprints on it and a new generation is learning to sing with one voice.
- A number of Seminex graduates now serve as bishops of the ELCA, working in a time of denominational decline to build up pastors and church leaders for a new order of relationships.

A lot of wings are flapping. What are all these wings doing? Einar Billing, a Swedish Lutheran bishop, once wrote that “my call is the form my life takes as God organizes it around the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>8</sup>

Organizing life around the forgiveness of sins is not a bad answer to the “what happened” question. The story of Seminex is not finished. Most of it has gone unnoticed. However, what happened in the Seminex events of 1974 has had and will have long-term consequences. Come to think of it, what we did was set in motion by something less visible than a butterfly wing, a single breath of new life in a garden outside of Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. Remembering the gospel released there and its stunning afterlife we press on in our faithful, critical callings.

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7. “Butterfly Effect,” [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butterfly\\_effect](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butterfly_effect).

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8. Einar Billing, *Our Calling*, Conrad Bergendoff, tr. (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Book Concern, 1947), 11.



# How My Mind Has Changed

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Paul F. Goetting

Several years ago, our family gathered in St. Louis for a reunion. Before their arrival, I had opportunity to spend some time in the library of Concordia Seminary, where I have studied. I was especially interested in obtaining a copy of the January 1955 issue of *The Seminarian*, the student monthly publication. I had written an article in that issue only months before graduation, and a copy was no longer to be found in our household. The librarian quickly retrieved the issue and provided me with a photocopy. As I examined the table of contents, I experienced an elevated level of hubris. I was astonished! My article was surrounded by those of fellow seminarians who later went on to distinguished academic careers (Robert Smith, Everett Kalin, and Martin Marty). I never realized I had been surrounded at that time by individuals of such quality! I was thrilled.

Then I read my article, and my ego began to deflate. On a quick reading of the article, it felt as though I had not grown. The article focused on the Christian faith interacting with politics and government, especially in the life and ministry of the laity. As I read, I asked myself: Am I stuck in the past or was I way ahead of my time? What I had written in 1955 was not much different from what I believe now. The only response to the article that I remember was that of a classmate who told me, "Your article does not belong in a theological journal." Later, however, I realized the article was a factor in leading a faculty committee to recommend me to teach social studies at Concordia College, Milwaukee, following graduation, which

certainly affected my career path.

I joined the Concordia Seminary faculty in 1969. Three years prior to joining the faculty, I completed an S.T.M. at The Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia and spent the next three years in an ecumenical "action/research" program. I was called to the program by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Mission Board; the project was generated by the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Both my S.T.M. and the "think tank" were centered on restructuring the local congregation for a more effective ministry by the laity in engaging issues of social justice. My call to the faculty included developing programs that were similar. Much of what I had hoped to accomplish at the seminary had to be placed on "hold" because of an intense conflict that raged between the leadership of the LCMS and the seminary, a conflict that brought major adverse changes, affecting every sector of seminary life. Many goals were never achieved. However, Professor Robert Bertram and I were able to develop an important program, titled *Theology in Metropolitan Experience (TIME QT)* which I still consider a major accomplishment.

My commitment to this subject has indeed grown through these years. I have particularly sought clarity on the necessity of connecting Luther's insistence on faith active in love with the Christian's engagement in issues of justice, especially carried out in the context of multiple offices and callings.

Christian faith reaches deep into God's word for insight, courage, and strength in struggles against evil and corruption. At the same time, we need to learn to pursue justice with reason and our senses, distinguished from the reality of faith, while also maintaining the inseparability of the two in the Christian life.

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All this has led me to insist that we need to review our public expressions of the meaning of ordination and clarify for the public that the grounding of all ministry lies in holy baptism, that the call to public ministry is not separate from the

common call of all Christians to offer our whole lives as a living sacrifice to God in view of the mercies given in Christ. We may properly teach that the call of the pastor through the congregation (a very human process) should be accepted as a call by God to a specific office, the office of public ministry (though this is not the pastor's only calling since he or she is also father and mother, husband and wife, son and daughter, citizen, etc.). At the same time, we need to teach that such a process is in effect similar to the calls received by each lay person, calls by God, through very human channels, to particular ministries, whether that of a garbage collector or an executive or a pastor. For both clergy and laity, the call is a call to witness to Christ's redemption and the promise of the resurrection and to engage God's world creatively. We are to shape the present world toward the better world that is not yet here, the better world for which God calls us to work even now, hindered as we are amidst the fog of a fallen world (even as we await "The End"). The church's process of calling a pastor ought to be a public model for the laity in approaching their various callings, offices, and stations in life.

*This piece, originally presented at the Seminex 35th Anniversary celebration, has been excerpted from a book, now completed by Goetting and awaiting publication, titled Bottom Up, The Inverted Church.*

# Building on the One Foundation— Bible: Book of Faith<sup>1</sup>

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago  
Seminox Reunion, June 24, 2009

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Edgar Krentz

*Christ Seminary–Seminox Professor Emeritus of New Testament  
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*

It was about the Bible—but not only about the Bible. The issues that led to Christ Seminary–Seminox, to Evangelical Lutherans in Mission (ELIM), to the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), to families divided, and to questions of personal and communal identity were more serious than debates about the Bible. Our common experience, which brought us here today, has infinite variety in our memories, takes us to different physical locations, recalls different faces and conversations, and inevitably leads to different ways of thinking about “the Missouri War” of 1973 ff.<sup>2</sup>

It was about the Bible, to be sure, but not just about whether historical criticism was a legitimate mode of interpretation. That exercised the ultra-conservative right, not the faculty. Rather, the basic issues were the relationship of the Bible to authority

in the church, the relationship of the Bible to theology, and the priority of gospel to the Bible in the life and work of the church.

It was about the Bible, but not about whether the Bible is authoritative. Everyone agreed about that, strange as it may sound. We had all taken our ordination vows seriously, and so we recognized the Scriptures as “the sole rule and norm of faith and life.”

It was about the Bible, about how faith reads the Bible, about the way the Bible relates to our faith, about how it “says what God wants it to say and does what God wants it to do.” That formulation comes from a statement adopted by the faculty titled “The Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures” many years before.

## I. The Bible, Book of Faith?

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1. Revised and shortened version of the paper as delivered.

2. In April and May 2003, John Tietjen spoke in Texas about four different themes. His first topic was the Bible in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) wars. All four were recorded and are available on DVDs. They are the only oral record the author has of John’s speaking. He stressed that the gospel was the key to the Bible.

1.1. We are not here simply to relive the past, as significant as it was and is. Rather we are here to think about Scripture’s place in ministry today. The title given to this presentation reflects the emphasis on biblical knowledge in a five-year program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Certainly that program is needed. Go into any bookstore and look in the

religion section. You will find Bibles in many different translations, niche Bibles aimed at special groups: newly married, teen-agers, college students, ultra-conservatives; name a group and there will likely be a Bible for them.

1.2. Yet, there is an amazing amount of biblical illiteracy abroad in the land. Entering seminary students often need to use the index to locate a biblical book. Teach an adult forum on almost anything in the Bible and discover the bizarre ideas people have—not just on the Apocalypse of John. There is an appalling lack of biblical knowledge, though, as Matthew reminds us, it is not smarts or IQ that are the precondition for the revelation of God's mercy (Matt 11:25–30).

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## In short, there is a famine in the land, a famine of hearing the word of God.

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The liturgical reading of biblical texts compounds the difficulties. What the lectionary compilers have done, without intending to do so, is create a canon within the biblical canon. Though unintentionally, they have taught people to read individual stories from the Gospels, or smaller sections of Acts and the epistles as if that is the way one should read and hear biblical texts. Most people never read any biblical book from beginning to end, let alone in one sitting. Pastors—not Seminec grads, I'm sure—are often more concerned to relate the liturgical readings

to one another than to interpret a text as part of a larger document. Pastors too often interpret a text without betraying knowledge of the stresses that a particular New Testament book has. I hear more sermons than I preach, and I find that a major problem with many sermons that I hear, often even in seminary chapels, is the tendency to harmonize or complete what a text “lacks” from elsewhere in the New Testament. In Year B some preachers read a text from Mark and then import Matthean, Lukan, or Johannine material as if it were all of a piece. The result is that in the year of Mark, sermons often massacre Markan themes.

Take another reality into account. We Lutherans sometimes feel that preaching the gospel involves a simple reference to the cross as the place where sins are removed and power is given. Two results follow: 1) We lose the specific stress of a biblical text or book and run the risk of foreshortening the riches of the Bible. 2) We [please notice I say “we” and not “you”] miss making the tie between the good news and whatever we are urging people to do or to be, that is, we may fall into simple moralism. Before you get too angry I confess that I am overdoing this analysis of Lutheran preaching. But I also say that I have heard sermons from Lutheran pulpits that did not even have that truncated gospel. Pure moralism replaces gospel proclamation; American love of the self-made person becomes the model for success in church and ministry. In short, there is a famine in the land, a famine of hearing the word of God.

## II. The Bible, Book of Faith

That title is ambiguous. Does it imply that the Bible causes faith? Defines faith? Judges the content of faith? Is it, to use the old Latin formulation, concerned

with the *fides qua creditur* or the *fides quae creditur*? What is the relation of the Bible to faith, however defined?

2.1. And which Bible? We are committed to the prophetic and apostolic scriptures at our ordination. But as a Lutheran I have no list of what is included in those prophetic and apostolic writings. The Reformation insistence on *sola scriptura* did not lead to an adoption of a canon list. Rome adopted such a list at Trent in 1545, including the deuterocanonical Old Testament books, and canonized the Latin text.<sup>3</sup> In response, the Reformed tradition adopted the Protestant 66-book canon, expressly rejecting the apocryphal books in the Second Helvetic Confession in Switzerland, the synod at Dordrecht in Holland, and the Westminster Confession in England. The Anglican Church included the apocrypha in their English translations, beginning with Coverdale in 1535. Luther also included the apocrypha in his 1534 complete Bible.<sup>4</sup> Luther even interrupted his translation of the Old Testament to publish a translation of the Wisdom of Solomon as instruction for the German princes. And “Now Thank We All Our God,” the hymn we sang yesterday, is based on Jesus ben Sirach 44–50.

In my opinion, first generation Lutherans consciously decided not to adopt a canon, under the influence of Martin Luther. Luther’s view of the Bible was surprisingly open. In September, 1522, he published his German New Testament. Luther followed Jerome and Erasmus in publishing a preface to the New Testament and to many of its individual books. In

the table of contents Luther listed and numbered 23 New Testament books, then left an inch or so of empty space and listed four more—Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation—which he left unnumbered.

In his prefaces to these books he interprets that decision. Hebrews was written long after the Apostles. “It flatly denies and forbids to sinners any repentance after baptism.... This seems, as it stands, to be contrary to all the gospels and to St. Paul’s epistles.... However that may be, it is still a marvelously fine epistle.... Therefore we should not be deterred if wood, straw or hay are perhaps mixed in with them [i.e., gold or silver].” Luther does not like James: “...it is flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works. ... It does not once mention the passion, the resurrection, or the Spirit of Christ. Therefore St. James epistle is really an epistle of Straw.” Jude is copied from 2 Peter, but apostles don’t copy. (Luther is wrong on this one; 2 Peter borrowed from Jude.) Of the Apocalypse Luther says that apostles write clearly, but this book is obscure. His spirit cannot find a place to rest in this book. He did not comment on it, though he did base one hymn on it, “Dear is to me the glorious maid,” based on Apocalypse 12 applied to the church. Luther prized books that urged Christ on the reader. *Was Christum treibet* became the touchstone for evaluating biblical books. Luther has a christological criterion by which he passes judgment on books in the canon.

It is significant that the *Formula of Concord*, written after the Catholic and Reformed canon decisions, speaks of “our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings... as to the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and

3. See Johannes Leipold, *Geschichte des newtestamentlichen Kanons* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1907), Zweiter Teil: *Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, 43–51.

4. See *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, ed. Siegfried Meurer (Reading and New York: United Bible Societies, 1991).

evaluated.”<sup>5</sup> But nowhere does the *Formula of Concord* take up the canon question! We are left with an undefined canon, an example of the genius of Lutheranism continuing an emphasis from Luther.

### *The Bible on Itself*

2.2. Why is that? One way to answer that question is to look at the Bible itself. When one does that carefully, paying attention to details of the text, one discovers a number of things. The first is that the Bible is not a unified whole, a perfect book without contradictions or problems. Indeed, one medieval Jewish scholar argued that the very fact that the Bible contains errors is proof of its divine origin.<sup>6</sup> Only God could have the chutzpah to put forward a sacred text full of errors. Any human would make certain that there would be no contradictions in the sacred book. The Bible is a library, not a single work. It contains ancient works of history, poetry, and mythology; short stories; letters; sermons; and much more. These books have differing stresses and theologies that confront a variety of life situations. Imagine how confused the hearers would have been if Paul had dictated Galatians and Philipians on the same day and told his scribe to send them off, and the scribe mislabeled them, sending Galatians to Philippi and Philipians to the Galatians.

2.3. What are the effects of this insight? One recognizes the various ways that people have dealt with that variety. The ultraconservative or fundamentalist

argues that such inconsistencies came in the transmission of the text. That hardly gives us an inerrant Bible now, and it is incapable of demonstration. A frequent, consequent error here is to regard the Bible as authenticating Jesus and the gospel, an inversion of early Christian biblical interpretation. People who hold this view often regard the Old Testament as providing anticipations of details in the life of Jesus. Now it is true that one cannot understand the New Testament without the Old. Augustine’s old formulation is valid: *Novum testamentum in vetere latet; vetus testamentum in novo patet*; “The New Testament lies hidden inside the Old; the Old Testament is made clear in the New,” to give a rough paraphrase.<sup>7</sup> The editions of the Greek New Testament by Eberhard Nestle used to have the Latin epigraph from Johann Albrecht Bengel: *Te totum applica ad rem; rem totam applica ad te* (Preface to his manual edition of the Greek New Testament of 1734). Put the two Latin mottos together and you have a terse hermeneutic.

2.4. Another unsatisfactory solution was either to settle on one gospel, a la Marcion [an edited Luke], or to try to harmonize the gospels—or Samuel-Kings with Chronicles—into one coherent account (à la Tatian’s *Diatessaron*). Take one example, the account of the raising of Jairus’ daughter in Mark, the earliest Gospel, and in Matthew’s parallel account. In Mark Jairus approaches Jesus with the request that he come and heal his sick daughter. On the way, Jesus stops to speak with the woman with the twelve-year menstrual period. Then Jairus’ servants come with

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5. Rober Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000)*, *Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, Preface, Binding Summary 3, p. 527.

6. Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* (München: C.H. Beck, 1924–1961), vol. VI.

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7. Augustine: “The NT lies hidden in the Old; the Old is unveiled in the New,” Catechism § 129; cf. Dei Verbum § 16. Reference from p. 33 in Jay Scott Newman. “The Church’s Book and the Sacred Liturgy,” *Lutheran Forum* 40 (2009): 29–35.

information that his daughter has died; so he should not trouble Jesus—whose response to Jairus is “Keep on believing!” Both with the woman and Jairus the story stresses that there is no boundary to what faith anticipates. The stress disappears in Matthew; there an unnamed ruler asks Jesus to raise his dead daughter; and the woman is not healed until Jesus spoke to her. The daughter cannot be both dead and alive at the time the request is made. In the sixteenth century Andreas Osiander, unable to harmonize the three accounts (the story is also in Luke), held that Jesus raised her from the dead three times. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum* (Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1. 101).

2.5. Much more satisfactory is to recognize how the New Testament came into being. The proclamation of the crucified and risen Christ preceded the writing of the Gospels by decades. The oral proclamation came first. Paul’s letters, the oldest texts in the New Testament, are all *ad hoc* documents, drawing out the implications of the earlier proclamation. Take the oldest text of all, 1 Thessalonians, as evidence thereof. Paul reminds the Thessalonians how they had received his proclamation, how they “turned from statues to serve a God who was authentic and alive, and to await his son, whom he raised from the dead, the one who rescues from the wrath that is on the way” (1 Thess 1:9–10). Paul’s letters, like all early Christian in-house proclamation, are *anamnēsis*, recall to memory; for example in the Lord’s Supper, 1 Cor 11:25: “Do this, as often as you do it for remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” The memory there is the tie to Jesus’ death; it has nothing to do with the recitation of the dominical words. Nils Dahl reminded us of that when he distinguished *anamnēsis* from *kérygma*, the latter being missionary

proclamation.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel that he preached in 1 Cor 15:3–5, citing an early Christian creed. That gospel stressed the death of Jesus on behalf of sins. Paul refers back to that in 1 Cor 15:17, where he says that “If Christ is not raised, you are still in your sins.” But those two passages and Rom 4:7, a citation of the Old Testament, are the only three times he uses *hamartia* in the plural.<sup>8</sup> Paul uses *hamartia* in the singular forty-seven times in Romans, twice in 1 Corinthians, three

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times in 2 Corinthians, three times in Galatians, and once in 1 Thessalonians (i.e., fifty-six times in the singular).<sup>9</sup> Paul does not speak of forgiving singular sin, since it is a slave master that holds people in bondage. You don’t forgive a slave master;

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8. The plural does occur in Eph 2:1, Col 1:14, and four times in 1 and 2 Timothy, all in my opinion deutero-Pauline letters.

9. Kurt Aland, *Vollständige Konkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1978–1983). Band II: Spezialübersichten, 16.



you redeem or liberate the slaves from the master. Think of Rom 8:2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has freed you from the law of sin and death.” Sin, the law, and death are the unholy three in Paul, not “sin, death, and the devil,” as my father taught me in confirmation class.

Paul’s proclamation about Jesus and/or the early Christian *homologiai* (confessions) found in the New Testament came first. His writings followed later. Paul never read a gospel. For him “Gospel” always meant proclamation, good news about Jesus. That too has *Nachklang!* It reverberates through history, especially in Luther. The ELCA constitution is on target in its unalterable doctrinal article. The Word of God is first a person, Jesus, then the proclamation about Jesus, and only in the third place the written Scripture which testifies to Jesus. I cite the relevant article:

2.02. This church confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.

b. The proclamation of God’s message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God’s Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God’s revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God’s Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship

for service in the world.

2.03. This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.

2.07 This church confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scripture and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God’s mission in the world.

This formulation agrees with Martin Luther’s view of the Bible. Think of the fourth stanza of *Ein Feste Burg*:

Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn  
Und kein Dank dazu haben.  
Er ist bei uns wohl auf den Plan  
*Mit seinem Geist und Gaben*

Did you hear it? *Das Wort*, the word (line 1), is a person, Christ. *Er [he] ist bei uns wohl auf den Plan* (line 3). *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* repeated the translation of *The Lutheran Book of Worship* that badly mistranslated this and thus obscured what is for Luther essential. That “Er” refers to Jesus, a person, and not to a written text.

Luther stressed that the word is first and foremost oral! Read his Epiphany sermon of 1522, i. e., early on in his life as reformer (I have the key phrases in boldface).

Christ has two witnesses of his birth and rule. One is the Scriptures **or the word spoken through the mouth**. Saint Paul (2 Cor 4:4) and Saint Peter (2 Pet 1:19) call that word a light and a lamp. Now the word is not understood until the light goes on. For the prophets are opened up through the gospel.... **For in the New Testament preaching should be oral with a living voice** and bring to our ears in language what was

earlier hidden in letters and unclear face. The NT is nothing else than an opening and revelation of the OT.

