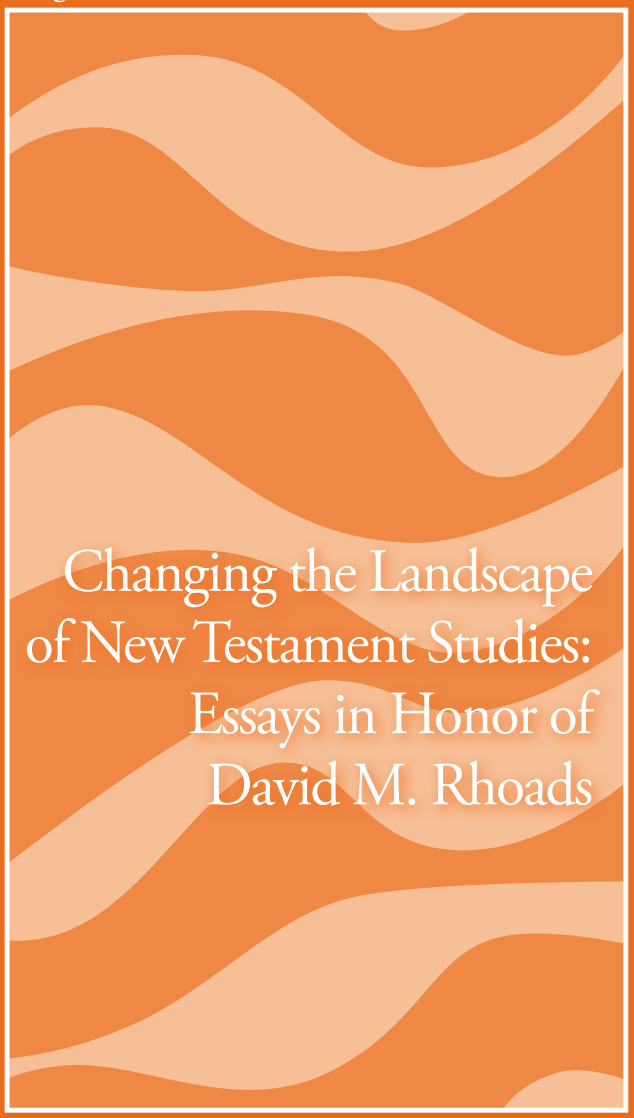
August 2010 Volume 37 Number 4



Changing the Landscape of New Testament Studies: Essays in Honor of David M. Rhoads

CURRENTS
in Theology and Mission

Currents
in Theology and Mission

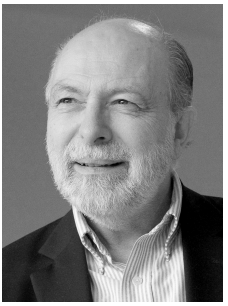
Published by
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
in cooperation with
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
Wartburg Theological Seminary

CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION (ISSN: 0098-2113) is published bimonthly (every other month), February, April, June, August, October, December. Annual subscription rate: $24.00 in the U.S.A., $28.00 elsewhere. Two-year rate: $44.00 in the U.S.A., $52.00 elsewhere. Three-year rate: $60.00 in the U.S.A., $72.00 elsewhere. Many back issues are available for $5.00, postage included. Published by Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a nonprofit organization, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615, to which all business correspondence is to be addressed. Printed in U.S.A.

CURRENTS is indexed in *ATLA Religion Database, Elenchus, IZBW, NTA, OTA, Religion Index I (formerly IRPL), Religious and Theological Abstracts, and Theologische Literaturzeitung.*

MICROFORM AVAILABILITY: 16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm, 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Inc., 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Contents



David M. Rhoads

Preaching Helps

Changing the Landscape of New Testament Studies: Essays in Honor of David M. Rhoads

The August issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* again pays tribute to the contributions of David M. Rhoads, who retired this spring from full-time faculty service as Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

When Dave's colleagues met to plan a *Festschrift* in his honor, we determined that two distinct issues would be needed to honor the breadth of his work. The April 2010 issue of *Currents,* "Faith and Earthkeeping: A Tribute to the Environmental Ministry of David Rhoads," centered on Dave's contributions to environmental ministry and featured vibrant essays by others who are partners in this vital cause. This issue highlights Dave's significant contributions to the field of biblical studies, particularly in the area of performance criticism. The common bond in both issues is collegial respect and gratitude for the groundbreaking work Dave has accomplished and the way that this work has inspired theological vision and creative ministry in generations of his colleagues and students.

David Rhoads is one of the pioneers of narrative criticism. His book *Mark as Story*, written with Joanna Dewey and Donald Michie, has served as an accessible and practical introduction for how to do narrative criticism for almost thirty years, and there have been many testimonies about how this text consistently opens up for students a whole new way of interpreting and experiencing the Gospels.

Although Dave has been a leading scholar of the Gospel of Mark, he has not settled into just one portion or approach to the New Testament studies. In his scholarship, as in his teaching and living, Dave celebrates diversity! His book *The Challenge of Diversity: The Witness of Paul and the Gospels* contains incisive introductions to Paul and each of the Gospels. It is one of those rare examples of a book that makes the best of scholarly insight into the New Testament available to a wide readership and seeks to engage people in conversation about how the variety that characterizes the New Testament canon can enliven faith and community.

Dave has also been committed to using a variety of lenses or approaches in interpreting New Testament texts. He can proficiently and simultaneously use narrative, social science, rhetorical, and post-colonial approaches sprinkled with an expertise in Greek syntax. His publications are too numerous to mention, but in addition to numerous books and articles on the Gospel of Mark, he has written on the historical Jesus, the Judean revolt, Paul's letters (Galatians), James, and Revelation. He has

excelled in bringing together his expertise in biblical interpretation and his passion for the care of the earth.

This is already an impressive list of achievements that reflect amazing erudition and creativity, but perhaps the most creative and impressive contribution of all is his development of performance criticism. Early in his career, Dave began to dramatically perform the Gospel of Mark, and then other New Testament texts such as Galatians and Revelation. As he began to bring these texts to life with his body and soul, this fundamentally changed his understanding of the nature of these texts and their impact. He began to teach what he was learning about performing Scripture by heart and has slowly but surely initiated what is coming to be recognized by some as a revolution in biblical studies.

It is especially inspiring, in reflecting on Dave's work, to celebrate how he has carried on scholarly inquiry in conversation and community with students and colleagues. His work on performance criticism has been carried out over the years in a community of scholars and with students. Dave is always the first person to give credit to those he is collaborating with on the various projects on which he is working. The essays in this issue were written by members of this broad community of colleagues, and bear witness to the collegiality and life-giving vitality of Dave's gifts as teacher, mentor, scholar, colleague, friend, and co-collaborator.

The issue begins with a tribute from **James Kenneth Echols**, president of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, focusing on how Dave Rhoads has been an ambassador of the gospel in the classroom, the church, and in the cosmos.

In honor of Dave's illuminating work in performance criticism, the first five essays explore various aspects of performance criticism and the relevance of this new form of biblical scholarship not only for those who serve in the academy but for those who "speak Scripture," preach, and teach in local congregational contexts. All five contributors have long been involved with Dave in the Bible and Ancient and Modern Media Group at the Society of Biblical Literature. Each of the essays attests to influence of his work on performance criticism on their scholarship and teaching.

Thomas Boomershine served as the G. Ernest Thomas Distinguished Professor of Christianity and Communication at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio (2004–06), and also as Professor of New Testament (1979–2000). He founded the Network of Biblical Storytellers in 1977. In "All Scholarship Is Personal," he offers an engaging reflection on the character and implications of performance criticism, and of Dave's role in its development. Replete with anecdotes, the essay offers an "insider's look" at an emerging field and its implications for scholarship as well as the revitalization of Christian faith and ministry practice.

In "Performance Criticism as Critical Pedagogy," **Phil Ruge-Jones**, Associate Professor of Theology at Texas Lutheran University, explores how performance criticism may aid theological educators in the academy and the local congregation to teach in ways that contribute to a liberating and transformative engagement with biblical texts.

James Maxey, Director of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship of the American Bible Society, investigates how words function as *events*, and their power, impact, and limitations in the Gospel of Mark.

Margaret Lee of Tulsa Community College begins by relating how Dave encouraged her to perform the Sermon on the Mount and then describes how performing it impacted her work on how ancient audiences may have experienced the Sermon as spoken performance, and also presented interpretive opportunities for translating it for contemporary audiences. **Richard Swanson** has used performance as a mode of teaching and interpreting at Augustana College, Sioux Falls, for the past ten years. He writes about using performance criticism in conjunction with other methods of biblical interpretation, and about the risks and rewards of performing biblical texts.

Dave's long-time colleague at LSTC, **Edgar Krentz,** Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of New Testament, Emeritus, honors the diversity of Dave's New Testament scholarship as well as Dave's concern to celebrate the diversity of perspectives within the Bible by examining the many ways that Peter is portrayed in the Bible and early Christian literature.