That's why Christ himself did not write down his teaching, as Moses did, he gave it orally and ordered it to be passed on orally and gave no command to write it. The Apostles wrote little, and not all, but only Peter, Paul, John and Matthew.... **Therefore it is not at all the NT way to write books of Christian doctrine**, but without books in every place there should be good, learned, spiritual, diligent preachers, who draw the living word out of the Old Testament and act as the apostles did. For before they wrote, they had with their bodily voice preached and converted the people, which was their true apostolic work.... **That one however has to write books is already a great falling away and a breaking of the Spirit**, that necessity has compelled and not the manner of the NT.

Think again of Luther and the Confessions:

I certainly grant that many *passages* in the Scriptures are obscure and hard to elucidate, but that is due, not to the exalted nature of their subject, but to our own linguistic and grammatical ignorance; and it does not in any way prevent our knowing all the *contents* of Scripture. For what solemn truth can the Scriptures still be concealing, now that the seals are broken, the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, and the greatest of all mysteries brought to light—that Christ, God's Son, became man, that God is Three in One, that Christ suffered for us, and will reign forever? And are not these things known, and sung in our streets? **Take Christ from the Scriptures—what more will you find in them? (Tolle Christum e Scripturis; quid amplius invenies in eis?)** You see, then, that the entire content of the Scriptures has

now been brought to light, even though some passages which contain unknown words remain obscure.<sup>10</sup>

Or consider what Luther says about the church and the oral gospel:

For, prior to Lord's Supper and Baptism the Gospel is the one most certain and preeminent mark of the church. For only through the Gospel is she conceived, formed, fed, born, raised, cradled, clothed, adorned, strengthened, outfitted and protected. In brief the entire life and nature of the church consists of the word of God.... **When I speak of the Gospel, I understand in that the oral word, not the written word....**<sup>11</sup>

Luther calls Scripture Christ's swaddling cloths:

Therefore dismiss your own opinions and feelings, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, in order that you may find that divine wisdom which God here lays before you in such simple guise as to quench all pride. **Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds (Luke 2:12). Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ who lies in them.**<sup>12</sup>

The Holy Scriptures are God's word,

10. Martin Luther. *On the Bondage of the Will*. A new translation by J. Packer and O. R. Johnston. (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell, 1957), 71.

11. *Ad librum eximii Magistri Nostri Magistri Ambrosii Catharini*, 1521. Weimar Ausgabe (WA) 7,721,9ff.

12. Helmut Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan, eds., *Luther's Works*, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986), Vol. 35, p. 236.

written (as I might say), put into letters and spelled, just as Christ is the eternal word of God, concealed in human form, and just as Christ is contained and acted in the world, so it also goes with the written word of God.<sup>13</sup>

In Gal 1:6–9 Paul stresses that a speaker, even if he himself or an angel from heaven, does not authenticate the gospel. It is the content that matters, not the speaker. The true mark of Scripture is whether it urges Christ, as Luther's Preface to James in his September Testament makes clear:

For the task (office) of a true apostle is that he preach of Christ's suffering, testing, and office and lay the foundation of Christian faith.... And all correctly operating books agree that they all preach and urge Christ. That is the true test, by which to judge all books, when one sees whether they urge Christ or not, since all Scripture shows Christ.<sup>14</sup>

Thus the gospel creates the church, not the church the gospel. The church is *creatura verbi*, not *creator verbi*:

**For the church is born out of the word of promise through faith, and it is nurtured and preserved by the same word, that is, the church is constituted by the promise, not the promise of God through the church.**

The word of God is without compare over the church, over which word of God the church as a creature has no power, to found something, to order

or to do something; rather she be founded, ordered, and made [through the word].<sup>15</sup>

Thus Luther stresses again and again the priority of the proclaimed gospel over the written Scriptures.

2.6. Read the New Testament carefully and **you will understand what faith really is**. For Paul faith is not something with precise content, not *fides quae*. It is rather *fides qua*, even when Paul speaks of the *pistis Christou*. This is one of the hotly debated items in current New Testament scholarship. I agree with those who argue for a subjective genitive and translate the phrase as "Christ's fidelity [to God]."<sup>16</sup> The parade exemplar of faith is Abraham in Romans 4. Paul begins with the call of Abraham. Abraham was not a believer when God called him. But he "believed on the God who justifies the ungodly, and that faith was put on the positive side, i.e., for righteousness, *dikaïosynē*." (Rom 4:5) Thus faith is setting one's self before God as a pagan. But Paul goes even further. Abraham "became the father of us all, Jew and Gentile alike, as it stands written, 'I destined you to be the father of many gentiles,' because he believed on God who makes the dead alive and calls non-existent things into existence." (Rom 4:16–17) Faith believes on the creator God; in faith one puts one's self before God as the dead thing that needs resurrection, as the non-existent thing that needs to be made alive. It is striking that Paul says all of this without reference to Jesus in Rom 4:1–23. Only in vv. 24–25 does he refer to

15. WA 6, 560, 33–561, 2.

16. The alternative is to translate it as an objective genitive, "faith in Jesus." I find this is rarely, if ever, what Paul means. See Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983).

13. WA 48,31. See also Ralph Klein, "Reading the Old Testament with Martin Luther—and Without Him," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 36 (2009): 95–103.

14. WADB 7, 384,22–386,2 (1522) =385,22–387,2 (1546): See Werner, Georg Kümmel, "The Continuing Significance of Luther's Prefaces to the New Testament," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37 (1966): 573–81.

Jesus' resurrection as the ultimate evidence that God is the creator God.

2.7. Such faith is always a response to the good news, whether in the Old Testament, as in the case of Abraham, or in the New, in response to the gospel in particular, not in general. From beginning to end the Bible relates its good news to people in specific situations. Second Isaiah is concerned with Israel in exile, not the Israel of the eighth century B.C.E. "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God" would have made little sense in the eighth century, but much when Israel was in exile, not in the land.

Qumran took this literally and went out into the Judean desert. There they built the highway by studying the Torah. They took Second Isaiah's words seriously, literally in so far as the desert was named.<sup>17</sup> John the Baptist did too; Matthew says he came into "the desert of Judea, preaching a baptism of repentance" as the preparation of the desert highway. And he made it very specific. See Luke 3:7–14 for the details.

The two Corinthian letters are good illustrations of this situation-related preaching by Paul. In 1 Corinthians Paul confronts a false interpretation of baptism which led to division, to false security (1 Cor 10:1–16), to sexual immorality (1 Cor 5–6), and to stress on the powerful presence of the Spirit that gave the Corinthians confidence, certainty, and deliverance from slavery to the body. Paul deals with that by stressing the death of Jesus. Paul is glad that he did not baptize many in Corinth: "For (as he puts it) Christ did not send me out to baptize, but to proclaim good news, not in the wisdom of argumentation, in order that the cross of Christ might not be nullified" (1 Cor 1:17). Paul goes on in 1 Cor 1:18–25 to call the

account of the cross the power of God. It is by the stupidity of a proclamation that God decided to save those who believe. So Paul says, "We preach Christ as crucified...the power and wisdom of God." The passage became a key text for the development of the *theologia crucis*, so prized by Lutherans after Blessed Martin. Paul caps those words in 1 Cor 2:1–2: "And I came to you not with excellence of argumentation or wisdom as I announced the mysteries of God. For I decided not to know anything except Jesus Christ as crucified." That determined much theology, and beautifully too. In the face of false security Paul points to the fragile, deadly cross as the key to God's wisdom and powerful action for people.

But 2 Corinthians almost completely reverses this language in the face of a new situation. Now people had come to Corinth suggesting that Paul was a second-rate apostle. He had no letters from the Jerusalem church. And they likely suggested that he had no contact with Jesus during Jesus' lifetime, and hence had no contact with the cross. Look how Paul responds in 2 Cor 13:3–4: "Since you seek proof of Christ who speaks in me, who is not weak for you, but strong in you. For he was also crucified out of weakness, but lives out of God's power. For we too are weak in him, but we live with him out of God's power for you." Now Paul denigrates the fleshly Jesus: "So from this moment we know no one according to the flesh; if in point of fact we have known Christ according to the flesh, we know him in that way no more. So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. Old things have gone away; behold they have become new" (2 Cor 5:16–17). Paul here puts the earthly Jesus under the old creation! He now stresses the Spirit that he had tamed, if not put down, in the first letter. Read 2 Corinthians 3. It is the Spirit that opens up the Old Testament. The letter kills, the Spirit makes alive (3:6).

17. 1QS VIII.11–16. See Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, rev. and extended 4th ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 81.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (3:17). The Lord Jesus is now identified with the Spirit that makes alive. All of this is language that would have been affirmed by the *pneumatikoi* in 1 Corinthians. It provides the proof of Paul’s apostleship. A new situation demands new language, new stresses, new points of contact with Jesus! The cross occupies very different places in Paul’s thought in these two letters to the same church.

This has very practical implications. Proclaiming the gospel does not mean repeating old formulations, as good as they may have been in their day. Paul demonstrates what many of us in this room, who had our preaching ability honed by Richard Caemmerer, learned from him. I listened to him expound the Bible and lead table devotions at Camp Arcadia from the time I was a second grader; I knew him well before I entered the seminary in 1947. There I had him as a teacher of homiletics both in my first and last years. I recall him saying that “You cannot preach the gospel in general, but only in particular.” That means you cannot reduce the gospel to a single formulation.

Western Christianity observes the 900th anniversary of the death of Anselm of Canterbury this year. His *Cur deus homo* strongly influenced western theology to think of the effect of Jesus’ death as a juridical transaction: Jesus’ death removed human sin. Anselm has had a huge influence on our interpretation of Jesus, stressing his death. But to insist on one formulation, even Robert Bertram’s wonderful “sweet swap” interpretation of the death of Jesus, as *the way*, the only way, to interpret Jesus’ significance is too narrow to encompass all that Jesus means. The Bible as Book of Faith is too rich to be so tied to one explanation.

Jack Elliott, my colleague from 1964

until he left for the University of San Francisco, once formulated his definition of gospel as “good news for people in bad situations,” and I would add only “because of Christ.” He had to defend himself against an attack; he refused to identify the gospel with the “forgiveness of sins.” His attacker(s) accused him of being un-confessional, even heretical, since the *Formula of Concord* defined the gospel as the forgiveness of sin. They were wrong. Let me be clear. There is no doubt that one comforts those with guilt on their consciences with the assurance of God’s forgiveness on account of Christ. But guilt feelings are not characteristic of the American psyche, as far as I can tell. People today are more likely feeling that life is futile; that they are under the control of powers over which they have no control, a declining economy, a mortgage that they have difficulty paying off, the cost of college or university or seminary education for their children; that they are only a nine-digit number to their government as April 15 rolls around. The gospel for them is the assurance that God knows them by name, gives meaning to life, and liberates them for joyful living and service.

2.8. Let me say it again! One implication of this diversity in the Bible is that any attempt to impose a single formulation of the biblical gospel on the Bible loses much of what the Bible has to offer. I am a committed Lutheran; I love the Lutheran Confessions. One effect of the Missouri Wars of the seventies was to drive many of us to the Confessions, above all to the *Confessio Augustana* and Melancthon’s *Apologia* of it. *Apologia* 4 formulated its criteria for the gospel: it “illuminates and magnifies the honor of Christ” (*Ap* 4.2); it is *propter Christum*, “on account of Christ” (*Ap* 4.44 et semper). We might add that the biblical gospel always makes Christ necessary and gives glory to God.

This last formulation deserves stress.

Lutherans are often in danger of becoming second-article-of-the-creed Christians. Some thirty years ago Nils Dahl wrote an article titled “The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology.”<sup>18</sup> He pointed out that most published New Testament theologies contained little about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you read the oldest text in the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians, carefully you will note that in that letter Paul identifies the gospel he preached to them as a gospel about the “authentic and living God, who raised his son from the dead, Jesus, the one who rescues us from the wrath that is on the way” (1 Thess 1:9–10). In 1 Thess 2:2 Paul says, “We took courage in our God to proclaim to you the good news about God,” and 1 Thess 2:8 he states, “We decided not only to share with you the good news about God, but also our own lives because you were beloved by us.” I rarely hear sermons or teaching that speak about God, that call for faith in God because of Christ, that do what Jesus did. Sermons about God, if preached at all, are usually preached on Trinity Sunday (Pentecost 1); then they usually deal with God as triune.

2.9. The Bible against the church.<sup>19</sup> The Reformation taught us that the Bible is often also against the church. In the old days we always recalled on Reformation Sunday that *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* were formulated against the Roman Catholic Church. Now it is more difficult, for we at times need to recognize that the Bible is against us. It was so already in the New Testament. Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians and Ephesians, to say nothing

of Hebrews and Mark, were all directed against what Christian communities, churches, thought and confessed. In this sense the Bible does indeed function as critic of our life together (*lex semper accusat*) and also of what we formulate. I am struck again by some of Paul’s manner of thinking. The gospel becomes a criterion of action. Paul accused Peter, “But when I saw that they were not living correctly (walking straight) with reference to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas...” (Gal 2:14). Or take Romans 2:16, where Paul says, “...on the day when God judges the hidden things of people according to my gospel, through Jesus Christ.” This is often mistranslated by moving “according to my gospel” to just after the word “when.” *Kata* with the accusative is the normal phrase for a criterion of judgment in early Greco-Roman ethical theory, which is how it is used here. In Rom 1:16–19 the revelation of the gospel is also a revelation of the wrath of God on unbeliefs! Rejection of the gospel brings down judgment on one’s idolatries. Note the parallel structure between verses 17 and 18; the righteousness of God passes this judgment on idolatry. Once again Luther helps us out.

In 1536 Luther set the following thesis for his doctoral candidate Nicolaus Medler to defend: “Scripture must not be understood against, but for Christ; therefore it must either be referred to Christ or not regarded as true scripture. If our adversaries argue the scriptures against Christ, then we will argue Christ against the scriptures.”<sup>20</sup> Christ against the scriptures puts *sola scriptura* in its proper location for Luther.

Luther spoke out against practices in the church of his day because he was a *Doctor in biblia*. He did not choose this role; it came to him with his professor’s

18. Nils A. Dahl, “The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology,” *Reflection* 73 (1975): 5–8.

19. I owe this formulation to Leander Keck, *The Bible in the Pulpit: The Renewal of Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978) 90.

20. *These von 1535*, WA 39.1.37.



chair. That is still true today. The Bible impels a critique of the church. It is against the church whenever the church becomes the guarantor of the gospel; whenever the church does not carry forward the concern of Jesus for the poor, the marginalized, and the non-people around it.

### III. An autobiographical postscript

3.1. How does the Bible relate to faith? I can answer this question biographically and then ratify that biographical understanding textually and theologically. *Quamquam animus memisse horret luctuque refugit, incipiam.*<sup>21</sup> “Although my mind shrinks from the memory and flees from sorrow, I shall begin.” I grew up in a Lutheran parsonage, attended a Lutheran grade school and the gymnasium in Fort Wayne, from which I graduated in January 1947. I had my first non-Lutheran educational experience in 1947 in the Indiana University extension in Fort Wayne, where a two-semester course in American literature opened my eyes to the humanist way of reading texts.

3.2. The insistence on the inspired, inerrant Bible in the LCMS made me read the biblical texts carefully as a student. That became a necessity when I began teaching at Concordia Seminary in the fall of 1953. It led to two discoveries: 1) Reading the Bible made me aware of the immense variety in the Bible, and 2) Graduate study in classics taught me that I did nothing different there than I did in interpreting the New Testament. These two discoveries led me to think about biblical hermeneutics.

3.2.1. On a sabbatical in Germany, I listened to and learned from Prof. Ernst Käsemann, a radical, critical New Testa-

ment scholar. I heard more Luther from him in 1963 and 1964 than I heard in four academic years at Concordia Seminary. He would often come out of his lecture and say to me, “*Nah ja, Herr Krentz, heut’ war ich ganz Lutherisch, nicht?*” He was truly Lutheran, along with espousing radical, critical views.

3.2.2. The Missouri war led me to read more widely in Luther and the Tapert edition of the Confessions. I wrote *The Historical Critical Method* in the year that Seminex was born. Two or three years later, my eldest son, a graduate student in ancient history said to me, “If you cannot study the history in the Bible the same way I study other ancient texts, it is not a history worth bothering about.” He was right; but it is a history worth bothering about. More important, it concerns the gospel, which is the core factor in our faith. The Bible is important because of the gospel that calls forth faith.

The discussion of theological and social issues regularly leads appeals to the Bible—and to hermeneutical issues about its authority and proper interpretation. On every side we hear appeals to the Bible. The use of the Bible raises incendiary issues in every church body today, as the huge divisions in Anglicanism make clear.<sup>22</sup>

So what have I learned since 1973? Has it been “change and decay”? Or is it “growth and maturation”? I think it is the latter, but you can decide for yourselves which it is after you hear me out today. I can list some of the changes in my thinking, which I think are growth.

22. The Hein-Fry lectures for 2006 by Donald A. Hagner of Fuller Theological Seminary and Donald Senior of the Catholic Theological Union, published in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35,1 (February, 2008): 6–44, are good orientations to the present state of biblical studies.

21. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2:12–13. See <http://noddictionaries.com/vergil/aeneid-2/3–39>.



## IV. Building on the One Foundation

4.1. That formulation implicates the question, just what is the foundation? Well, like you, I learned that the Reformation's *sola scriptura* affirmation is ambiguous at best and dangerous at worst. *Sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide*. Shibboleths of the Reformation. But not in that order! It is all summed up in *solus Christus*. I have come to appreciate Luther and the confessions more and more.

Let me illustrate. 1972 was the 450th anniversary of the publication of Luther's September Testament. I wrote a letter to the general manager of Concordia Publishing House (CPH) suggesting that one way to observe the anniversary would be to publish a true Luther New Testament, with his introduction to the New Testament, with the prefaces to the individual books, and with the books arranged in the order he put them in his September Testament. The general manager responded that CPH did not print its own Bibles; it would be prohibitively expensive to print. He proposed an alternative. If I would write a brief introduction, he would print these prefaces as a separate paperback. I did, and he did. He sent a copy to every pastor on the LCMS roster. It appeared late, in May of 1973, shortly before the New Orleans convention. There irate conservatives accused me of using Luther to support radical, critical study of the Bible. It was Luther's words, not mine that disturbed them, to put it mildly.

Luther confessed at Worms that he could not and would not recant unless he was persuaded by clear Scripture and/or sound reason. Luther's view of the Bible was ambiguous. Take his view of the inspiration of the Bible.<sup>23</sup> Or read Ralph

Klein's lecture on Luther as interpreter of Scripture and read Luther's "On how to read Moses" in vol. 35 of the American edition. He consistently read the Bible through the lens of the gospel.

4.2. Implications and conclusions. What conclusions come with that method? Quite a number, in fact:

1. Properly understood, the Bible defines what faith really is, standing before God as the impious non-Christian who believes on God who justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5) and who calls non-existent things into being.
2. The resurrection of Jesus authenticates his "God and Father" as the God of life and justification who opens up the future.
3. The immense variety within the Bible resists every attempt to impose a unifying reconstruction on its variety. Indeed its variety is a major resource for calling people to faith.
4. There is no one formulation of the gospel that captures the fullness of the biblical resources.
5. The Bible, interpreted from its center, the gospel, is both source for and judge of our witness to Christ.
6. I have learned that asking the right questions is all-important.
7. One final, very *ad hoc* implication. Like Paul "I am not judged by any person; I do not even judge myself" (1 Cor 4:1ff). Rather, like Jesus in 1 Peter 2, I refer my cause to the God who judges justly. And so I have no interest in asking the LCMS for an apology, for

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tion?" in Tuomo Mannermaa, Anja Ghiselli, and Simo Peura, eds. *Thesaurus Lutheri: auf der Suche nach neuen Paradigmen der Luther-Forschung* (Helsinki: Finnische Lutherische Literaturgesellschaft, 1987), 259–278.