These essays attest to the impact of the scholarship of Dave Rhoads, especially in the area of performance criticism. They are offered in appreciation not only for his many books, articles, and performances of biblical texts, but also in honor of a life devoted to teaching, learning, and perhaps most importantly, *embodying* the Scriptures. The contributors to this volume have not only been influenced by what Dave has written. Rather, each of them worked with him in various ways over the years because, whether in the academy or in the classroom, he is always collaborating; challenging himself and others in the community to think new thoughts and try new approaches. Through these essays and, perhaps most of all his countless colleagues and students, Dave Rhoads will continue to inspire others to allow biblical texts to live and breathe in ways that foster justice, compassion, and diversity. We bless him and thank him for that precious gift.

Raymond Pickett and Kathleen Billman
Co-editors for the August 2010 issue

Editors' Note: With the August 2010 issue we note with deep appreciation the many years of service rendered by Pamela Challis, Randall Lee, Richard Ramirez, Susan Rippert, Barbara Rossing, Susan Swanson, Vicki Watkins, and Fritz Wehrenberg on the editorial board of Currents in Theology and Mission. We welcome and give thanks for the newly-constituted editorial board, with faculty and alumni representatives from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, and Wartburg Theological Seminary, and look forward to working together to build on the strong foundation we have inherited.

Kathleen Billman, Kurt Hendel, and Mark Swanson

David M. Rhoads: Ambassador of the Gospel: A Personal Tribute

James Kenneth Echols

President of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

"So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us."
2 Corinthians 5:20

On Sunday, May 16, 2010, the Lutheran School of Theology (LSTC) held its 150th commencement. The Rev. Dr. David M. Rhoads, Professor of New Testament, was the celebrant and presiding minister at that inspiring and magnificent celebration that sent forth eighty students into church and world. From the presiding minister's chair near the altar in the chancel, David had a bird's eye view of all the students who were completing a journey, graduating with joy and delight and making transitions into the next phase of their lives and ministries.

As it was with those students on that day, so it is now with David in these days. For in these days, David is commencing and graduating into retirement. Both the April 2010 and this edition of *Currents in Theology and Mission* acknowledge and mark this transition and are wonderful *Festschriften* in recognition and thanksgiving for his distinguished ministry of teaching and scholarship. As he moves back to Wisconsin to enjoy full-time living with his beloved family and pursue any other endeavors that catch his fancy, I know that you join me in wishing him God's richest blessings for this next chapter in his journey.

An LSTC commencement tradition is to list the degrees that graduating students already possess as they receive their seminary degrees. The diversity of degrees earned and schools attended is always impressive. But then the moment arrives when it is my great pleasure and privilege to say, "By the authority vested in me as President of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, I hereby confer upon you the degree of _____ with all of the rights and privileges thereunto appertaining." And with those words, they have graduated and are able to give public witness to another formal course of study completed.

As David retires, let the record show that his formal education is extensive. He

> As David commences from LSTC, I hereby salute him as an Ambassador of the Gospel

holds the B.A. degree from Gettysburg College and the M.A. degree from Oxford University. He received the M.Div. degree from The Lutheran Theological Seminary

at Gettysburg and earned the Ph.D. degree from Duke University. This is not to mention several other honorary degrees that he has received. But now the moment has arrived. As David commences from LSTC, I hereby salute him as an Ambassador of the Gospel who has allowed God to make God's appeal through him to church and world. While this does not translate into a degree earned, it does reflect a life lived in response to God's gracious love in Christ, and I do give thanks for that!

While David has been an Ambassador of the Gospel in numerous areas, they all come together for me in terms of classroom, church, and cosmos. In the classroom, his imaginative and innovative pedagogical approaches have invited and motivated students to study, understand, and interpret the New Testament biblical witness in faithful and exciting ways. It is inspiring and marvelous to witness the impact of David's "Scripture by Heart" emphasis on the development of women and men being formed for ministry. In the church, David's numerous performances of Mark's Gospel have been powerful as has been his significant scholarship for church and world. And in the cosmos, David's calling of the church to focus on the care of creation has already and will continue to shape the church's consciousness for the sake of the world (cosmos).

For all that David Rhoads is, has been, and will be, as well as for all that he has done, is doing, and will do, I salute him as an Ambassador of the Gospel and say, "Thanks be to God!"