23. See Miikka Ruokanen, "Does Luther Have a Theory of Biblical Inspira-

their recognition of me as a legitimate Lutheran, for reinstatement in their clergy, or for vindication by a resolution of an LCMS synodical convention. I am vindicated by God's good news, not by any human activity.

4.3. In 1546 Luther edited his German translation of the New Testament for the last time. The title page pictures Christ on the cross, with Luther kneeling to the right and his elector, Johann Friedrich, kneeling to the left. At the very top stands a hand-written black ink superscription: *ORAVIT, DOCVIT CHRISTUS, FIT VICTIMA, VICTOR*, and at the bottom, *Doct: Mart: Luth: (in red) Witeberg. Gedruckt durch Hans Lufft. 1546*. Below that, in red ink is the following subscription: *VETUS NOVUM (in two columns) testamentum est FONSLVX* (again in two columns) and then in partly obliterated letters *nostrae vitae* (my conjectured restoration).<sup>24</sup> Luther concerned himself with the illustrations in his editions of the Bible. I presume he approved the title page illustration showing the two kneeling figures at the foot of the cross, both subservient to the crucified Christ. I do not know who wrote the two handwritten inscriptions, interpretations of the illustration.

About fifty-two years ago William F. Arndt of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich fame was speaking at his retirement dinner. When he responded to the *oratio* in his honor, he took as his theme a Latin phrase borrowed from F. W. Farrar, *fides manet immota*, "Faith remains unmoved." That fits me too, after fifty-six years of seminary teaching.

And so, *soli deo Gloria propter Christum et beneficia eius*.



24. Dietrich Steinwede, *Reformation: A Picture Story of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 52. Title page from the Lutherhalle, Wittenberg.

# How My Mind Has Changed

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Kurt K. Hendel

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I joined the faculty of Concordia Seminary in July 1973. Hence, I was not subjected to the interviews, the accusations, or the personal and corporate attacks that my former teachers and then my colleagues had to face. My family and I moved into #3 Seminary Terrace very shortly after the New Orleans Convention, and it was immediately, tangibly evident that the life of the seminary community had changed radically since I graduated three years earlier. While I missed the faculty interrogations, I was present when the conflicts within the seminary and the church body reached their high point; when John Tietjen was suspended from office; when the students called a moratorium; when Martin Scharlemann, who asked for the initiation of a fact-finding process during my senior year at Concordia Seminary, became interim president; and when I, like my colleagues, had to decide whether I would honor the student moratorium and, shortly thereafter, whether I would submit to the Board of Control's dictum that the faculty resume teaching on the campus of Concordia or face dismissal. My presence here and now indicates the choices I made in consultation with my family.

I felt that I had very good reasons for making these decisions. My seminary studies, which I had completed only three years before being invited to return to Concordia to teach, had been a wonderfully enlightening, affirming, and freeing experience, intellectually, theologically, and spiritually. That was ultimately God's

gift, of course, but God used the faithful men—and they were all men—who taught me at Concordia as God's means through whom the gift was given. My love for the biblical languages, for the critical study of Scripture, and for the gospel had been awakened at Concordia Senior College, but it was nurtured and truly blossomed at the seminary. My new attitude toward other Lutherans, even other Christians, was formed by the ecumenical perspectives of my teachers and of the leadership of the Missouri Synod. My growing conviction that women should be pastors was not simply a visceral response of someone who, after twelve years of doing so, was tired of going to classes only with males. Rather, it was due to new scriptural insights that I had gained; to a clearer understanding and experience of the freedom of the gospel; and to a growing awareness that women had always been important leaders in the church, albeit often behind the scenes, without the public support of the institutional church and without the grateful affirmation of the men who exercised leadership in the church. While we had a strong faculty advocate of the Vietnam War on campus, most of us had opposed that war from the beginning as we watched friends and former classmates going off to fight for a cause that we, and many of them, could not support. There were very few African-Americans enrolled at Concordia Seminary, but my seminary graduating class, impressed by the bold, yet peaceful, witness of Martin Luther King Jr., refused

to attend a graduation banquet sponsored by Concordia Publishing House until this institution of the church promised to hire African-Americans, not only as dock workers and janitors, but also as white-collar employees and administrators. They did make that promise, and our graduating class participated in the banquet, eagerly anticipating the ministries to which we would be called.

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Since my seminary career was such a formative time for me, primarily because of the faculty who taught me, it was quite evident to me whom I had to support in the conflict between the seminary and the church and between the majority and minority of the seminary faculty. I had to stand together with the majority of my teachers because I agreed with their stance and because I knew them to be faithful servants of the church. I was also deeply offended by the way they were treated by the community of faith they loved and served.

Hence I became part of the Seminex community. I was concerned about the unethical behavior of the church's lead-

ership, and I knew that Christians, even Christians who disagreed with one another about important matters, should treat one another with respect and love. I realized that the use of the historical critical method did not destroy biblical authority. Rather, at least in my case, it enhanced my love for Scripture and its significance in my spiritual journey. I rejoiced that the ecumenical spirit had also manifested itself in North American Lutheranism and that even the Missouri Synod, long an opponent of anything that it considered to be syncretism and unionism, was eager to explore new relationships with fellow Christians, at least with fellow Lutherans. I trusted that the Holy Spirit was leading women to pursue pastoral ministry and that this same Spirit had moved the church to affirm the call to ministry that inspired these courageous and faithful sisters in Christ. The policies of the Nixon administration confirmed for me that my opposition to the Vietnam War was entirely justifiable. The martyrdom of Martin Luther King Jr. made it unmistakably clear that both the church and our United States society had to repent of its racism and affirm the struggle for equality of all races. These were all convictions inspired by a new understanding and appreciation of the freeing power of the gospel through which God restores not only the divine-human relationship but also opens up new possibilities for our dealings with one another and with the whole creation.

These were the reasons why I joined that band of exiles as we sang "The Church's One Foundation" and then followed the processional cross down the hill to DeMun Avenue and eventually to St. Louis University and Eden Seminary. For these reasons, I was convinced that Concordia Seminary in Exile and eventually Christ Seminary-Seminex needed to exist as long as God willed, and it is because of these

convictions that I was deeply grateful that many people agreed and expressed their agreement with generous gifts of support.

But I have changed my mind or, better, it has become clearer to me why I did what I did and why God called Seminex into being. It was about exegetical methodologies, ethics, ecumenism, racial and gender justice, war and peace. However, it was finally and ultimately about the gospel, and all of those other crucial concerns were reflections and inspirations of the gospel. After all, it is not a particular exegetical method that unlocks the Scriptures for us and points us to Christ so that we are nourished, enlightened, and enlivened by God's word. Rather, it is the radical good news that God is gracious and that God grants us all the gifts that we need, not because of who we are but in spite of who we have become, not because we merit God's grace or do just enough to tip the scale in our favor but because of what Christ has done for our sake. Hence, it is finally Christ, revealed in the gospel, who opens and explains the Scriptures for us and enables us to see God's saving activity in human history. It is Christ who inspires us to be agents of grace, peace and justice in our world. As the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod leadership accused the faculty of being gospel reductionists, they forgot that the gospel really is the key to understanding Scripture and the ultimate reason for the church's existence.

Thus it was the gospel that freed us to study Scripture with critical insight and to look for Christ rather than for proof texts for a particular theological perspective. It was the gospel that helped us recognize that faith is not rational assent to a specific, scholastic dogmatic tradition but *fiducia*, the ability to trust God's surprising, radical promises. It was the gospel that inspired us to be ecumeniacs; to recognize that we are one in Christ, whether we admit it or

not and whether we manifest that unity or not. The gospel clarified that the Eucharist is truly God's means of grace that is not an ecclesiastical sign of dogmatic uniformity but a gracious divine gift. It is a gift through which the Holy Spirit heals our brokenness, enables us to transcend our differences, inspires us to address what divides us, and gives us the wisdom to welcome the stranger and to celebrate our diversity even as we give grateful thanks that we are all one body of Christ. It was the gospel that enabled us to see particular scriptural texts with new eyes, to evaluate long-standing traditions in critical ways and to transcend traditional boundaries that discriminated against women and prevented them from serving God's people as pastors of the church. Even our concern for justice and for ethical behavior in the church was ultimately a fruit of the gospel because we recognized that unless our ethics are shaped and inspired by the gospel ethic of faith active in love, both our personal and our communal ethics will likely be legalistic, eudaimonistic, synergistic, or shaped by whatever is current political correctness. The gospel also clarified for us that while the quest for justice dare never be equated with justification, it is a natural consequence of the alien righteousness that is God's gracious gift to us for Christ's sake. It was the gospel that freed us to be theologians of the cross rather than theologians of glory, to let God be God, to call the thing what it really is and to recognize the paradoxical nature of God's saving work.

So, I have changed my mind. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod leaders were right about one thing. We were gospel reductionists in the best possible sense of that word, and I hope that we still are, for that is precisely what it means to be faithful to our Lord and faithful to our calling.

# Christ Seminary–Seminex Library: From Concordia Seminary in Exile Library to Seminex Legacy Collection

Susan J. Ebertz

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Today it is not unusual for a woman to be the director of a seminary library. But in 1962, when H. Lucille Hager was appointed the director of the Concordia Seminary library, there were very few female library directors and even fewer female seminary library directors. Not only was Hager the only female faculty member at Concordia, but she was also tenured. She participated fully in the life of the seminary as a faculty member and had an equal vote in faculty meetings. Her competency can be seen by her successful tenure evaluation and her appointment as the library director despite her gender in a denomination that does not ordain women. She was an extraordinary woman like the other extraordinary library staff and supporters connected to the Seminex library.

When the Concordia Seminary Board of Control voted on the faculty members in 1973, they chose not to vote on whether Hager should be commended or corrected.<sup>1</sup> She could have stayed at the Concordia library, but, because of her convictions, she voted with most of the faculty members to go into exile. On the day in February 1974 when the faculty marched off campus, Hager put on her academic gown

and joined them.<sup>2</sup> She left her library, her position, and her salary, sacrificing them for what she believed was right. But she did not leave her commitment to being a librarian: to serve the academic resource needs of the students and faculty.

Hager wasn't the only librarian to leave 801 (the name given to the Concordia campus by Seminexers). Tom Rick, technical services librarian; Thelda Bertram, cataloger; Ann Constable, part-time cataloger; Ellie Sauer, reference librarian; and the secretary all left with Hager to serve the students and faculty in exile. Three of them, Bertram, Constable, and Sauer were faculty spouses whose husbands also left. Betty Danker and Mary Bischoff remained at the 801 library.<sup>3</sup> Danker was in charge of circulation and was a faculty spouse whose husband went into exile. Bischoff was the acquisitions librarian and cataloger. Bischoff recalls that she thought the 801 administration would soon be negotiating with those that left. She remained at the 801 library to keep it running in expectation that the others

2. Mikail McIntosh-Doty, "Hager, H Lucille, 1924–2004." *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 59, (January 1, 2005): 283.

3. Mary Bischoff, e-mail message to author, December 14, 2010.

1. John H. Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 123.



would be back shortly.<sup>4</sup>

Hager put together a small library in the tight quarters of the refectory at St. Louis University. The library was in the corner of what was called the Commons with a desk for circulation and reference, chairs for the staff, and book shelves containing books on loan from several faculty members.<sup>5</sup> The resources were meager, but Concordia Seminary in Exile had a library, a symbol of the educational mission of the exiles and of the assistance of those who saw the library's importance.

Since the Seminex library in the Commons was not adequate for all the research and study needs of the students and faculty, arrangements were made for the use of the libraries at both St. Louis University School of Divinity and Eden Seminary. Additionally, Fontbonne College helped with cataloging. The consortial and supportive relationships of these other libraries helped sustain the Seminex students and faculty enormously.

Another unexpected library resource was the 801 library. Since she remained behind, Bischoff was appointed the acting director and allowed the Seminex students to use the 801 library.<sup>6</sup> They were, in a way, still Concordia students—just in exile; it made sense that they should be allowed to continue to use the library. Gwen Sayler, a Seminex student in her last semester when the walkout occurred, remembers continuing to study in the 801 library. It was closer to where she was living than the Seminex library or the Eden Seminary library.<sup>7</sup> This library resource, however, did not last long. Less than a year after

the walkout, in January 1975, the 801 administration banned Seminex students from entering the 801 library. Perhaps the administration finally realized that the Seminex students were still using it. At that point, Danker and Bischoff left the 801 library. Danker began working for the Seminex library, but Seminex could not afford to hire Bischoff right away. It was a year and a half later, in August 1976, that Bischoff began working for the Seminex library.<sup>8</sup> The same dedication of the librarians who left in the walkout can be seen in the two that remained. Bischoff and Danker stayed to help the Seminex students and then left when they could no longer help Seminex students at the 801 library. Bischoff left even though she had an uncertain professional future.

Friends helped the fledgling Seminex library to grow by providing books. Approximately 10,000 volumes were donated by the widows of Concordia Seminary faculty members Paul Bretscher, Carl Meyer, and Arthur Carl Piepkorn. The Piepkorn collection was the largest and included some rare books and books on systematic theology, liturgics, and American religious bodies, Piepkorn's particular area of interest. The Meyer donation included mainly church history books.<sup>9</sup> These donations helped to broaden and deepen the scope of the library collection, providing much needed resources for the students and faculty.

The growing size of the library collection added to the space concerns in the Commons at St. Louis University. About six months after the exile began, in August or September 1974, the library and the administrative offices moved to another location. While the new location provided more space for the small library, it was not ideal. Since most of the classes were

4. Bischoff, e-mail message to author.

5. Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*, 219.

6. Bischoff, e-mail message to author.

7. Gwen Sayler, interview by author. Tape recording. Dubuque, Iowa, December 16, 2010.

8. Bischoff, e-mail message to author.

9. *Ibid.*



still being held at St. Louis University, the library was not readily available to the students. The Seminex library collection could not serve the students well in this new location.

Those in exile were still sojourners. The library moved again, about a year later, in August 1975. This time it moved with the entire seminary. The library could once again be a part of the seminary community and better serve the students and faculty. The new library was originally on the twelfth floor of the building but later the seminary leased more floors and the entire library moved to the thirteenth floor. In the new thirteenth floor library, the ballroom became the stacks. The reference and study areas moved to the former dining room and the circulation desk to the lobby area. The technical services area and archives also were relocated to the thirteenth floor.<sup>10</sup> The easy access to the classrooms and offices aided the library in serving the students and faculty better.

Moving a library is not simple. It takes skill and planning by the library staff and a lot of willing volunteers to help. The move to the thirteenth floor ballroom was the third move. Moving the library offices would be similar to moving any administrative office. However, when one moves library books, the movers must make sure to put the books back in call number order. The first move was probably not as difficult as the subsequent moves when the collection was larger each time. The Seminex library was again indebted to the dedication of the library staff and the assistance of others.

More book shelves were needed. Again the help of others filled this need. The McCormick Theological Seminary Library in Chicago was joining the Jesuit seminary and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) libraries to form

Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick (JKM) Library on the LSTC campus. They no longer needed all their book shelves. So one of the Seminex librarians, Tom Rick, drove a rental truck to Chicago and brought back the shelves. Volunteers helped to assemble the shelves in the Seminex library's new quarters in the ballroom.<sup>11</sup> The donation of the shelves as well as volunteer time were invaluable in helping the library continue in its mission to serve the resource needs of the students and faculty.

The life of the library settled down into the more or less normal routine of a library: acquiring resources, circulating books, and providing research help. Problems with the building and the owners came to a head when a new trouble emerged. In January 1982, the pipes froze one weekend, and when the heat was turned back on they burst. When staff, students, and faculty arrived on January 12, they found the building filled with water. Library books were soaking wet.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the best way to save wet books is to freeze-dry them. The subzero weather and the lack of heat in the building probably aided in the recovery of many of the books. Two days later Seminex rented the building across the street and moved to the new quarters. The weather was again kind when a snowstorm which dumped over 20 inches in St. Louis held off until after Seminex had completed their move. This move for the library, like the others, took a lot of coordination and committed helpers. The collection had grown to about 30,000 books so the move was more complicated. The book shelves also had to be moved. So as the shelves were emptied, they needed to be taken apart, moved to the new location, and reassembled in time for the books to be put on them. The books were loaded

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*, 289.

on book carts, pushed to the new building then unloaded after the shelves were reassembled.<sup>13</sup> All activities were necessary to retain call number order, of course!

Because of the upcoming possibility of merger of several Lutheran denominations, the negotiations for the deployment of Seminex's resources to other seminaries were beginning about this time. What was to happen to the library collection and the staff? When Seminex was split up, where would the library collection go? Whom would the library serve if there were no "Seminex" students? The faculty would be sent to other seminaries. Would the library collection be sent with them? Where could the library continue to serve?

It was decided that the library and the director of the library, faculty member Hager, would be sent to Austin, Texas, to

be a part of the Luther Seminary Program in the Southwest (LSPS) which was a part of Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS). The library collection would be housed in the library of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest (ETSS now Seminary of the Southwest). Hager would have her office in that library. The move took place in August 1983. According to a story, Hager visited the Episcopal seminary library and made exacting measurements of where the books would go and how much space she had. She then had the books packed up on a Tuesday and sent to Austin. The books arrived on a Thursday, and by Monday morning everything was in place in Austin!<sup>14</sup> Though still a Seminex faculty member, Hager served not only the students of LSPS but of ETSS

13. Bischoff, e-mail message to author.

14. McIntosh-Doty, "Hager, H Lucille, 1924–2004." 285.



*Seminex crosses, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. ELCA Archives photo.*

as well. And the Seminex collection not only served Lutherans but Episcopalian students and faculty as well. The library was reaching out beyond its small beginnings in a Jesuit divinity school refectory at St. Louis University and continuing its ecumenical service.

The Seminex library consisted of not only its collection but the staff who served in it as well. Those who had worked together with dedication to provide library resources for the Seminex students and faculty were dispersed to serve in other arenas. The reach of the Seminex library continued through them. Some continued to serve within the Lutheran family. Constable went to Austin with Hager. Bischoff became the assistant director at the Graduate Theological Union library which served Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. Others no longer worked for a Lutheran library. Danker's faculty husband was sent to LSTC, but she did not work in the LSTC library (JKM library). Rick, Bertram, and Sauer stayed in St. Louis.<sup>15</sup>

On December 31, 1987, Seminex was officially no longer an educational institution. The library collection was given to Wartburg Theological Seminary. Hager became a faculty member of WTS serving in Austin at LSPS. The rare books, almost 400 volumes, were already in Dubuque, Iowa, at WTS, having been sent there in the summer of 1983. These books, now called the Seminex Collection, reside in the Rare Book Room at WTS. The remainder of the Seminex library stayed in Austin and became the LSPS library, continuing in its service to LSPS and ETSS students and faculty. The Seminex library's mission to provide library resources for students and faculty continued even though the ownership and name changed.

Hager became part-time in 1990, retired in 2002, and died in 2004. Mi-

kail McIntosh-Doty, an ETSS librarian, became the acting director of the LSPS library and later the LSPS liaison. McIntosh-Doty remembers how Hager was a mentor to her. McIntosh-Doty presented the memorial tribute of Hager at the 2005 American Theological Library Association annual meeting. She noted in her tribute to Hager that "so often she did the right thing, not the easy thing."<sup>16</sup> How true that was. She left the Concordia library because of her convictions and became a sojourner, making a library for students and faculty wherever she was. When the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire rose up and went ahead, she followed with her library no matter where it went.

Beginning in 2004, as director of the WTS library, I worked with LSPS Director Wayne Menking and the ETSS Library Director Rob Cogswell to determine the most suitable way to provide services for the LSPS students and faculty and to honor the tradition of the Seminex library. The hard questions were: How much library do twenty or so students need to support their academic research and study? Was the aging LSPS library collection necessary for the mission of LSPS? How do we honor the sacrifice of the donations of books, shelves, assistance, and the good will of other libraries in St. Louis while still best serving the faculty and students? How do we, with budgetary constraints, provide library staffing for the LSPS library and the LSPS students? One of the results of this discussion was that in 2006, I was appointed the LSPS library director as part of my responsibilities as the WTS library director. I worked with the ETSS library director and LSPS liaison to continue to provide services for the LSPS students and faculty.

On June 30, 2009, the discussion

15. Bischoff, e-mail message to author.

16. McIntosh-Doty, "Hager, H Lucille, 1924–2004." 286.

that began in 2004 ended when the LSPS library collection was turned over to the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest. In turning over the collection, LSPS no longer provided remuneration to ETSS for library staffing. This decision was reached because the LSPS program suspended the MDiv degree program and focused on the TEEM program. The TEEM program is an alternative route in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America to prepare women and men for rostered ministry. The library resources were no longer as critical to the mission because of the needs of the TEEM curriculum. In determining what to do with the Seminex library collection, the cost of separating the collection from the ETSS library, both physically and digitally in the catalog, and the cost of moving them and making space for them at WTS in Dubuque, Iowa, were prohibitive in a time of economic restrictions. It was decided that the majority of the Seminex library collection would be donated to ETSS. At the time of the transfer of ownership, there were over 40,000 volumes, including periodicals. Most of these were books and bound periodicals from St. Louis. New acquisitions were at a minimum during the last years of the LSPS library. Many of the periodicals included in the 40,000 volumes were donations to LSPS in exchange for subscriptions to *Currents in Theology and Mission*.

As a part of the transfer of ownership, the Seminex Legacy Collection would be created and sent to Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, where it would be housed in a separate part of the library. The collection would include those books which have the most historical value to the remembrance of Seminex. It would,

indeed, be a legacy collection to remind us of those who “did the right thing, not the easy thing.”

The Seminex library was a sojourner in this world, staying here as long as it was needed for the preparation of ministers of the gospel. It moved many times and when it was no longer needed as a library, it separated into different parts. It now serves the same mission it once did but is now known by different names. As its name changed from Concordia Seminary in Exile library to Christ Seminary–Seminex library to Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest library to Seminex Legacy Collection and a part of the Seminary of the Southwest library, it was still essentially the same in its mission: to provide the academic resources for preparing women and men for ministry in Christ’s church.<sup>17</sup>

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17. Finding information about the Seminex library was more difficult than I had imagined. Not much is written about it. My student assistant Kirk Wilkie, Mary Bischoff who worked at the Seminex library, and Mikail McIntosh-Doty who was at the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest aided me considerably. Almost all of the information about the Seminex Library in St. Louis comes from an e-mail from Mary Bischoff, as well as from the book by John H. Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*. McIntosh-Doty in her memorial tribute of H. Lucille Hager and in her e-mail to me helped me to know Hager better. Gwen Saylor, former Concordia and Seminex student, and Norma Cook Everist, former Seminex board member, helped me understand the context of the Seminex times. Both of them are my colleagues at Wartburg Theological Seminary and so graciously allowed me to interview them.

# How My Mind Has Changed

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Ralph W. Klein

*Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor Emeritus of Old Testament  
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“The religion that ceases to change ceases to remain the same.” So said Lutheran Old Testament professor George Mendenhall, who served most of his career at the University of Michigan. Mendenhall meant that as societal, historical, and other factors change, religion must react in ways appropriate to those challenges, or it will not have the same attractiveness, effectiveness, or believability it once had. If the central question Luther wrestled with in the sixteenth century was, “How can I find a righteous God?” the central question for many of us in the twenty-first century is, “How can I find God at all?” For me the definition of the gospel as God’s good news for our bad situations is quite congruent with Mendenhall’s thesis.

My training as a seminarian at Concordia and as a doctoral student at Harvard was as a historian or as a philologist. I remember meeting one of my older daughter’s first dates, and he asked me what I did for a living. He added, “Martha tells me you are a historian.” She was probably embarrassed to admit I was a seminary professor, but in many respects she was right. But my training was also in languages—German, French, Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Syriac, and Arabic.

I still use my historical and linguistic training as primary research tools, but all of us have been affected by the many new methodological approaches, such as narratology, social scientific criticism, and the like. We recognize more and more

that the final form of the text also has an important meaning, even if we can detect stages through which a text has passed in oral tradition or literary redaction. We have also all been impacted by feminism, womanism, and post colonial criticism, and we are keenly aware that the social location of the biblical interpreter—and even of the biblical author—must be taken into account as we try to understand what texts meant then and what they mean now. I am much more aware now than I was in 1974 about how pervasive patriarchy was in the biblical world and the biblical text. It colors its view of the human situation and of God.

In the 1960s Krister Stendahl published his famous essay on “biblical theology, contemporary,” and penned his classic statement that the biblical interpreter seeks both what the text meant and what it might mean today. I still find that distinction profoundly meaningful today, even if Stendahl’s naiveté about what the text meant has come in for severe criticism. Stendahl believed that a Christian, a Jew, and an empathic agnostic reading the New Testament should be able to come to some consensus about what Paul meant. There is some truth in Stendahl’s hope. The disagreements in discussions in the Society of Biblical Literature are usually not denominationally based. Lutherans, Catholics, and Jews may find themselves on both sides of the argument. Where Stendahl erred was his downplaying of the social location of the interpreter (including

his or her religious convictions) and of the alleged objectivity of historical criticism or even in his hope that texts have singular meanings.

The mantra of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been diversity and multiculturalism. Despite great efforts this has not translated into much of a change in our demographic profile—we are still primarily a church that is over 97 percent Northern European in background. But how we have profited in the ELCA and in its seminaries from the voices and leadership of women, African-Americans, Latinos/Latinas, and others. Those voices were beginning to be heard already at Seminex, but their presence has dramatically increased in the subsequent era.

One of my discoveries at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) and in the ELCA is the great variety of ways there are to be faithful as Lutherans. That can already be seen in worship styles, which are usually derived from different theological perspectives, but it can also be seen in renewed appreciation for the first and third articles of the creed. The theology of Seminex at times was Christomonism. Much more could and should be said here, but the ELCA is being challenged to redefine for itself what it means to say that our unity is in the gospel or in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, even when our beliefs, ethics, and worship styles differ radically in detail.

What has changed most, in my opinion, are the questions. We were faced with the question of inerrancy, which we tried to change into the question about the sufficiency of the gospel. Let me mention three challenges faced by the ELCA today: 1) Sexuality. The proposed Social Statement on Sexuality and the Recommendations for Changes in Rostering indicate in part the change. Think of it.

When I was in my 20s, I knew no one who admitted they were living together outside of marriage. Pastor friends today tell me that 80 percent of the couples they marry are already living together. At the same time the ELCA has been plagued by hundreds of cases of sexual impropriety by clergy and by bishops. It has not all been progress. 2) The ELCA has moved ahead with full communion with Reformed and Episcopalian bodies. United Methodists will join the circle this summer, and there was major progress in the joint statement on justification with Roman Catholics. Of course we have a very long way to go in living out these decisions, and I still wince in our LSTC chapel when preachers presume that everyone in the audience is Lutheran, when they are clearly not. Nor is the faculty entirely Lutheran. 3) The Bible. The ELCA is not bothered about the inerrancy question, Adam and Eve, Second Isaiah and all the rest. But it faces two biblical challenges illustrated by the Bible: Book of Faith initiative. The ELCA is still trying to break out of its own version of fundamentalism or the assumption that what the Bible says on controvertible ethical questions is clear (it usually is not) or valid for all time (in the Bible people got married at 14 or 15 years of age, and thanks to decisions made by the couple's parents. Patriarchy predominates in almost all of the Bible's statements about sexuality). A second ELCA problem is widespread biblical illiteracy among its members and, dare one say it, a relatively low level of sophistication in biblical interpretation among its pastors. Questions about sexuality, ecumenism, and the Bible have changed!

So let me end as I began: The religion that ceases to change ceases to remain the same.



# Seminex: A Spiritual Journey

Paul Bauermeister

## Hymns, Lessons and Story

### PRELUDE

Prelude: "Aria"

P. Manz

Hymn of Invocation: "All Glory Be to God on High" *ELW* 410

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Allow me a brief history lesson: Thirty-six years ago the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Convention passed a resolution requiring every pastor to be a biblical literalist. The losers asked permission to record their dissenting votes and to sing one stanza of a hymn. The lines were long and they sang stanza one over, and over, and over until all had recorded their dissenting votes. Tied up the whole convention, and gave us our song.

"The Church's One Foundation" *ELW* 654 (Stanza 1 only, sung three times, the first time solo, second and third repeats of stanza 1 sung by all)

When Mark Bangert invited me to preach at this service he told me we had four lessons and that I could use any or all of them. He further told me that I could preach once or often. He gave me so much freedom that I decided not to preach at all. Instead, I will tell you the story of Seminex as a spiritual journey.

### FEAR

Hear now a lesson written in Jeremiah, the first chapter, verses 4-10 (NRSV).

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy."

But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord."

Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

Here ends the Lesson.

"God, My Lord, My Strength" *ELW* 795

When God first called Jeremiah, the young man shuffled his feet in the sand, grinned, hung his head and mumbled, "Shucks, I can't do that. Look at me, I'm just a kid. Nobody listens to a kid."

The psychologist in me hears fear. Over fifty years ago, when I was ordained, I looked like a small 17-year-old. Many times, I said, "I wish I had some white hair



so somebody would listen to me!” For the record, white hair doesn’t help—much.

God was calling! And God did not let Jeremiah or me or Seminex off the hook, no matter how many lame excuses we cooked up. Remember, faculty people were being called away from a regular paycheck, a tenured professorship, a vocation. Staff, students, and faculty were all being called away from a health plan, a pension, a guaranteed future, and a beautiful campus. Some were even being called away from the very house they called home.

Students were being called away from a vocation, a comfortable dorm room and a bountiful dining hall, from a system that promised them an internship in a congregation, where each student could pick out a rich and comely spouse. After graduation, a churchly call was part of the deal. All of us were walking away from a sure thing. Nevertheless, the LCMS could no longer love us, so it was time to leave. God was calling us.

February 19, 1974. We followed God’s call and walked away from 801, following a processional cross, singing our hymn that defined us. It was a magnificently stirring event, experienced by many with tears in their eyes, and butterflies in their stomachs. **That was the day we began seriously learning about fear**, sleep-robbing fear that won’t go away, fear that makes food uninteresting, or too interesting.

We had fear about our future! Our future had been certain, solid, locked in, but now was swinging in the wind. It was the same fear that was felt by everyone who participated in Seminex.

“Have No Fear, Little Flock” helped us focus our fears—and our comfort.

“Have No Fear, Little Flock” *ELW* 764

## **TRUST**

Let’s sing Psalm 46 responsively with the choir.

1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2. **Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;**

3. though its waters rage and foam, and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

4. **There is a river, whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.**

5. God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken; God shall help it at the break of day.

6. **The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake; God speaks, and the earth melts away.**

7. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

8. **Come now, regard the works of the Lord, what desolations God has brought upon the earth.**

9. Behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world; who breaks the bow and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.

10. **“Be still, then, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”**

11. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

We had *more* than fear to learn. We also began slowly to learn to *trust*, first each other, then our friends, a fledgling outfit called Evangelical Lutherans In Mission (ELIM), the Jesuits at St. Louis University, the people at Eden Seminary and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

(LSTC), as well as many, many saints who became our generous supporters.

We were learning how shared fear mixed with shared trust pulls a community together. This new community was palpable—in the chapel, in the classrooms, in the hallways, in the Commons, in every faculty gathering. We were coming together. It was like when a choir gets past being a collection of individual voices and begins to blend.

At the same time we were learning to trust another—yes, God!—like never before. That was such a good psalm. Let's sing it again, in hymn version.

“God Is Our Help and Constant Refuge,”  
p. 4 of the Worship Folder

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Yes!

The psalmist's poetic hyperbole became our reality. The earth at 801 indeed had been moved from beneath our feet. The mountains of oppressive control over us by the 801 Board of Control were carried into the midst of the sea and troubled us no more. Instead, the waters of the sea raged and made foam. And the great high peaks of ecclesiastical power of the LCMS administration trembled. Those leaders knew they had pushed too hard, too far, too fast, and too rudely. Now they had to tremble and ask themselves, “Just how far might this rebellion spread?”

And we? We were wading the river whose streams make glad the city of God! And its waters were sparkling and warm to our feet.

## **SERVANTS**

But we still had more to learn. When soldiers in foxholes are under enemy fire, they repeatedly ask themselves a question, “What on earth got me here?” We at Seminex did a similar thing, we examined and re-examined our call. This lovely Latino

hymn reminds us of the beauty and simplicity or our call, a call to go we know not where, only to follow Jesus. We sing “Pescador de Hombres.”

“You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore”  
*ELW* 817

Though we had been doing our best to take Scripture most seriously, those who hated us called us “**Bible doubters.**” “**Not to be tolerated in the church of God!**” That too came out of the 1973 LCMS convention. We needed to examine our call from God.

Ah! But those who loved us called us—**heroes.** Now doesn't that just feel good all over!

Let me tell you a story of two wanna-be heroes from the Gospel of Mark, the tenth chapter.

First comes the set up: Two disciples peel away from the others and position themselves between Jesus and the other disciples. They face Jesus, but their backs are to the other disciples. These two speak in hushed voices. “Jesus!” James whispers. “**Can we make a deal?**” (wink wink, smile smile)

John continues, “**You know, Jesus, how hard we work for you, and how much we gave up for you. We left Mom and Dad and all those fine fish....**”

James says, “**Can we make a deal, Jesus? We're not asking much. Just promise to make one of us Secretary of State, and the other Attorney General, you decide which. Don't do it now, later when everything gets all sorted out—and you (smile smile) are fully in charge.**”

John concludes, “**How about it, Jesus? Deal or no deal?**” You do see how it is with heroes. Heroes have earned a reward, a payoff!

Jesus slams down the little box over

the big button and shouts, NO DEAL! And then in harsh, choppy language Jesus tells them who they are to be—servants!! Not heroes. “For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life for the freedom of others!”

When somebody calls you a hero, it is hard not to puff up and strut like one. Nevertheless, we learned, we learned, we learned. We are servants, served by the Chief Servant. Not an easy lesson.

We sing this song and remember the magnificence and magnitude of the mission to which we are called.

“Lift High the Cross” *ELW* 660

### **FOUNDATION**

Hear now a Lesson written in 1 Corinthians, the third chapter, verses 11-23 (NRSV).

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw, the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy and you are that temple.

Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in

their craftiness,” and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Here ends the Lesson.

We sing a lovely new hymn that describes the One who has called us. The music was written by Robert Buckley Farlee.

“Holy God, Holy and Glorious” *ELW* 637

How might one describe “Foundation”? Remember when you were first learning to swim a little dog paddle, and you found yourself in deep water? Frantically you reached down with all ten of your little toes and found—only more water. You thought you might die, or worse yet, that you might have to call for help and be embarrassed for the rest of your life. Your breathing and heart rate shot up, your toes stabbing downward with all your strength. Then one single little toe touched something solid—Foundation!! Changed everything!

St. Paul instructs us, “Make no mistake, your foundation is Jesus Christ, not Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.” Not Augustine, not Luther—not Damm, not Tietjen. Jesus Christ is the only one strong enough to be your Foundation.

The time has come to sing all of “our song.” Our song that tells us who we are and how we got that way and where we are going. Sing and rejoice!

“The Church’s One Foundation” *ELW* 654

An 800-pound gorilla still sits in this room. Does-Seminex-make-any-difference?

**Of course it does!** It is a two-step process, and still going on. Step one, Seminex makes a difference for Seminex people. Our spiritual journey took us through Fear to Trust to Community to Service. God was mightily at work in that journey, forming us as followers of Jesus, with Jesus Christ as our Foundation. A process that continues to this day.

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**G**od was  
mightily  
at work in that  
journey, forming us  
as followers of Jesus,  
with Jesus Christ as  
our Foundation.

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There is more. Step two, Seminex people went out into the church, to serve in every kind of ministry. They went carrying with them the answer to the church's central, most crucial question. "How does the church become the church?" The answer: "The church's one Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord." Oh, yes, there must be preaching and teaching, worship and singing, programs and organizing, but **in, with, and under** each of these must be the Foundation, Jesus Christ. Yes. Seminex makes a difference—to quote a prominent national politician, "You betcha!"

So we can say good-bye to the 800-pound gorilla. Go on! Ged-ouda-heah!!

L: Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O Lord God, for by

the brightness of your only begotten Son, you daily deliver us from darkness and lead us into the community of your servants. Hear our thanksgiving for Seminex and for the miraculous goodness your many saints showed us in our times of need.

You Lord, sustained us, giving us courage enough to contain our fears, an expanding community built on trust to heal our wounds, opportunities enough to challenge our service and leaders blessed enough to frustrate the Devil's own chaos.

Through yesterday, today, and forever, you give us a Foundation like no other, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. By your Spirit, make strong our hands, make swift our feet, make clear our minds and voices for the great work you place before us. Let us be servants worthy of the gifts you give. Teach us day by day to discover anew the deep joy of serving your people.

C: Amen.

L: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you,

The Lord look upon you with favor, and give you + peace.

C: Amen

Sending Hymn "Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices" *ELW* 833

L: Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God!

Postlude

# Let me see!

Lessons for the Commemoration of Renewers of the Church,  
Jer 1:4–10; Mark 10:35–45

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Everett R. Kalin

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Wow! What a sight! How wonderful and amazing it is to see one another again. And the phrase “What a sight!” is not really a throw-away line, since the homily is in part about seeing.

As I started thinking about this homily some time ago, I was looking at the lessons for last Sunday. Then two weeks ago, I got a mock up of this service from Mark Bangert and saw instead the lessons from Jeremiah and Mark, the lessons for the **Commemoration of Renewers of the Church**.

Seminex, a renewer of the church? Is that what that is meant to mean? But aren't the Renewers of the Church and Renewers of Society on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) calendar all dead, most of them for a long time? And didn't someone else, not they themselves, put them on the list?

Has Seminex been a renewer of the church? By the grace of God, yes indeed, in that, and to the extent that, we have been faithful to our calling, faithful to our Lord; in that, and to the extent that, we have proclaimed and lived the gospel. What a blessed and wonderful gift we have been given, in what has been for you and me a life-changing event like few if any others in our lives. We have been, are and hope to be renewers of the church.

But to make that designation fit depends upon how you and I look at

ourselves and at God's work. It is vital that we make neither too much nor too little of ourselves.

First, too much. A week or so ago on National Public Radio there was a discussion about being a celebrity, about having your fifteen minutes of fame and how best to deal with it. The guests, Ted Koppel and Henry Winkler—the Fonz, said that the key was not to believe the hype, not to take yourself too seriously.

Don't make too much of yourself, like the two in today's gospel who approached Jesus with a request. “What do you want me to do for you,” he asked them. “Right- and left-hand places; we're big stuff.” “Can't do it,” said Jesus. “That's the way the world's big shots act—not you who are with me.”

Paul said, “For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake” (2 Cor 4:5). And he said, “I realize how kind God has been to me, and so I tell each of you not to think you are better than you really are” (Rom 12:3 CEV). Renewers of the church do not need to divide the church or the world into the angels of light and the axis of evil. We dare not make too much of ourselves.