James Kenneth Echols

All Scholarship is Personal: David Rhoads and Performance Criticism

Thomas E. Boomershine

Professor of New Testament and Christianity and Communications Emeritus, United Theological Seminary

Various commentators and historians have said, "In the end, all politics is personal." The statement calls attention to the fact that the major forces that shape national and international politics are finally about the life and work of individuals. The same is true for biblical scholarship and the megatrends of the interpretation of the Bible in the church and in the wider culture. In the end, all biblical scholarship and interpretation of the Bible is personal. A specific example of this is the evolution of performance criticism and the person, David Rhoads. As a lifelong friend, I am in a privileged position to tell the story of this evolution. With David's permission, my purpose here is to tell some of the stories, both personal and communal, that have shaped this development. My purpose is also to reflect on the character and implications of performance criticism. Whether this development is of historic importance for biblical scholarship and the interpretation of the Bible in the church and the wider culture only time will tell. But it may be of immediate interest to the community of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) as it reflects on the impact of David's tenure as professor of New Testament and on the institution's future. In the end, the community will decide whether performance criticism in its various dimensions is a personal idiosyncrasy of David Rhoads and his friends or a new paradigm for the future of the understanding, interpretation, and communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world.

Beginnings

My first vivid memory of David is of an encounter we had in the lobby of the Marriott Hotel in New Orleans in 1977. It was my second annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). I had met David the year before at SBL. He had become an instant hero to me because he had read my dissertation, *Mark the Storyteller,* and thought it was important. He came across the lobby quickly and said with some anxiety, "Tom, do you by any chance know where I can get a room? They're all booked up." As it happened, I had reserved a room and had no roommate. That was the first year of our rooming together at SBL for the next twenty years. My memory is like Andrew's story of his first meeting with Jesus at four o'clock in the afternoon (John 1:38–40). One remembers the beginnings of significant relationships.

David was involved in the Mark Seminar as well as the Literary Aspects of the Gospels and Acts group at SBL because of his ongoing work on Mark as a narrative that soon (1982) resulted in his book, *Mark as Story.* That book was framed as narrative criticism, and approached Mark as a narrative written for readers.

This decision was related to the intended audience of college and seminary students who would read Mark in silence. This was appropriate for David and his co-author, Donald Michie, who was also teaching at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin. This work was one of the early fruits of a movement within biblical scholarship that focused on Mark and other works of the New Testament as unified narratives rather than as the product of a tradition history process that could be traced by the methods of form, source, and redaction criticism. It was a ground-breaking work because it used the categories of narrative (point of view, narrative comments and asides, plot, characterization, norms of judgment) and the analysis of the interactions of the narrator, the reader, and the narrative itself with its characters and plot as a methodological center for a comprehensive analysis of Mark.

> Each of us had learned Mark by heart and had begun telling the story in classes, coffee houses, and churches.

This work helped to establish narrative criticism as a viable methodology for the study of biblical narratives. The central move of this development was taking the literary critical methods that had been developed for the study of the modern novel and applying those methods to biblical narratives. A central presupposition of this critical methodology was that the work itself had meaning in and of itself as a narrative that was more than the sum of the various causal forces that determined its present form. Narrative criticism focuses on the interactions of the narrator, the reader, and the narrative itself with its characters and plot.

David and I shared this interest. I had been a student of Wayne Booth, who was a leading figure in the development of new literary critical methods for the study of the novel. His book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* was a pioneering work that introduced categories such as reliable and unreliable narrators, the implied author, and the dynamics of distance in characterization to literary criticism.[1] My 1974 dissertation, *Mark, the Storyteller: A Rhetorical Critical Study of Mark's Passion and Resurrection Narrative,* had been a comprehensive study of Mark's climactic narrative based on James Muilenburg's proposal of a "rhetorical criticism" for the study of biblical tradition but that also adapted Booth's methodological categories.

Both David and I were aware, however, of the historical discontinuity between Mark and the modern novel because we had both begun telling Mark's story. This grew out of the basic historical critical impulse to seek an understanding of the works of the New Testament in their original historical context. We recognized that the modern novel and the literary critical methods for its study were a development of the seventeenth century through the twentieth century, not of the first century. We both knew that Mark's story was primarily told from memory and was part of a radically different media culture in which literacy and the distribution of books were much different from the period after the printing press with its

1. Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961).

mass literacy and mass publishing. Each of us had learned Mark by heart and had begun telling the story in classes, coffee houses, and churches.

As a result of our conversations at SBL, our ongoing study, and our experimentations with the performance of Mark, I took the initiative (1982–1983) to establish first a consultation and then a research group called "The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media." The purpose of this group was to develop a methodology for the interpretation of the Bible in both the media culture of the ancient world and the media world of the post-literate electronic age of the late twentieth century. This group provided a context in which a group of scholars could explore topics that were not part of "normal" biblical scholarship. One of those topics was the performance of books of the New Testament.

Thus, in 1986, a session of the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media group was titled "The Bible as Oral Text." Following presentations by Lou Silberman on the cantillation of the Scriptures in the synagogue and Nicholas Kastamas of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology on the chanting of the Scriptures in Orthodox churches, I made a presentation on critical moments in the Greek text of Mark as an oral text and David concluded the session with a dramatic performance of Mark 1—3:6. The audiences for these presentations were small. Nevertheless, the energy as well as controversy that they generated was much greater than the attendance would initially indicate. David's presentation at SBL was the first part of a dramatic performance of the whole of Mark that David had begun to do, primarily in Lutheran churches but also in various schools, retirement communities, and prisons. These performances of Mark were a major source of new knowledge about the New Testament in its original context. For those who have heard David's various performances, it may be well to remember that we did not know then whether a performance of Mark or Galatians or the Revelation to John was viable and could even hold an audience's attention because no one had done it before. It is also well to remember the risks that David took in putting himself out there in unknown territory and to celebrate his courage and creativity. These were significant steps in the understanding of the New Testament in its original context and in the interpretation of the New Testament in a post-literate age.

Then LSTC appeared on the horizon as a possible location for David's work. I remember this period well because it was a source of both hope and anxiety. While he loved his work at Carthage College, David really wanted to teach in a theological seminary and had candidated for other positions that did not result in an appointment. LSTC was the ideal place in virtually every way. I remember a phone conversation we had just prior to the interview. We talked for over two hours and went through all of the questions we could identify that he might be asked and evaluated possible responses. We agreed that it was important to ask questions and to engage in dialogue, as well as to give responses, in order to establish a spirit of collaboration and mutual engagement. That approach proved to be helpful in the interview process and established a spirit that David has continued during his years at LSTC. The confirmation of the appointment was a great joy and our hopes have been abundantly fulfilled. LSTC has proven to be an ideal place for the development of David's gifts as a teacher/scholar and for the integration of many dimensions of what we would now call performance criticism into a seminary's curriculum.

This realization about the importance of dialogue is also related to performance criticism. The stories and letters of the

New Testament were composed for performances that were highly interactive and involved implicit dialogue between those who were telling a Gospel or reciting a letter with their audiences. One of the ongoing discussions in which we are engaged is the degree of this implicit dialogue with the audience in ancient performances and in performance today. David has from the beginning developed the models of performance from dramatic presentations and has received coaching from drama directors. What he learned from drama shaped his performance of Mark. For example, he has been guided by the notion of being "on stage" with the audience looking through the imaginary "fourth wall."[2] This results in most of the conversations in the performance of Mark, for example, being "on stage" with the audience looking through the imaginary "fourth wall" at these interactions. I came to storytelling after a long period of professional involvement with drama during which I wrote a series of religious dramas and musicals and performed as an actor in a number of plays. I have been impressed by the differences between drama and storytelling and have pursued the distinctive character of storytelling. This approach results in the speeches and dialogues of Jesus in Mark or John being addressed directly to the audience so that there is no "fourth wall." The question of the character of "audience address" in the performance of New Testament compositions is an ongoing subject of research and debate as well as experimentation in performance.

This "on stage" approach to the implicit dialogues of New Testament compositions was particularly apparent in David's performance of Galatians at SBL. The annual meeting of SBL in Chicago in 1988 was the occasion for a major symposium on Paul's letter to the Galatians that involved Pauline scholars from all over the world. David had learned Galatians by heart and offered to perform it for a session that would be jointly sponsored by the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media (BAMM) group and the Pauline groups that were sponsoring the symposium. Once again, we had no idea how this would be received because it was an unprecedented venture. As co-chair of BAMM along with David's colleague and co-author, Joanna Dewey, I was involved in making the various arrangements, including the setup of the room. I remember it well because it turned out to be our largest audience, over 200, for a session of BAMM until then. Of course, the real importance of this occasion was not the size of the audience but the establishment of the historical probability that Galatians was actually performed either by Paul himself or more probably by an authorized reciter who learned the letter by heart and recited it as Paul's representative, with or without a manuscript, for the Galatian congregations. David recited the letter in costume as Paul engaged in an imagined dialogue with the Galatians. While this was almost certainly not the manner of the original performances (in later performances he spoke directly to the audience as Paul's listeners), it was highly effective and established that it was historically probable that the letter was composed for presentation for audi-

2. The "fourth wall" refers to the imaginary "wall" at the front of the stage through which the audience sees the action in the world of the play. The presence of the fourth wall is an established convention of fiction and drama. When this boundary is "broken," for example by an actor onstage speaking to the audience directly, or doing the same through the camera in a film or television program, it is called "breaking the fourth wall."

ences rather than to be read in silence as we now experience the letter.