On the other hand, we dare not make too little of ourselves. As we look to the past, but especially as we look to the future, as we look at the hurt in the church

and the pain in the world right now, dare we say, “Who me, a renewer, an agent of change, one who can make a difference?” If we say or even think that, all the while hanging back in the shadows, then the tagline “God’s work. Our hands.” has become just “God’s work,” and the hurt in the church and the pain in the world are still there. As Gandhi said, “Whatever you *do* will be *insignificant*, but it is very important that you *do* it.”

Let us not presume to say with Jeremiah, “I’m not a good speaker, Lord, and I’m too young” (Jer 1:6 CEV). Come to think of it, when I look around, I see there’s not much danger of our playing the youth card. But we dare not replace it with a geezer card, “I’m too old [and let me rattle off my aches and pains].” For God says to us as to Jeremiah, “If I tell you to go and speak to someone, then go! And when I tell you what to say, don’t leave out a word! I promise to be with you and keep you safe, so don’t be afraid” (1:7–8, CEV).

We are called to be renewers of the church and to do God’s work. And what is the heart of God’s work? Today’s gospel, Mark 10:35–45, is eager to answer that. And that brings us to a focus on seeing, as I mentioned at the beginning.

Mark 10:35–45 is the very end of the central section of Mark’s gospel. It is followed by the story of Bartimaeus. Jesus addressed to him the same question he asked of James and John, “What do you want me to do for you?” His answer, so much better than theirs, was simply “Let me see!”

It is supremely important to Mark that his readers see the message in the central section of his gospel, so he places the healing of a blind man just before it and another here, just after it, framing its message, about which we are to get sight, to get insight.

What is the heart of God’s work? Serving the world and redeeming it. Jesus embodies God’s work: “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). [An aside: During my examination by the committee investigating each faculty member back at Concordia Seminary, I was asked about the connection between Jesus as a ransom in Mark 10:45 (the Greek word is *lytron*) and what Paul says about Jesus as a ransom. The committee thought (perhaps hoped) I might say that Mark got the words about Jesus being “a ransom (*lytron*) for many” not from Jesus himself but from Paul. In the course of my answer I said that it would be strange for Mark to get the use of that word from Paul, since “Paul never uses the word *lytron*.” When I got a typed copy of the interview, taken off the tape by a secretary, it had me saying, “Paul never uses the word ‘Lutheran.’” Now you know why we got fired!]

The central section of Mark’s gospel invites us to see what is at the heart of God’s will and work, the way of the cross for Jesus and his followers. So Mark says about Bartimaeus after Jesus’ word of healing: “Immediately he regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way” (10:52), the way of the cross.

The way to be a renewer of church and society is to proclaim and follow the Crucified One. In the church his *all-embracing* love excludes no one from its life and ministries; in the world his *servant* love battles hurt and pain. And there is so much pain. Sometimes only the young can see it. Jim Wallace’s son Jack prayed one evening, “And God, there are a lot of poor people, hungry people, and homeless people—any questions or comments? Amen.” Since it is so very hard for us really to look at the world’s pain we need each other for support. It is hard to fight the world’s evil; we can only do it

together. Resisting the world's evil and renewing the church are joint projects. The only way Seminec happened is that we all worked together, students, staff, faculty, and supporters—those wonderful generous supporters.

Servant renewers, I'll close by illustrating our need for one another with two images from Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, a town of thousands of indigenous inhabitants, almost all Roman Catholic. Let me set up the two images this way: In the '80s, during the civil war in Guatemala, the Guatemalan army set up a base on the outskirts of town, alleging that the peaceful townsfolk were supporting the guerillas. One evening in December 1990, some drunken soldiers harassed the townsfolk one time too many. In the middle of the night, a group of several thousand people, peacefully and totally unarmed, gathered at the entrance of the base and demanded redress. The army's response was to open fire, killing thirteen people, some of them children.

Now image one: I sometimes took seminary students with me to language school in Guatemala, and we usually went to the makeshift cemetery in Santiago Atitlan, where thirteen rough-hewn crosses bore the martyrs' names. On my desk at home, I have a picture of two of these seminarians, Todd and Doug, with

their arms around one another, holding on for dear life as they look at the graves. The only way to confront such evil, or even to look at it, is together, supporting one another.

Image two: After this unspeakable evil, the indigenous residents of the town immediately demanded that the army base be removed. The government at first refused. So, against the will of the government and its mighty army, the residents organized nineteen squads of townspeople. Each night, from sundown to sunup, one of these squads marched around the perimeter of the town, preventing any soldier or any guerilla from entering. Their equipment: a stick on which to carry a bag with their bread for the night and a whistle, to summon one another if necessary. Within a few weeks, the army base was removed. The way to defeat great evil in church or society is to take bread for the journey and a whistle, to summon one another for support. AMEN.

[A brief postscript: After I preached this sermon, Ed Schroeder commented on this final image from Santiago Atitlan by saying that for us, on our way, the whistle could well be intoning "The Church's One Foundation" and that the bread would surely be the Bread that nourishes us Sunday after Sunday at the altar. Thanks, Ed. I wish I had thought of that.]



# Camelot

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Joan Beck

*Cornelsen Director of Spiritual Formation and Pastor of the Community Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*

and

Donna Herzfeldt-Kamprath

*Pastor, West Linn Lutheran Church, West Linn, Oregon*

This sermon was delivered by the Rev. Donna Herzfeldt-Kamprath (her portions are in regular print) and the Rev. Joan (Lundgren) Beck (her portions are in italic print) at the closing worship of the 35th Seminex Reunion at LSTC, June 25, 2009.

One evening during the 1971 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Milwaukee Convention Doc Caemmerer said to John and Ernestine Tietjen and Arthur C. Repp, “The two views about Lutheranism that are in contention right now are as different as a box is different from a platform. The Preus people think of Lutheranism as a box. You have to be in the box to be a Lutheran. The box tells you what you can believe and what you can’t believe. If you don’t agree on the truth in the box, you have to get out. But Lutheranism is really a platform on which to stand. The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions that witness to what they teach are the ground of our life together. They are the platform on which we stand to witness to what we believe. As rule and norm the Scriptures help us make sure that we speak the Word of God when we witness. The Confessions free us up to witness to what is the heart of our faith, Jesus Christ, and the good news that we are justified by faith in him.” (from *Memoirs in Exile*, Tietjen)

*The Lord be with you.*

***And also with you.***

*Let us pray. Builder God, we marvel at your plan from of old. We commend our lives, our work, our church, our world into your wise design. Let your Spirit speak and inspire hearing in this word. Amen.*

This invitation to preach is like an invitation to “touch home base.” I was one of those in the field when Seminex deployed in 1983. My internship year was spent in Evansville, Indiana. I was engaged to Tim, who was serving in his first year in southern Manitoba in a two-point Lutheran Church in America (LCA) parish as a pastor/intern. This sermon feels a little like a fourth-year project for the year I never got to complete with all of you! In that sense, Seminex has always been “out there” for me, like an elusive “Camelot”—a memory, a dream, a hope that still exists, and can never die. I remember being in high school in the early 1970s, listening to the sound track of “Camelot” over and over again. The story of King Arthur and the knights, Queen Guinevere, and the round table is so romantic. The ending is so poignant. After all the love and struggle, betrayals and high hopes, the time comes for the reality to change and fade away, and the work of

telling the story to begin. King Arthur—in the midst of the battle that finally brings down the court he has built up—calls to the young boy page and commissions him to go and tell:

Ask ev'ry person if he's heard the story, and tell it strong and clear if he has not, that once there was a fleeting wisp of glory called Camelot... Don't let it be forgot that once there was a spot for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot.

In 1974 I was a sophomore at Northwestern University. I had been invited to the Lutheran Campus Ministry Center where an LCMS congregation shared a home with an American Lutheran Church/ Lutheran Church in America (ALC/LCA) congregation, each with their own pastor, membership, worship, and activities. Who would have thought there were other Lutherans out there?! Not a young LCMS girl from Sheboygan, Wisconsin! And conflict in the church? What was that all about?!

Well, we had visitors who came and told us what it was all about. Young, energetic seminary students on Operation Outreach who were in the thick of the conflict and passionate about what God was doing in the church came to tell the story. I don't remember a lot about what they said, but I remember the story was told with fervor and that this story was having real consequences in some of my new friends' families (such as the Krentz family).

When the time came for me to discern my call into ordained ministry in the late 1970s, Seminex had been operating in St. Louis for about five years. It was my first choice for the seminary I wanted to attend. Deep inside I believe I wanted to be a part of the passion, the calling to proclaim the true gospel word, the "fleeting wisp of glory." Oops, did I say "glory"?

OK, maybe a little bit of glory—walk-

ing in the footsteps of Dr. Tietjen and other great leaders who had braved the battles and shown the Lutheran church a new path! I wanted to find my place at that "round table" where I imagined women and men shared equally in ministry, where people coming from other careers instead of through "the system" were fully respected, where laying down one's life for those who were poor and victimized in this world was expected. I entered Camelot—I mean, Seminex—in 1980.

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my place at that  
"round table" where I  
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ministry...

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*By 1980, the glory of Camelot had definitely faded for me. I remember getting fired up by Operation Outreach. I headed out with other students and a faculty member to Iowa and one of the Dakotas. I was eager to tell the story, too. Our public story emitted an energy that people wanted to gather around; but my personal story with Seminex was dying down. It didn't take long before I felt like an ember that somehow got kicked away from the fire and would soon lose its spark. Part of this happened when I was sexually harassed by a teaching assistant at the seminary. I was really burned! Another part happened because of my involvement in "field work" in a congregation. When the district president found out, he came to tell me that I could not serve in any pastoral*

role because I was a woman; to do so was a clear “violation of scripture.” In that moment, face to face with his critique, the Spirit ignited me and boldly I proclaimed, “I have the call to preach the gospel,” and my challenger, respecting the doctrine of call, sat back in silence. Nevertheless, in 1976 after my vicarage, I found myself heading out of the Seminex camp to finish my training at a different Lutheran seminary.

At this reunion, many stories have been expressed, not all easy to hear or receive. We know there are many other stories out there—maybe as many as 243—that we don’t even know how to discover. Expressions of pain make us uncomfortable; our indiscretions burn bridges between us; our emptiness snuffs out light and life. As James Wind said, “What we did those days was very human.”

Camelot in crisis. What happens when the castle crashes, the round table is cracked, and human frailties break bonds of friendship and trust inside the walls we’ve constructed to protect ourselves and to identify ourselves in the world? We’ve been talking about breakdown, conflict, and brokenness in the LCMS on this 35th anniversary as if we were standing around a bonfire, enjoying the warmth and stories. But what if, instead of throwing more LCMS logs on the fire, we admit, we acknowledge, we confess that there are logs of our own conflict, breakdown and brokenness that need to be thrown on the fire too? God requires, invites, demands a day to disclose the quality of our work, to reveal it with fire. Do you want the whole story or will we be satisfied with fleeting glimpses of glory?

*Speakers in this anniversary celebration have challenged us to look over the walls and out of the turrets to understand what materials from the culture of the sixties and seventies may have contributed to the building of Seminex. Some of the materials*

*were sturdy; some were precious; some have already disintegrated. Is there a foundation there, one that will hold what we now have to build for the twenty-first century church? Prophets such as Justo Gonzalez challenge us with questions like, “Where will you be when western capitalism collapses?” We cannot see and know what is coming. When the people of Corinth were scrambling to build on foundations of courageous leaders, wise doctrine, or worldly power, Paul warned them of fire, fire that would test and fire that would reward. But only One could use that fire properly; only One could control that fire. The day of disclosure will come for everyone and every institution. Fire and smoke.*

Fire and smoke and fear. The story is played out every fire season, particularly across the dry, dry West. A few years ago the Biscuit Fire took hold in southwest Oregon, eating its way through thousands and thousands of acres of forest and wilderness. The fire had to do its work, even though humans tried to manage it. One of the places engulfed in smoke and debris during this fire was the small town of Cave Junction. Our cluster colleague, Pastor Peg, and the people were fatigued. Smoke was in their eyes and lungs. They were living moment to moment, on the edge of life and death. Peg prepared, along with the congregation and community folks, to be ready to evacuate at any moment. In all her ministry she had never done this before, but she told us that she had put in the trunk of her car the bread and the cup, the cross and the Bible, ready to go whenever the fire dictated, and wherever the people would go. These were the things she trusted and knew would draw the people together in the face of the fire and sustain them even if homes, businesses, church building and all the structures of the community were destroyed. The people, the Word, and the Sacraments. The church.

*When is fire good news for the people of God, and for our world? God, the one true builder, knows the durability of the foundation, for this builder has laid it from the very beginning. This One knows what fire will cleanse; what fire will clear away and reveal; what fire will test, mold, and transform. Fire in the toolkit of this builder is good and necessary. Fire is good news when it reveals the true foundation—"that foundation is Jesus Christ."*

*Christ, who chose to suffer loss for our sake, who burned with love that would be hidden but not extinguished. Christ, who holds out for us to drink the cup of his own baptism with fire. Will you take? Will you drink? Will you be consumed with this burning love?*

The walls, table, and community of Camelot were destroyed; what came through the firestorm were the story and the song, carried out into the world in the voices and lives of people, people telling the whole story. Paul says the whole story of God belongs to you, shapes and informs your whole life: "... whether the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God."

*We are a people who have learned to evacuate before, who have survived all kinds of fire and storms, and who trust in the builder of all firm foundations. We can evacuate now. We can help the church around us let go of structures and systems when their inferior quality is revealed. Respect the power of the fire, fear the one who yields the fire, but follow the one who knows the way through the fire! Come, Holy Spirit, come!*

*Wonder of wonders, we have the foundation that will travel with us! Doesn't that sound more than a little foolish?! Look! This foundation can*

*—rise up from the water to meet our toes dangling in dangerous depths!*

*—be the tablecloth spread out on the ground to hold the meal that sustains us in the midst of our enemies!*

*—connect believers on a common network of texts, tweets, and twitters that rally them for faithful action!*

*—be the mat carried in our pockets and unfolded and laid out on the gymnasium floor with a labyrinth pattern inviting youth and children and adults to wander and pray, guided by the Spirit!*

This space has been ringing and alive with the voices, stories, and songs of Seminex. We are grateful for the hospitality of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, our Chicago brothers and sisters, and one another. *Whenever* your story may have begun with Seminex and *whatever* stories we have yet to discover and share, we know that this time together is a temporary structure for the life we have lived and celebrated. Think of it as a platform or launching pad for the lives and ministries we are called to build up, remodel, and portray in the world.

For a 1981 Advent prayer book prepared by Seminex students, John Tietjen wrote these words that now send us out:

You still need messengers, don't you, Lord,  
to speak your truth to the world  
to prepare the way for your Christ.  
You still use strange people, too!  
Why should we find it strange  
that you should choose to use us?

In the desert of our lives, Lord,  
stiffen our backs  
breathe life into our bones  
to speak your truth  
to point to your Christ  
no matter what the cost.

Amen and amen.

# Valid, Etc.

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Everett R. Kalin

*Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor Emeritus of New Testament  
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary*

*Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
September 23, 2009  
Founders' Day and Seminex Celebration*

## **Lessons for Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist:**

***Ezek 2:8–3:11, Eph 2:4–10,  
Ps 119:33–40, Matt 9:9–13***

Matt 9:9–13 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. 10And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. 11When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (NRSV).

## **"VALID, ETC."**

So many topics; so many texts; so little time. I was tempted to add, "and miles to go before I sleep," but decided it was not a good idea to begin a sermon with the word "sleep"! So many topics: PLTS Founders' Day; Seminex at 35; the call of Matthew; and one more, which I'll save until the end. So many texts, from Ezekiel, Ephesians,

Psalm 119 and Matthew. These I narrow to two, Matthew and Ephesians. The psalm we sang, and psalms are for singing. All I'll do with Ezekiel is make the rather perverse observation that in God's call to swallow the scroll we finally see the origin of the Collect for Holy Scripture, which invites us to read, mark, learn, and **inwardly digest**.

For all these topics, from these two texts, one double theme: a) God's grace/mercy/love that embraces us in Jesus Christ, the crucified one, and b) the grace/mercy/love we are therefore freed to live out in the world with this crucified one.

But still the embarrassment of riches. Today's texts from Matthew and Ephesians use all the terms I just used, grace/mercy/love, and more, to speak of both halves of the double theme, God's love for us and God's life through us. I want to make it simple, as Rabbi Marc Gellman was quoted as doing in an article called "The Right Way to Pray?" in last Wednesday's *New York Times* (printed, the article was eleven pages long). The Rabbi said, "... when you come right down to it, there are only four basic prayers. Gimme! Thanks! Oops! and Wow!"

I need and have found a simple phrase like the Rabbi's that covers both God's love to us and God's love through us. I found it neither in Matthew nor in Ephesians but in the words you see as you go through a Bay Area bridge tollbooth using FasTrak, the automatic toll collector attached to your windshield. A sign just beyond the tollbooth flashes these words

as you go through: “VALID ETC (“ee-tee-cee”), which means “Valid Electronic Toll Collection.” But before I knew that, I had always read it as VALID ETC. (“et cetera”) and saw a sermon theme in there somewhere. And you are in luck, dear friends, for here is that sermon, in which VALID ETC. means: a) because of God’s love in the crucified one, we are VALID, validated, justified, every day anew and b) every day anew the Spirit impels us to live out the ETC. life of service that flows from faith’s reliance on our gospel validation.

**Theme one, the call of Matthew.**

Whatever this tax gatherer had done or been, with no prerequisites, today’s gospel says he was called with these unadorned words, “Follow Me.” This was not, in first instance, a call to be one of the twelve apostles, but a call like ours, to be Jesus’ follower, to follow his way to the cross. It is through Jesus’ cross that Matthew and we have been validated. Matthew’s gospel is by no means devoid of this VALID-half of our double equation: it tells us that Christ has come to give his life a ransom for many and that his blood is poured out for the forgiveness of sins. But Matthew majors in the ETC. In today’s gospel, when Jesus is challenged about his and God’s barrier-breaking inclusiveness, Jesus says, “Go and

learn what it means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’” Jesus’ followers are to be just as welcoming, just as barrier-crossing and just as merciful as he. “Go...and make disciples of all nations” is the command with which this gospel ends.

Ephesians 2 is much more articulate about the VALID part than Matthew: God is rich in mercy, acts out of great love, by grace, through faith, not the result of works. However, the ETC. is not far behind—the “not of works” in verse 9 is followed by the assertion that in Christ Jesus we were created for good works. And if today’s Ephesians lesson had not been cut at verse 10, we would have come to one of the most barrier-breaking, reconciling passages in the whole Bible, in which, through the cross, through his flesh, Jesus has broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile “that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace” (v. 15).

Sadly, as James Carroll shows in *Constantine’s Sword*, the church often made the cross a sword, a weapon of warfare, of superiority. Whatever was not the church became no-thing, especially if it was Jewish. The church, with its sword-cross, became the ecclesiastical equivalent of Chevy Chase’s self-introduction on





Saturday Night Live: “Hi, I’m Chevy Chase—and you’re not!” Thank God for the cross that unites rather than divides, creating **one new humanity!**

**Theme two, on Founders’ Day, the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS) story.** PLTS had two main catalysts, the Holy Spirit and James Prince Beasom. Beasom, president of the California Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA), was an incredibly energetic, mission-oriented pastor. Before

on a hill, and *voilà*, a seminary in and for the West.

PLTS has had a wonderful blending of the VALID and the ETC., with an evangelical center and a reach beyond itself. Of the four orienting perspectives of PLTS, Lutheran Identity seems to focus most specifically on the VALID, the evangelical core. It reads, “A shared passion for the biblical story, centered on God’s sheer love in Jesus Christ, which forms us as a community of worship, study, and service, rooted in the Lutheran confessional tradition.”

The other three perspectives, Religious Pluralism, Multiculturalism, and Public Sphere, flow from this evangelical core into various aspects of the ETC. In today’s gospel Jesus speaks of God’s desire for mercy in the context of warning against saying no to those to whom God says yes. And so PLTS became a Reconciling in Christ seminary.

Its ecumenical and inter-religious setting in the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) is a logical extension of its Lutheran heritage, not a denial of it. So is the seminary’s commitment to justice and peace. Maybe in the ‘60s it was accused of being the Berkeley city council at prayer. To which two brief remarks: 1. I learned in the Beasom booklet that the seminary is not actually in Berkeley, the property line putting it almost entirely in Contra Costa County. So, seminarians, if necessary, a quick note home to the family in Peoria or St. Cloud—“Guess what, Grandma, I am **actually not** going to school in **Berkeley!**” 2. A passion for peace and justice did not first spring up on Sproul Plaza on the Cal campus or on Telegraph Ave. It is at the heart of Jesus’ message, and he, in turn, found it in the books he called Scripture.

**Theme three, on its 35th anniversary, the SemineX story.** In January of 1974, the Board of Control of Concordia

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**O**n February  
19, 1974,  
we processed off the  
campus to be met by  
Walter Brueggemann,  
then Dean of Eden  
Seminary, and  
representatives of  
Jesuit-run St. Louis  
University, who gave  
us classrooms and  
took us in.

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there was a PLTS, Beasom went each year to the Lutheran seminaries in the East to recruit promising pastors for the West. He was so successful that these Eastern seminaries said, “Don’t come back.” And so, he and others bought two mansions

Seminary in St. Louis suspended the seminary's president, John Tietjen, alleging that he was harboring false teachers on the faculty. The students declared a moratorium on classes until the issues were resolved, and the faculty majority (all but five of the forty-plus professors) honored the moratorium. A month later, with nothing resolved, the faculty was ordered to teach or be fired. The students and the faculty majority then voted to continue seminary education as Concordia Seminary in Exile (later called Christ Seminary–Seminex). On February 19, 1974, we processed off the campus to be met by Walter Brueggemann, then Dean of Eden Seminary, and representatives of Jesuit-run St. Louis University, who gave us classrooms and took us in. In 1983, in anticipation of Lutheran merger, Seminex deployed its remaining faculty to other Lutheran seminaries, and four of us came here (Carl Graesser, Bob Smith, George Hoyer and I).

Here are the Seminex issues, in an abridged Gimme! Thanks! Oops! and Wow! version. On the issue of the VALID, both sides wanted to uphold the gospel. Our accusers sought to do that by insisting on a particular understanding of the scriptures. They insisted we affirm, for example, “the historicity of every detail in the life of Jesus as recorded by the evangelists.” We found the gospel at the center of the scriptures by methods that differed from, and were not helped by, the ones they insisted on. On the issue of the ETC., here is one example. Our detractors declared, “a decision on...ordaining women...[cannot be] made on the basis

of the ‘Gospel’ rather than on the teaching of Scripture as such.” On the ordination of women, we found the gospel a wonderful guide to keep us from saying no where God was saying yes.

These are the stories of Matthew's call, PLTS, and Seminex. There is **one more story**—by far the briefest of all, but, if John Steinbeck is right, the most important of all. In *East of Eden* he said, “If the story is not about the hearer, he[ she] will not listen.” This VALID ETC. stuff **is our story**, yours and mine.

Last week my wife, Clara, and I rushed to the home of a neighbor to help the infirm husband, who had fallen. An hour later he fell again, and 911 was called. As I sat with the wife, herself infirm, we spoke about their adult daughter, who lived at home with them and sacrificed her own life to meet their every need, and then some. The mother said of the daughter, “She does not think she has done nearly enough and thus believes that when she dies she will not go to heaven, at least not right away.”

Thanks be to God there is a different way to think about deeds of love and God's eternal embrace. The VALID ETC. story is our story. From the baptismal get-go, because of Jesus Christ, we are VALID, validated in the sight of God. To these waters, this VALID, we are called back every day, only to be sent out on the Fas-Trak of the ETC., to show filial, parental, neighborly, and every other kind of love. It does not get any better than that! And so, to end this sermon, all I need is one of Rabbi Gellman's very brief prayers: **Wow!** Amen.

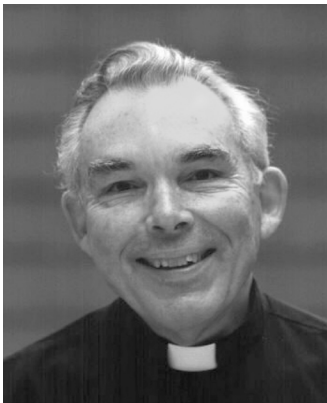
# Tribute

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Ralph W. Klein

*Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor Emeritus of Old Testament  
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*

## We Remember With Joy and Thanksgiving



Our First Dean  
John S. Damm  
1974-1981

### ***The 1973-1974 Academic Year***

- The early “Retirement” of seven colleagues
- Barnstorming the country in the week after the Saturday night massacre
- Casey Jones wearing a clerical collar every day in support of John Tietjen
- The death of Arthur Carl, his funeral and burial
- The suspension of John
- The student moratorium
- The faculty’s own decision
- The daily faculty meetings

- The notes from the board under our doors
- Exile

Through it all John was meeting with the Deans of

- LSTC
- St. Louis University
- Eden Seminary

When Exile hit, we had

- places to hold classes
- the aura of accreditation
- an institution to grant our first degrees

For the first year John was our acting president.

### ***February 14, 1975—completion of acting presidency***

We have learned again that our God is the God of infinite surprises.... But learning to appreciate and savor this God of surprises—this is a life-long task. And we weren’t prepared for the quick succession of surprises God had in store for us this year.

Remember that snowy morning on the nineteenth of February as we sat in the Fieldhouse and Richard Caemmerer talked to the whole community about faith. God gave us the power to do what Rachel and we had such a hard time doing, giving up our little vest pocket deities, our little personal idolatries, and rediscovering again how to put our whole confidence and trust in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John S. Damm

- Pioneered a study for curriculum renewal (TERC)
- Was a member of the student-elected pastoral staff
- With his mother Lillian was “given to hospitality”
- Was godparent to at least sixteen children
- Preached at ordinations, installations, and weddings at least ten times a year.
- Extensive counseling of students, their spouses, and partners
- 1981–1991 senior pastor at St. Peter’s in New York
- Loving care, liturgical excellence, and articulate preaching
- Encouraged development of the Momentum AIDS dinner program
- Remains active in the parish and in New York City
- Severe health challenges

## **We Remember With Joy and Thanksgiving**

Our faculty sister and brothers who have died in the Lord

Robert Bertram  
Herbert Bouman  
Richard R. Caemmerer  
William J. Danker  
Alfred O. Fuerbringer  
Carl Graesser  
Robert Grunow  
H. Lucille Hager  
Paul G. Lessman  
Erwin L. Lueker  
Herbert T. Mayer  
Arthur Carl Piepkorn  
Arthur C. Repp  
Alfred von Rohr Sauer  
Robert H. Smith  
Gilbert A. Thiele  
John H. Tietjen

Carl Volz

Walter Wegner  
Andrew M. Weyermann  
Leonhard C. Wuerffel

## **We Remember With Joy and Thanksgiving**

The eight district presidents and the president of Evangelical Lutherans In Mission

District Presidents  
Herman Frincke  
Harold Hecht  
Paul Jacobs  
Emil Jaech  
Waldemar Meyer  
Herman Neunaber  
Rudolph Ressemeyer  
Robert Riedel

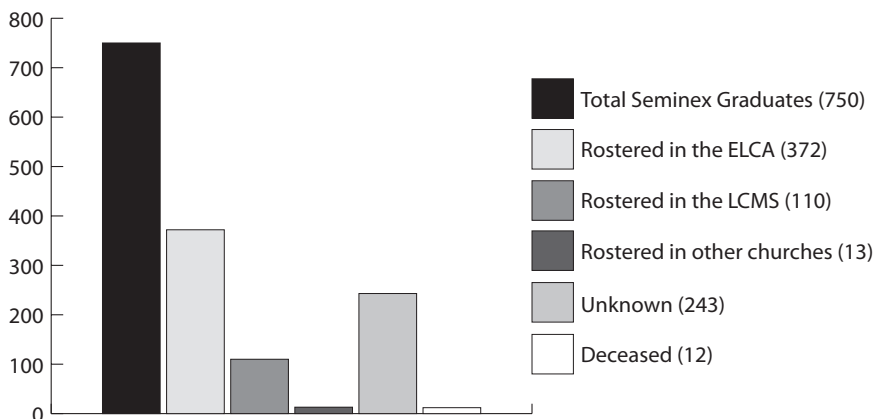
President of Evangelical Lutherans in Mission

- Samuel J. Roth

## **We Remember With Joy and Thanksgiving**

The students at Seminex 1974-1983

- For their creative action the morning after John was suspended
- For Operation Outreach
- For their courage in facing agonizing decisions
- For those who were alienated from their families
- For those who never received a call
- For those who have died in the Lord
- For those who are here
- For those who wish they were here



## Now Thank We All Our God

Now thank we all our God with hearts  
and hands and voices,

who wondrous things has done, in whom  
this world rejoices;

who, from our mothers' arms, has blest  
us on our way

with countless gifts of love, and still is  
ours today.

Oh, may this bounteous God through all  
our life be near us,

with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace  
to cheer us,

and keep us all in grace, and guide us  
when perplexed,

and free us from all harm in this world  
and the next.

All praise and thanks to God the Father  
now be given,

The Son, and Spirit blest, who reign in  
highest heaven,

The one eternal God, whom earth and  
heav'n adore;

For thus it was, is now, and shall be ev-  
ermore. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship  
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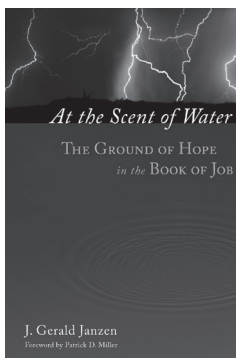
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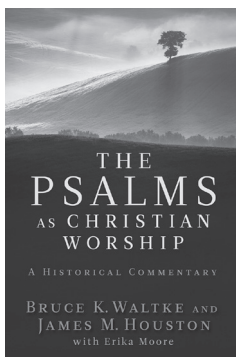
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# Book Reviews

***Power, Politics, and the Missouri Synod: A Conflict that Changed American Christianity.*** By James C. Burkee.  
Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011. ISBN-13:  
978-0800697921. xi and 256 pages.  
Cloth. \$29.00.

In the history of the church when Jesus Christ meets Machiavelli, very soon there will be a crucifixion. In this cautionary tale the chief protagonists are Herman Otten Jr. and Jacob A.O. Preus, who together helped to orchestrate the purging of theological liberalism from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in the 1960s and 1970s. The story culminates in the cleansing of Concordia Seminary, leading to the walkout of the majority of the faculty in 1974 to create Seminex (Seminary in Exile). The historical background for this struggle includes the specter of the civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam. The drift to liberalism in society had begun to infect also the policies and programming of the church by giving priority to economic justice, racial equality, and women's rights. Especially blameworthy for these developments were theology professors, whose use of historical criticism for interpreting the Bible resulted in revisionist teachings that undermined traditional authority.

In combating such an enemy, the ends justify the means. For Otten, a graduate of Concordia Seminary who was refused endorsement for ordination in the LCMS, the means included the publication of the *Christian News*, a tabloid journal that sniffed out liberalism and attacked its purveyors without regard for accurate reporting or ethical decency. For Preus, who rose rapidly through the ranks of contenders to the presidency of the LCMS, the means included the clandestine operation of a fine-tuned political machine to drive fear into the hearts of the laity, in order to persuade them to elect, by means of published lists, the candidates for office that ensured a conservative takeover. Burkee documents de-

tail after detail of his account with 50 pages of footnotes, including extensive interviews with many of the principal characters and the use of archival papers from the chief figures.

Burkee observes that in order for this form of conservatism to thrive, it necessitates an identifiable enemy. Once the bogeyman of liberalism had been eliminated, this meant that the fragile coalition of conservative factions began to turn on one another. Near the end of his narrative, the author concludes: "Jack Preus gained and lost allies because of his pragmatism. Hermann Otten, conversely, gained and lost allies because of his I-am-right-at-all-costs posture. Both entered a new decade in 1981 considerably less influential and more unpopular than they had been in 1969. The church they left behind was divided, dwindling, and more discouraged than it had been at any time since its beginnings in 1839, when founding bishop Martin Stephan was excommunicated for sexual misconduct and embezzlement" (175). Herein lays the tragedy. Power politics leaves the church inevitably weakened, as its witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ is compromised by fear-mongering, false innuendo, fallacious accusations, self-serving leadership, and other hypocrisy. In the words of the great Pete Seeger song: "When will 'they' ever learn?" Indeed, when will 'we' ever learn?

Craig L. Nesson  
Wartburg Theological Seminary

***The Power of Forgiveness.*** A Film by Martin Doblmeier. Journey Films. 2007. DVD. \$24.95.

***The Power of Forgiveness: Based on a Film by Martin Doblmeier.*** By Kenneth Briggs. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008. x and 205 pages. Paper. \$25.00.

This film by the renowned director, Martin Doblmeier (who also directed "Bonhoeffer: Pastor-Pacifist-Nazi Resistor"), and the companion book by Kenneth Briggs (former religion writer of *Newsday* and religion editor of *The New York Times*) are exceptional resources for congregational and other educational use. In this age of



extraordinary violence, where many people have been harmed by others, the topic of forgiveness is not only a classic Christian theme but a challenge with which we struggle in both our personal and corporate lives. Genuine forgiveness is never easy. Forgiveness is a process that is facilitated by particular conditions that aim, insofar as possible, toward reconciliation between the estranged parties. This film and book prompt reflection on those conditions and encourage viewers and readers to engage in the process that can lead to forgiveness and reconciliation.

The film features commentary and insight from well-known figures, including Elie Wiesel, James Forbes, Sr. Helen Prejean, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Thomas Moore. It takes viewers to places that face acute challenges to the very possibility of forgiveness: Ground Zero, Northern Ireland, the Amish countryside, and the Middle East. Both the personal and the societal dimensions are addressed in ways that encourage reflection and discussion about the meaning of forgiveness in concrete situations. The companion book assists the reader in exploring particular topics related to the process of forgiving: forgiveness and religion, the relationship between forgiveness and health, the impossibility of forgiveness, forgiving oneself, the question about justice, mutuality in forgiveness, social challenges to forgiveness, and forgiveness as a journey.

While this film could certainly be viewed apart from the book with great benefit, many points would be lost on one-time viewers without the analysis that the book provides. Conversely, while the book could be used with good effect apart from the film, the advantage of the book is in exploring at greater depth the particular issues dealt with in the film. In combination, one receives both the powerful images and narratives of the film and the identification of core issues and keen analysis of the book. I can imagine congregations and educational institutions incorporating *The Power of Forgiveness* into a variety of settings and thereby offering the opportunity to investigate new paths toward a reality for which we all yearn.

Craig L. Nesson  
Wartburg Theological Seminary

***Kindling Desire for God: Preaching as Spiritual Direction.***

By Kay L. Northcutt. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0800692639. ix and 160 pages. Paper. \$13.49.

This work cuts across denominational boundaries in drawing together matters of counseling, spiritual direction, education, sacraments, and homiletics. Northcutt offers a blend of these themes to discuss her emphasis on “the spiritual life of the preacher and the *aim* of preaching itself” (101). Building on the concept of spiritual formation, chapter titles reflect this concern in forming the preacher’s inner life as well as the lives of the listeners. The reader will need to decide if this blend of Protestant and Roman Catholic histories succeeds and to what extent it enhances the preaching life.

Susan K. Hedahl  
Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary

***Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times.***

By Joerg Rieger. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007. ISBN: 978-0800620387. x and 334 pages. Paper. \$22.00.

In the last twenty years, there has been a growing interest in the role of empire upon the development of Christian theology and praxis. In *Christ and Empire* Joerg Rieger, a systematician at Perkins School of Theology, has provided an ambitious series of analyses using the methodologies that have evolved in this multidisciplinary effort. With a focus on one figure or issue, Rieger moves through the millennia. He begins with the New Testament (Paul) and then travels through the council of Nicea (language of “co-equality”), the early medieval period (Anselm), the missions that accompanied the discovery of the “New World” (Las Casas), nineteenth-century imperialism (Schleiermacher), neo-colonialism (Aulén), and the late twentieth-century interest in the “cosmic Christ” (Matthew Fox).

What is fascinating in this work is not only the historical range and variety it offers, but also the way Rieger approaches these case



studies. Rather than taking sides as has often been the case in this field of study (*either* Paul sells out to empire *or* resists it), Rieger understands how difficult it is for anyone to escape the influence of empire (if it is one's cultural context) while, at the same time, he recovers the "christological surplus" of each of the figures/issues under review that may provide churches today with resources to reflect over and address the complicated power dynamics that come with globalization.

Given the range of the study, one can quibble with the accuracy of some of the historical details as presented. It is also clear that Rieger has a thesis to defend and will, at times, find ingenious readings of his source material to do so. His United Methodist theological ethos informs his sense of the ethical mandate upon the contemporary church, as it should. All in all this is a fine balanced introduction to current and important thinking being done in theological faculties concerning the effects of imperial ideology upon Christian theology, from Rome to the United States of America.

*Erik M. Heen*  
*The Lutheran Theological Seminary*  
*at Philadelphia*

***Enigmas and Powers: Engaging the Work of Walter Wink for Classroom, Church, and World.*** Edited by D.

Seiple and Frederick W. Weidmann. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 79. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2008. xxviii and 139 pages. Paper. \$19.00. ISBN-13: 978-15546352904; ISBN-10: 1556352905.

Frederick W. Weidmann begins the "Introduction" to this *Festschrift* in honor of Walter Wink as follows: "You hold in your hands an unusual book. In it you will find essays, letters, speeches, prayers, toasts, reminiscences, arguments, footnotes, and open-ended conversation" (xvii). He later writes, "Taken as a whole or even in its individual parts, what follows is not easily categorized or situated within accepted disciplinary categories."

How true these words are. This volume

breaks all the expectations of a *Festschrift*—as Walter Wink, the honoree, so often broke the categories imposed by the expectations of scholarship. The contents of this volume reflect what happened at a "party," as it was informally called, on his retirement as Professor of New Testament at Auburn Theological Seminary, New York, in May 2005. The first eight contributions (3–54) discuss Wink as scholar and active churchman. Wayne Rollins gives "An Overview of the Work of Walter Wink," focusing on *The Bible in Human Transformation* (1973), Wink's interest in the "Powers" (1973–2002) both in the Bible and the contemporary world, and in the significance of *The Human Being* (2002). There follow brief discussions of Wink's biblical scholarship (Bruce Chilton, 15–21), hermeneutics (J. Harold Ellens, 22–27), theology (Henry Motu, 28–32), pedagogy (Sharon Ringe, 33–38), philosophy (D. Seiple, 39–44), peace theology (Ted Grimsrud, 45–48), and psychology (Hal Childs, 49–54). A glance at the bibliography of Wink's published words (127–136) expands one's appreciation of his wide-ranging scholarship and churchly concerns.

The last two sections of the *Festschrift* are much more personal in nature. Section two, "Testimonials and Toasts," contains varied contributions: a Prayer, a Toast, a Letter, an Appreciation, an Inspiration, a Partnership, a Testament, a Recollection, an Envoi, and a Final Toast, all very personal memories and testimonials, witnessing to Walter Wink's impact in various areas of life. The final section, "Enigmas of the Future," contains five reflections on the effects Wink's work may have on future thought and activities. The last piece is a "Parting Prayer."

This is an unusual *Festschrift*, not made up of scholarly articles somewhat related to themes of the honoree's work. These varied papers and contributions show in very personal terms how Wink has influenced the contributors. It enables the reader to gain some appreciation of the person of Walter Wink, and not just of his scholarly work.

*Edgar Krentz*  
*Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*

***Homilies on the Gospel of John 1–40.***

Translated by Edmund Hillo, O. P., edited with an annotated introduction by Allan D. Fitzgerald, O. S. A. *The Works of Saint Augustine Part III—Homilies I/12.* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1565483194. 604 pages. Cloth. \$59.00.

This latest publication of the New City Press' edition of Augustine's sermons is the first of two volumes on John's Gospel. It presents the first forty of 154 sermons. These homilies are the only commentary on John from the Latin patristic tradition; they are of immense interest, therefore, informed by the Donatist heresy that Augustine opposes. Augustine devotes six homilies to John 5:19–30, interpretations that differ in stress on Jesus as Son of Man in the earlier set, but stress him as the humble Word of God in the three later homilies. This is a valuable addition to a very good translation of Augustine's works.

*Edgar Krentz*  
*Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*

***Beginning from Jerusalem.*** By James D. G. Dunn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0820839329. vii and 1347 pages. Cloth. \$80.00.

This work is volume 2 (of an anticipated 3 volumes) in the series titled *Christianity in the Making*. The first volume, of nearly equal length, titled *Jesus Remembered* focused on the person to whom the origins of Christianity can be traced. This second volume covers the period from approximately 30 to 70 CE, the first generation of the Christian movement. Dunn, or Jimmy as most of us know him, has shared with us a remarkable undertaking. As known from his many prior books and articles, he writes with careful consideration of all the issues involved. At the same time, even when dealing with complex issues, his presentation is most readable. That makes this work an outstanding textbook for college and university classes.

As the title indicates, the primary problem

is how the post-Jesus faith moved from Jerusalem to the Hellenistic world. The Aramaic-speaking community in Jerusalem, the so-called apostles, who were eventually led by James, appointed seven Greek-speaking deacons. According to Dunn's reading, the seven changed the language of the faith to Greek; essentially rejected the center of the world by disregarding the temple; and acted as evangelists rather than deacons by carrying the new faith to Antioch. He admitted his reflections on this complex period still left us on "shaky ground."

A second major problem arose with several conflicts that occurred in Antioch. The famous meal involving Paul, Cephas, and men from James resulted in Paul's going beyond even the Antioch Hellenists to take the gospel to non-Jews (Gentiles). Like most others, Dunn found it impossible to reconcile Paul's meal narrative with several Lukan narratives in Acts (e.g., chapter 15). Nevertheless, he saw in this material (Galatians and Acts) the diminished influence of the Jerusalem Christians as well as that of Peter. So from thereon he describes the emergence of Paul and his function as the apostle to the Mediterranean world.

In a study so incredibly extensive the average reader might easily find disagreements. For example, some might not see four separate letters in 2 Corinthians, as does Dunn. However, he knows the problems, even recognizes three or five letters might be more correct. In other words, Dunn describes the first generation well, but certainly includes the difficulties involved.

*Graydon F. Snyder*  
*Chicago*

***Undone by Easter: Keeping Preaching***

***Fresh.*** William H. Willimon. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009. ISBN-10: 142670013X. ISBN-13: 978-1426700132. xi and 116 pages. Paper. \$14.00.

Willimon draws upon an eschatology of Easter to deliver nearly 120 pages of pastoral care to preachers who doubt their preaching vocation. However, his book has very little to



do with the Lent/Easter season that its title claims as its focus.

Willimon laments “Neophilia,” an unhealthy obsession with the new that infects preaching: pastors grope for new ideas in order to sate an insatiable public. Willimon exhorts preachers instead to cherish the “eschatological newness” of repeating Christ’s story. Willimon considers this work to be a conversation with Barth, and ultimately he must confess, “Only Christ can preach Christ. And he will preach.” (67) Willimon’s chief contact with Easter throughout the book is with what he calls “the truth of the resurrection,” that upon which all preaching depends. (29) The resurrection has changed the rules. We no longer play by the world’s time—secular holidays that mark the passage of time until we die—but by the rules of the God who is truly in charge.

The chief shortcoming of this book lies in Willimon’s caricature of Rudolf Bultmann as a denier of the resurrection. It seems Willimon needed an “anti-Barth” and that Bultmann fit the role well enough. Willimon really did not need to go after Bultmann, and the book stands on its own without the two pages of misguided attack.

The book’s chief strength is its being a strong dose of pastoral care for preachers. All of Willimon’s emphasis on the truth of the resurrection and the central role of Christ in preaching serves to soothe the nerves of pastors who feel that they have run out of ideas. Preachers repeat themselves. That is what they are supposed to do, because the good news in Christ bears repeating. It is a strong message of pastoral care to those who preach.

*Timothy Andrew Leitzke*  
*Philadelphia, Pa.*

***First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.*** By Joseph A. Fitzmyer. The Anchor Yale Bible 32. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0300140446. 688 pages. Cloth. \$55.00.

Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., is Professor Emeritus at the Catholic University of America and one

of the leading Catholic biblical scholars in the world. This commentary on First Corinthians is Fitzmyer’s most recent contribution to The Anchor Yale Bible commentary series. He has written some of the best volumes in the Anchor series on the Gospel of Luke, Acts, Romans, and Philemon. This volume reflects the same in-depth historical-critical exegesis evident in previous volumes. There is a seventy-page introduction that begins with a detailed discussion of the city of Corinth and includes a helpful summary of Pauline teaching in 1 Corinthians. One of the main strengths of the commentary proper is that on any particular interpretive issue Fitzmyer typically presents all the options before making his own case. Fitzmyer also provides superb philological analysis. This is surely one of the better commentaries on 1 Corinthians. However, at more than 600 pages it will serve primarily as a reference work for detailed exegesis of particular passages.

*Raymond Pickett*  
*Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago*

***The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel.*** By Craig Koester. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xiv plus 245 pages. \$21.00. ISBN 978-0802829382.

Koester, professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, offers this fine contribution to the many attempts to describe the theology of John’s Gospel. He focuses on the text itself with few references to first- and second-century social contexts or literature. After a summary of the history of interpretation, he organizes John’s theology into traditional categories: God “The World and Its People” (Anthropology), Jesus (Christology), Crucifixion (Soteriology), the Spirit “Faith, Present and Future” (Eschatology), “Discipleship in Community and World” (Ethics).

The strength of Koester’s proposal is its close reading of the text and clear presentation. He presents major interpretive options clearly and concisely without naming scholars and the details of their debates. For example, he refers to unnamed “interpreters” who distinguish the Spirit’s role in the first half of the





Gospel as “giving life” from the second half’s emphasis on “abiding presence, teaching and witness.” In contrast, he emphasizes the theological unity of John within its literary unity: “the various Spirit passages are interconnected and create a web of meaning” (p. 134).

The focus on the text alone is also the book’s greatest weakness. By taking the text out of its first-and second-century context, Koester minimizes the impact of some scenes. Koester minimizes the importance of Old Testament allusions, such as the role of Zech 14:20–21 (“there shall no longer be traders in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day”) which helps understand John’s sense of the “cleansing of the temple” (esp. John 2:16; see Koester, 152–153). He minimizes the juridical social context indicated by the blind man’s trial before the council and Jesus’ trial before Pilate (e.g., the too brief discussion of the “courtroom” setting for the Spirit, 157). Yet, Koester’s reading of John is not independent of a context. Anachronistically he portrays John as having an “egalitarian vision” of Christian community (203) despite the privileged roles given to Peter and the Beloved Disciple.

*The Word of Life* is suited for the pastor and seminary student, but is accessible to the informed lay person. If a study guide could be written, it could easily be used in an adult Bible study.

Peter S. Perry  
Chicago, Ill.

edged as such by his disciples in Galilee. After a brief overview of scholarship, Barnett has chapters on the various sources for this “historical Christ”: the canonical Gospels, non-Christian sources (especially Josephus), Acts, Mark (written in collaboration with Peter), Luke’s sources (Mark, Q, and L), the Gospel of John, and Paul’s letters. His final chapter is an argument for the general historical credibility of virtually all of the sayings and narratives of Jesus in Galilee. Barnett mounts a serious scholarly argument, but he writes in a manner accessible to anyone who is interested in this question. He makes a good case for the general historical reliability of the New Testament information about the pre-resurrection Jesus. However, his case for a pre-resurrection *Christ* in the sense of Jesus’ own self-consciousness will not convince skeptics. Barnett makes unproven assumptions, such as his repeated insistence that the Gospel writers would neither alter nor omit any sayings of the Lord. Barnett makes a plausible case, but it is an open question as to whether the sources, all written from the point of view of post-resurrection faith, can provide reliable historical evidence of Jesus’ self-consciousness. This book may be useful to pastors, students, and anyone interested in what ‘biographical’ information we can know about Jesus. However, its conservative findings are not going to convince everyone.

David W. Kuck  
United Theological College, Kingston, Jamaica

***Finding the Historical Christ.*** (After Jesus, volume 3). By Paul Barnett. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0802848901. xi and 299 pages. Paper. \$22.00.

This is the third volume of Barnett’s trilogy *After Jesus*. The previous volumes covered the development of Christianity in the first twenty years after Jesus and in Paul’s mission. In this final installment he focuses on the New Testament documents as sources for “the historical Christ.” The title reveals his primary argument: there is no dichotomy between the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith,” for Jesus understood himself to be the Messiah and was acknowl-

***King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature.*** By Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008. v and 261 pages. Paper. \$28.00.

This useful and informative volume presents a series of essays that trace the function of the titles Son of God, Son of Man, and Messiah in biblical literature and some related sources. Adela and John Collins, both on the faculty of Yale University, have combined their extensive knowledge in Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament to create a historical development not



easily matched by any other pair of authors.

The study begins with short discussions of royal ideology in Near Eastern contexts: Egypt, Mesopotamia, and ancient Canaan. They show how divine kingship was adapted by ancient Judah, especially as seen in Psalms 2 and 110, yet did not imply the king was “god.” Eventually the relationship between God and king became covenantal (e.g., 2 Samuel 7, “father and son”), rather than authoritative. The Deuteronomistic material reflects this shift from a more militaristic monarch to a leader like the judges.

The destruction of Jerusalem left the Jews without a king. Consequently, they developed an eschatological Messiah. The authors first present intertestamental Hellenistic material as a sign of that shift. Much is little known to many of us: Septuagintal Psalms; Septuagintal Isaiah (as angel in Isaiah 9); the Dead Sea Scrolls (especially 1QS9:1, 4Q174:13, and 4Q246). This future Messiah became identified with the Son of Man and, though the connection may be complicated, Dan 7:13–14, and *bar nasha* serve as the source for this important link. In the Gospels “Son of Man” can represent the eschatological Messiah, the dying and rising king, or the present person, i.e., “I” or Jesus. Mark’s prediction of a suffering Son of Man radically changed the Jewish expectation of a Messiah. The coming Jewish leader will give of himself for the world, not conquer it. This may well be the defining point of the Christian faith.

While Jesus is known throughout the New Testament as the Son of God, the primary source for us is the Gospel of John. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Son of God (1:34), a confession parallel to Jesus as Messiah (1:27). The Jesus of the Gospel of John is not an eschatological figure following the fall of Jerusalem. Rather he is the divine Logos, present from the very beginning, even as a creator.

Starting with Royal Ideology and ending with the divine Logos, this work by the Collins offers a comprehensive approach to biblical Christology. Though the composition is not excessively complicated, it will benefit primarily academic types. It is must reading for anyone teaching or writing on the New Testament.

Graydon F. Snyder  
Chicago

## Briefly Noted

In *Opening up the Scriptures* (Eerdmans, 2008. \$25.00. ISBN 976-0802860118), five Catholic scholars seek to advance the program proposed by then Cardinal Ratzinger. Critical of historical criticism in 1988 he suggested a method should combine historical criticism with the insights of patristic and medieval exegesis. The scholars here seek to implement his suggestion, insisting on reading the Bible as faith-conceived revelation. An interesting volume.

Edgar Krentz

Anthony Thiselton’s *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Eerdmans, \$30.00; ISBN-13: 978-0802864109) gives students a history of hermeneutics and an analysis of contemporary trends in interpretation. Based on a deep knowledge of the literature and the issues raised (the select bibliography covers twenty-five pages), it is a good guide to the subject and deserves wide use.

Edgar Krentz

Michael F. Bird in *Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVPress Academic, 2009. 192 pages. \$20.00) gives basic information about Paul, assuming all letters are authentic. The work stresses that Paul is different from modern people. Useful for parish libraries, it is a quick, conservative review of Paul’s life and thought.

Edgar Krentz

Gordon Fee provides a helpful, historically conservative interpretation in *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (Eerdmans, \$44.00), a volume in The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Fee knows and uses the Greek text well, but writes this commentary for the pastor who looks for help in proclamation and teaching. His notes contain many references to modern scholarship for those interested in pursuing topics more deeply. All in all, a helpful aid for pastors.

Edgar Krentz

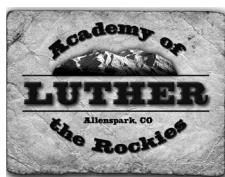
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# Preaching Helps

Seventh Sunday of Easter— Proper 13

## Concerning this Column

A pastor I deeply respect once told me that his idea of hell is spending eternity writing the pastor's page for a congregational newsletter. While I can certainly name worse fates and am keenly aware that many people are living them, I do not think this pastor is alone in his sentiments. Many pastors and other rostered leaders tell me that coming up with a topic and writing the newsletter article is a monthly dread. I often think of the church newsletter article—or this introductory essay—as a topical rather than a text-based sermon. Rather than “reporting” on what we have discovered or heard in readings from Scripture, we need to decide on a topic and then say whatever it is we have to say about it. Sometimes that's plain exhausting, especially when we're unsure of what the newsletter article is supposed to accomplish, whether whatever we're saying matters to the readers or if anyone actually reads the column or simply turns the page to the “news.”

As a preacher, I become more and more grateful for the lectionary. I am glad and relieved that weekly preaching is different from monthly newsletter writing in that I do not have to come up with a sermon “topic,” but first listen to Scripture and my faith community to discover what I believe God has to say. I am consoled by the fact that the sermon's purpose is clear—to proclaim the gospel. Like many preachers, I sometimes am befuddled by the lectionary. Yes, while the preacher sometimes brings life to the lectionary, mostly the lectionary brings life to this preacher. The key seems to be discovering the spark or connection between God's activity in the congregation and world and God's activity in the readings. This issue's author of “Preaching Helps” does this well.

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When I was a full-time parish pastor, it never occurred to me (or I was too afraid) to ask whether people read my pastor's page in the newsletter, what purpose that column should serve, and whether it's really necessary. The pastor's page was a “given.” Truth be told, I can count on one hand the times someone commented on something I wrote in the newsletter—a commentary, perhaps, on the quality of

my columns! Now that my synod's newsletter comes online, I find that I read my bishop's page less. Are we so bombarded with information that, regardless of their quality, what were once "givens" are simply filtered out?

As I conclude my eighth year editing "Preaching Helps," I genuinely wonder if this page is a "given" and, if it is, what purpose ought it to serve. My aim has been to encourage preachers. As I say in my classes, "We applaud after every sermon in this class because there will be a lot of years when no one will!" Have you felt encouraged? Should I keep doing this, do something else, or simply provide an introductory paragraph telling you about the author and get on with the "Preaching Helps"?

I suppose I could do what LSTC seems to be doing a lot these days and set up an online survey. I'd rather simply invite your thoughts. Do you read this essay? What, if anything, do you find helpful? What direction would you like to see this essay take? Or can it disappear? You're welcome to drop me a note at [csatterl@lstc.edu](mailto:csatterl@lstc.edu). I would genuinely appreciate hearing from you.

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## Seventh Sunday of Easter

### June 5, 2011

Acts 1:6–14

Psalm 68:1–10, 32–35

1 Peter 4:12–14; 5:6–11

John 17:1–11

#### First Reading

In the Gospel reading, St. John records a prayer of Jesus. “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17:11b). By 120 CE, the Christian community had come to know the tensions between brokenness and unity.

Unity did not come easily for the first generation of Christians. Every Christian community used their own individual canon of scripture. Every Christian community was constituted of many different cultures with many different sensibilities. Many Christian communities began to experience persecution. Radical ideas of the faith were beginning to crop up, some heresy and some doctrine. Unity did not come easily or readily. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

In our first reading, we have a scene of the very first Christian community. In Acts we read, “When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers” (Acts 1:13–14).

In Acts, we have an assembly of a diverse group of women and men. We learn that they were centering themselves upon Christ in prayer. In other words,

these first Christians were focused upon Jesus. The good news is that the focus on Jesus made all the difference. As Christian community grew, it experienced diversity of thought, practice, and culture. What kept Christian community unified was its dedication to Jesus. If it worked for them, it will work for us in this generation.

#### Pastoral Reflections

One of the qualities I admire about ELCA presiding bishop, Mark Hanson, is how he concludes many of his prayers. I've noticed over and over again, he finishes his prayers by declaring, “In Jesus. Amen.”

I like that prayer conclusion for many reasons. I like the simple confessional nature of the conclusion. I like the pleasing ring those words possess. But the single biggest reason I like it is because Jesus is all we have. When everything is said and done, Jesus is the only thing that matters. When the presiding bishop utters this conclusion, he reminds the entire church who our source of unity is.

Unity is a great idea that does not fit well into the reality of life. Because of sin, our age-old rebellion, we live more out of brokenness than unity. Left to our own devices, we let slip the dogs of war in our lives, in our parishes, in our ecosystems, in our businesses and in our communities. Truth be told, humanity is very good at brokenness. We might even go so far as to say that we are experts in this terrible field.

That's why God gave us the church. We need a place to learn a new expertise. This expertise, this new proficiency is unity. Not only did Jesus know what to pray for the human family, he knew that he was quite literally the answer to our prayer. Like those women and men of the first Christian community, we need to gather around Jesus.

To face brokenness alone leads to



despair. Facing brokenness with Jesus leads to unity. This idea is not naive, wishful thinking or false hope. This idea is the center of Christian community.

A sermon on the contrast between brokenness and unity allows preachers to name the struggles faced within their own particular communities. But more than that, such a sermon directs the preacher to help the listeners to hear the good news of the unifying presence of Jesus. ACB

## **Pentecost** **June 12, 2011**

Acts 2:1–21

Psalm 104:24–34, 35b

1 Corinthians 12:3b–13

John 20:19–23

### **First Reading**

What a moment! The disciples were assembled. As promised, the Holy Spirit came and gave them the power to communicate with the international crowd who had gathered in Jerusalem. The noise of the Spirit was loud enough to disrupt the busy streets of Jerusalem. Like any good missionary, they seized upon the opportunity to speak with those who were bewildered over the events that had just taken place.

The author of Acts records the initial response of the crowd. “All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’<sup>13</sup> But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’” (Acts 2:12–13).

Talk about edgy. There were those who believed this was nothing more than a few obnoxious drunks emptying out into the streets after an all-nighter. This is the very definition of cynicism.

Cynicism is part and parcel of what Christians face when they minister in their contexts. Jesus experienced this time and time again. Think of the twenty-second chapter of St. Matthew. Not once but three times, we see our Lord’s opponents attempting to ask him questions that will trip him up. Remember the questions about taxes, marriage, and commandments? Interesting to note, their cynical approach to Jesus failed and left them wondering about their life and commitments.

Even when the Holy Spirit presents itself, there are those who are cynical. It is something that we should expect and be ready to respond to.

### **Pastoral Reflection**

Let’s begin with a statistical analysis of our own parishes. Please check out your parochial records. Let’s look at worship attendance for Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. What do your numbers reveal?

If your parish is like mine, it will show that Christmas and Easter have the highest attendance of the year by far. In my shop, nearly 75 percent of my members attend those services. But when it comes to Pentecost, it may as well be 5 Epiphany or 2 Advent—just another day in the liturgical calendar. Judging by worship attendance, it’s hard to believe that Pentecost is the third major festival of the Church Year.

As evidenced by our own parochial records, not only do we find cynicism outside the church, but we may find cynicism inside the church as well. I suspect this may be a prevailing attitude when it comes to Pentecost. Here’s what I’ve sensed and heard from God’s people over the years: “Pentecost is something that occurred 2000 years ago. It’s not about today. The Spirit doesn’t work that way now. I’d like to get me some of that new wine, Pastor.”

I am not asking anyone to embrace a literal reading of scripture. I am not endorsing a spirituality that reflects the charismatic tradition. But I am suggesting embracing the fullness of the Pentecost story in a way that compels the listener to reject a cynical approach to matters of the Spirit and embrace the faith journey that expects to see, hear, experience, and participate in the life of the Holy Spirit.

Such a sermon could take on cynicism head-on. Consider addressing the ways the evil one seeks to prevent us from living Pentecost. The sermon structure could include individual members telling their Pentecost stories from the previous year. ACB

## The Holy Trinity

### June 19, 2011

Genesis 1:1—2:4a

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13:11–13

Matthew 28:16–20

#### First Reading

This grouping of scripture speaks to a common theme, which, in this pastor's opinion, is the power of God. What could be more appropriate for the celebration of the name of God?

In the first reading, we hear these words from the author of Genesis: "And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation" (Genesis 2:2–3). In this reading, we hear God's name connected to the gift of creation.

In the second reading, we hear

these words from the author of Second Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2 Corinthians 13:13). In this reading, we hear God's name connected to the centrality of Christian community.

In the Gospel, we hear these words from St. Matthew: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19–20). In this reading, we hear God's name connected to the mission of the church.

These powerful texts connect God's name and us to creation, Christian community, and the mission of the church. Could a preacher ask for anything more?

#### Pastoral Reflection

Have you ever noticed that it is easier to tear something down than build something up? This is true of most everything. From businesses to structures, from communities to nations, building something up takes longer than tearing something down.

Spiritually speaking, there are players in this cosmic blueprint. There is an architect whose name we honor this day. The name of God has always been about building up. In creation, community, and mission, God is at work. But as we all know, there is a demolition expert who is the architect's adversary. The name of evil has always been about tearing down. Evil is the enemy of creation, community, and mission.

Perhaps the most difficult question in all of Christianity is theodicy. Theodicy asks this primary question: How can there be an omnipotent and good God

in view of the evil in this world? This is a question that all thinking Christians have asked time and time again over the course of their lifetimes.

These readings and this liturgical day provide an opportunity to explore this existential question. Such a sermon could explore what God and evil have been up to in your neck-of-the-woods and how your community can participate. In this pastor's opinion, such a sermon needs to conclude with the good news that the architect's plans cannot, and never will, be destroyed by the demolition expert. ACB

## Proper 8 June 26, 2011

Jeremiah 28:5–9

Psalm 89:1–4, 15–18

Romans 6:12–23

Matthew 10:40–42

### First Reading

In his book, *Preaching Matthew's Gospel*, Richard Jensen writes these words about this Sunday's pericope: "To minister to the least is to minister to Jesus. We hear that in both 10:40–42 and 25:31–46. To receive the little ones is to receive Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

For reference, Matthew 25:31–46 is the parable of the last judgment. The scene is ferocious. On Judgment Day all of humanity is separated into two categories: the sheep and the goats. The only distinguishing characteristic between the two groups is how they treated those in need. Both the sheep and the goats quickly discover the presence of Christ

was located in the faces of the needy they encountered in their lifetimes.

These two texts from Matthew remind the listener that Jesus is ever present. He is ever present in the faithful, hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned. The word could not be any clearer. Jesus is ever present in you and those around you.

Now here is my question. How might the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—or any other denomination—look ten years from now if every bishop, pastor, professor, rostered leader, congregational president, and the other 4.7 million of us saw Jesus in one another and those we encounter on the street?

### Pastoral Reflection

For me, ministry is all about relationships. These relationships are threefold. They include a relationship between us and our souls, other people, and God. When we tend to these relationships, ministry moves ahead. When we ignore these relationships, ministry grinds to a halt.

At the heart of these relationships is a vision. For healthy Christian relationships to emerge and grow, we must see the nature of love in ourselves, one another, and God. Once that vision is clarified we can grow in our relationships.

But so often, this vision of love is blocked by history, grudge-holding, personalities, sin, and a variety of other reasons. When these reasons take center stage, relationships not only plateau, they fail. In theological language, we re-enact the fall and embody original sin.

This Sunday is an opportunity to explore how we see ourselves, one another, and God. Such a sermon could explore the nature of relationships and how those relationships get blocked. The preacher should focus attention on the sinful consequences of blocked relationships—i.e.,

1. Richard A. Jensen, *Preaching Matthew's Gospel: A Narrative Approach* (Lima, Ohio: CSS Publications, 1998), 99.

the hungry starve. One last note: Perhaps the best place to start in such a sermon is by looking inward. Who have you blocked out—your soul, your neighbor, your God? ACB

## Proper 9 July 3, 2011

Zechariah 9:9–12

Psalm 145:8–14

Romans 7:15–25a

Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

### First Reading

“Psalm 145 consists of a series of short affirmations that extol the reign and kingship of God.”<sup>2</sup> There are two attributes of the kingdom of God as detailed in the appointed verses from this psalm. On the one hand, God’s kingdom is compassionate (vv. 8–9) and loving (vv. 8, 13). On the other hand, God’s kingdom is everlasting (v. 13) and powerful (vv. 1–12). It is interesting to note how the fullness of scripture reveals that compassion and love are deeply connected to that which is everlasting and powerful. This contrast is one of the paradoxes of the faith. Everlasting power is found in compassion and love.

We hear echoes of that paradox in the first reading from Zechariah. In verses 9–10 we read, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot

from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” Yet the greatest example of that theme is found in the life, teachings, healings, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Where these attributes are found, it can be assumed that the kingdom of God is breaking in upon the world. These attributes can be found among individuals and nations alike.

### Pastoral Reflection

Over the course of my pastoral career, I have noticed three preaching strategies in regard to the American celebration of the Fourth of July. First, the preacher avoids the topic altogether. Second, the preacher embraces enculturation and turns the worship experience into a nationalistic rally. Third, the preacher takes a prophetic voice and uses the moment to address the nation’s ills. By means of confession, I have regularly embraced the first option.

In this pastor’s opinion, all three options miss the mark and lack balance. The first option does not take seriously the societal event that so occupies the listeners’ minds and hearts. The second option does not take seriously our nation’s sins. The third option does not take seriously our nation’s greatness.

I believe there is a fourth way to address the American celebration of the Fourth of July. This way takes seriously the attributes of the kingdom of God and connects them with our nation’s history. I fully realize this is a serious challenge with potential risks. Careful attention must be paid to the line between recognizing our nation’s greatness and our nation’s sins.

Here’s how just such a sermon could work. An opening proclamation could include outlining the attributes of the

2. Fred B. Craddock, et. al., *Preaching Through the Christian Year, Year A: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Lectionary* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1992), 352.

kingdom of God as detailed in Psalm 145. As previously noted, these qualities include the paradox of compassion and love with everlasting power. With this scriptural base, a faith-based assessment of our nation's history can take place. In this section of the sermon, there must be a balance of examples that detail both our nation's greatness when we lived up to those qualities of the kingdom of God and our nation's sins when we set aside those qualities of the kingdom of God. A closing proclamation could include a call to faithfulness for this and all nations.

For the preacher, such a sermon demands careful theological and historical reflection. For the listener, such a sermon provides a framework to understand the fullness of our nation. For both parties, such a sermon will lead to growth. ACB

## Proper 10 July 10, 2011

Isaiah 55:10–13  
Psalm 65:[1–8] 9–13  
Romans 8:1–11  
Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

### First Reading

The disciples came to know that life with Jesus wasn't easy. They ate whatever they could find on the road. They slept outside many, many nights. They were often harassed by the local authorities. All in an effort to share the good news that God was quite literally before them!

Richard Jenson helps us get a handle on Jesus' life according to St. Matthew. After noting that the lectionary has omitted Matthew 12, Jenson points out that chapter 12 gives context to this Sunday's Gospel reading. "Matthew 12 is full of terrible conflicts; opposition to Jesus

intensifies as Pharisees begin to debate with Jesus directly...and plot his (Jesus') death. By the end of the chapter, they (the Pharisees) are painted as representatives of 'this evil generation.'"<sup>3</sup>

The parable of the sower is our Lord's attempt to help his disciples understand what has taken place and their responsibilities in ministry. Put differently, Jesus is telling his disciples that even though the evil one has blocked attempt after attempt, God's will is always realized.

The parable of the sower is the narrative form of the word of the Lord from Isaiah, "so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). As Jesus said, "Let anyone with ears listen!" (Matthew 9:13).

### Pastoral Reflection

A few years back, the department for Research and Evaluation for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) examined the question of frequency of invitation among ELCA members. The results were unsettling. The average ELCA member on average invites 1 person every 40 years to their church.

Whenever I share this number, people laugh. I'm certain they laugh for a variety of reasons. They laugh because they can identify with the truth of the research. They laugh because they are embarrassed that the department for Research and Evaluation has identified their behavior. They laugh because they don't know what else they can do.

I typically use that moment for pastoral instruction. I begin first by remind-

3. Richard A. Jensen, *Preaching Matthew's Gospel: A Narrative Approach* (Lima, Ohio: CSS Publications, 1998), 112.

ing them, this isn't funny. It's sad. Once the mood of the room shifts, I turn my attention to this parable of our Lord.

What strikes me the most is that Jesus and his disciples sowed the seed of God's Word, despite all their ongoing troubles as documented in Matthew 12. They didn't make excuses as to why this couldn't possibly work. They didn't try to delineate what is good soil from the rest. They didn't attempt to figure out the yields of the potential harvest. They simply went and sowed the seed of God's word.

This is personal, isn't it? Just take a moment and think about your faith journey. At one point, someone cared enough about you to sow the seed of God's word in your life. Isaiah points out that it did not come back empty. As it was true for you, so it is true for your neighbors. There are so many people who are empty fields, waiting for a sower-congregation to plant the seeds of faith.

This is such an important parable for our own day and age. As your parish prepares for the fall program this year, perhaps this mid-summer text could begin to frame your fall outreach efforts to sow the seeds of faith in your community. ACB

## Proper 11 July 17, 2011

Isaiah 44:6–8  
Psalm 86:11–17  
Romans 8:12–25  
Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

### First Reading

As mentioned in my notes for July 10, the context of Matthew 13 is Matthew 12. In Matthew 12, Jesus finds himself

in one conflict after another. His teachings, his ministry, and his disciples are under assault.

Whereas the parable of the sower is all about Jesus' ministry, the parable of the weeds and the wheat is all about the big picture of history. Richard Jensen puts it this way, "The Gospel of Matthew is filled with the reality that Jesus who brings the kingdom is locked in a struggle with the devil."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus goes out of his narrative way to make that point. We read, "So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.'" (Matthew 13: 26-28a). Notice Jesus refers to the one who sowed the weeds as an enemy. This is strong language for our Lord.

In addition to revealing the power of evil, Jesus speaks of the story of human history. Good and evil will coexist until time comes to an end and God shall separate the righteous from the unrighteous. This theological point is made when we hear how two types of seed have been sowed in the field. Resolution will not occur until harvest, when the farmer can separate the weeds from the wheat.

### Pastoral Reflection

I'll never forget the first time I went to the Chicago Botanic Gardens in Glencoe, Illinois. The site is 385 acres with 24 themed gardens. It is a vision of beauty and grace. It's the way all gardens should be. When I returned home, I saw my own poor excuse for a garden. It was filled with weeds and misshaped plantings. My garden was a good example of the

4. Ibid., 119.

way things are.

Who among us hasn't noticed the gap between the way things are and the way things should be? These thoughts cross our minds every time we witness or participate in an injustice, an act of incivility, or some other type of sin.

The way things are is entirely about original sin. We live in world that is shaped, formed, and structured in the brokenness of humanity. Even in the most beautiful flower and vegetable gardens, weeds simply appear. It's just the way things are.

The way things should be is a vision that is larger than the sum total of the human story. Staying the course with our theme, this is a vision of a garden with colorful flowers, ripened fruits, and vegetables. Each plant spaced properly from the next. This vision is entirely about Jesus and his kingdom.

We live in the world where original sin is reality. It's just the way things are. But this doesn't mean that we have to passively accept our own and the world's brokenness. No, our job is to live according to One who has shaped and formed us in the ways of grace.

The Chicago Botanic Gardens inspire me. While my own gardens will never look as good as the Chicago Botanic Gardens, they serve as an example to me for my own property. To this day, I strive to make my property look as good as it can. This is how we live in the gap between the way things are and the way things should be. Such a sermon could explore these polarities and how we can embody God's grace as we live as wheat among weeds. ACB

## Proper 12 July 24, 2011

1 Kings 3:5-12

Psalm 119:129-136

Romans 8:26-39

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

### First Reading

Could there be a more packed Gospel reading for this lectionary year? In our Gospel for this Sunday, we read six brief parables of Jesus. These parables are the mustard seed (vv. 31-32), the yeast and flour (v. 33), the hidden treasure (v. 44), the pearl (vv. 45-46), the fish net (vv. 47-50), and the householder's treasury (vv. 51-52).

From this preacher's perspective, having six parables is like having nine beatitudes. Where do you begin? *Preaching Through the Christian Year, Year A*, suggests this idea: "Perhaps the congregation will be better served if the preacher possesses no thematic center for these six parables. What is the kingdom of God like? It is many-splendored, but we catch glimpses of it. It is as though Jesus held it up to the light, turned it as one turns a prism in the sun, and in these stories told us what he saw. We listen, enjoy, and ponder."<sup>5</sup>

One more note of interest from *Preaching Through the Christian Year*. The authors make the point that for Matthew, the kingdom of heaven is interchangeable with the kingdom of God. "It is not intended to point the reader beyond here to the hereafter."<sup>6</sup> These parables are for today.

Lastly, I am struck by how narrative our Lord is with his approach in teaching. He spends his time telling stories, not lecturing on theology or ethics. He

5. Craddock, 382.

6. Ibid.



provides images to stir the imagination of his disciples.

### Pastoral Reflection

I had the privilege of studying in the ACTS Doctor of Ministry in Preaching program through LSTC. No, I'm not being paid for this plug! But truth be told, if you want to grow in your preaching that's a program worth exploring. Back on task, I took a course where we examined the preaching idea of dynamic translation.

Dynamic translation, which was developed by Dr. Charlie Cosgrove and Dr. Dow Edgerton, is the rewriting and retelling of scripture for our own day and age. In order to engage faithfully in dynamic translation, there are a series of guidelines per Cosgrove and Edgerton.<sup>7</sup> These guidelines include:

1. The dynamic translation must speak to our own time.
2. All parts and elements of the text must be addressed.
3. The form and genre of the text must be used in the dynamic translation.
4. With the exception of God and Jesus, everything else in the passage can be represented with something else.

Given the fullness of this text, dynamic translation is one way to pick up both the spirit and content of this full text from Matthew. Such a sermon would focus upon the kingdom of God and its layers, using images and constructions that relate well to your particular community.

Here's how this works for me, based on the parable of the pearl. The kingdom of God is like a fisherman who found the most beautiful lake and sold all that he

had so that he could purchase a lakefront lot. There the fisherman built a cabin, grew old with his family and taught his grandchildren how to fish. That is my dynamic translation. What is your dynamic translation? ACB

### Proper 13 July 31, 2011

Isaiah 55:1–5

Psalms 145:8–9, 14–21

Romans 9:1–5

Matthew 14:13–21

### First Reading

In our Gospel reading, we quickly learn that Jesus has experienced a family death. His cousin, John the Baptist, was unjustly murdered by King Herod. Our grieving Lord was mourning his loss.

Jesus decided to take some down time. So he set off to spend time in a secluded spot. But because the people knew where he was going, when he stepped off the boat he was greeted by a great crowd. Instead of turning them away, he healed their sick. When evening fell, the crowds became hungry. Instead of turning them away, Jesus blessed and broke the five loaves of bread and two fish.

There are many elements of this story that are striking, including the contrast between Herod's table and Jesus' table. Yet, what jumps out to this preacher is the selflessness of Jesus. The text notes that Jesus had compassion when he saw the needs of the crowd. Jesus temporarily set aside his own need to grieve and he went to work. He healed and fed that crowd of five thousand folks.

This wasn't the last time that Jesus modeled this selfless attitude of compassion for us. On the cross, Jesus embraced

7. Charles H. Cosgrove and W. Dow Edgerton, *In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

the ugly stuff of humanity—sin, death, and evil. From the empty tomb, Jesus overcame it all in the resurrection—pouring out the gifts of life, forgiveness, and salvation.

At times, being a disciple of Jesus requires selflessness. These are the times when we set aside our own needs. The good news of selfless-living is its own reward. It is a life well-lived.

### **Pastoral Reflections**

Right before my senior year at LSTC, my paternal grandmother took ill. She suffered a massive stroke. Instead of artificially extending her life, our family elected to let her die a natural death. With a stroke at 96, her quality of life would never recover. Our family made the right decision.

The night she died, my father and I were keeping the watch. As Dad and I tended to his mother, I noticed my father every now and again writing down notes on a legal pad. Around 2:00 a.m., Grandma died. Dad and I went home

and talked about his mother for the next hour. We then went to bed well after 3:00 a.m.

The next morning, I heard my father knocking around bright and early. I went downstairs to check on him. He was dressed in his clerics. He told me that he would be back later in the morning. He had a funeral to preside over.

That moment embodies selflessness to me. Even while my dad's own mother was dying, he was mentally preparing himself to serve another family who experienced their own loss. This was not about being heroic or having poor boundaries, it was about serving selflessly the One who serves us in the same manner. My father's witness shaped me.


Every community of faith has stories just like this one. Perhaps this Sunday could be an opportunity to lift the witness of the saints who selflessly serve Jesus. Make no mistake: these stories will change the outlook and life of your listeners. ACB



Programs offered through the Tithing and Stewardship Foundation at LSTC promote the practice of proportionate giving, encouraging greater spiritual growth in the sharing of all our talents and gifts. The Tithing and Stewardship Foundation generously underwrites the workshops.

For more information and to register, go to <http://tithing.lstc.edu/> or contact Laura Wilhelm at [lwilhelm@lstc.edu](mailto:lwilhelm@lstc.edu) 773-256-0741.

The October 2009 issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* was published in partnership with the Tithing and Stewardship Foundation. It contains articles that explore the relationships of stewardship, liturgy and preaching and provides practical guidance for leaders. A single copy is available through the Tithing and Stewardship Foundation without charge. Additional copies may be purchased for \$2.50 each (includes postage and handling). Contact the LSTC Office for Advancement by e-mail at [advancement@lstc.edu](mailto:advancement@lstc.edu) or call 773-256-0712.

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