Performance criticism: a new paradigm

Throughout these years, all of us engaged in this research were looking for an appropriate name for this new approach to biblical criticism. Implicit in the question of the name was the broader question: is this another discipline to be added to the methodological quiver of biblical criticism along with, for example, source, form, and redaction criticism or is this a new paradigm that involves a foundational shift in the basic understanding of the character of the Bible and the appropriate methods for its exegesis and interpretation?

The first appearance of "Performance Criticism" at SBL took place in a session of the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media group in 2005. In that paper, a draft of which was first delivered at the inaugural session of the Network of Biblical Storytellers Seminar outside Houston in the summer of 2004, David described performance criticism as an emerging discipline in New Testament studies alongside the other methods of New Testament criticism. The foundation of the discipline is the recognition that the New Testament, and indeed the whole of the Bible, was originally a series of compositions that were always performed for audiences. The evidence for this is a combination of a range of data about performance practices and techniques in ancient rhetorical treatises, literacy rates in antiquity, the availability and character of ancient manuscripts, and the ubiquitous descriptions of public and private readings and recitations in ancient literature. In subsequent articles, David has outlined the ways in which the full range of disciplines can contribute to the clarification of the "big picture" dimensions of ancient performance of biblical texts—orality criticism, linguistic criticism, rhetorical criticism, sociological criticism, performance studies of ancient theater and rhetorical speeches—as well as the exegesis and translation of particular biblical books.

As the work on performance criticism has proceeded in recent years, it has become increasingly clear that performance criticism is not just another methodology to be added to traditional methods but is a cornerstone of a new paradigm for the interpretation of the Bible in its original context and in the context of the twenty-first century. The need for a new paradigm had been identified in earlier articles. One of the sources for recognition of this need was the study of the correlations between the history of communication technology and culture and the history of biblical interpretation.[3] While the causal

The New Testament, and indeed the whole of the Bible, was originally a series of compositions that were always performed for audiences.

3. See Thomas Boomershine, "Biblical Megatrends: Towards a Paradigm for the Interpretation of the Bible in Electronic Media" in Howard Clark Kee, ed. *American*

relationships remain ambiguous, there is a direct correlation between the emergence of new communication systems and the development of new systems of biblical interpretation. This history clarifies the reason why performance criticism is the cornerstone for a new paradigm. Performance criticism is based on a reconception of both the original media of the Bible and the media of its interpretation in post-literate, digital culture.

A brief survey of this correlation may be helpful in clarifying this history. In the oral communication culture of ancient Israel, story was the primary mode of thought and storytelling the primary system of distribution. Oral culture is definitively shaped by the stories that are the defining center of tribal life. The traditional stories are reinterpreted and made relevant for later generations by retelling the stories. This interpretive system is evident in the retelling of the traditional stories of Israel by the Deuteronomist and the Priestly writer who retold the stories of the Pentateuchal tradition in the post-exilic context. It is also present in the New Testament in the four evangelists' retellings of the stories of Jesus in the context of the aftermath of the Jewish war.

> There has been a correlation between the major media changes in the history of western civilization and the major changes in biblical interpretation.

The emergence of literate culture in the Hellenistic culture of the centuries leading up to and following the life of Jesus was empowered by new technologies of writing and manuscript production and distribution that in turn made possible a critical mass of literate people. This literate community probably never exceeded 15 percent of the population even in the major urban communities of the ancient world but this literate minority shaped and controlled the economic, military, and political systems of the ancient world. The definitive interpretive system for literate culture was the world of ideas and the systems of philosophy. The church of the patristic period developed theology as its primary system of interpretation leading up to the creedal statements of the great ecumenical councils of the fourth through the sixth centuries. As a result of the prodigious labor of Origen, the greatest biblical scholar of the early church, allegorical interpretation became the dominant system for the interpretation of the Bible in this literate culture.

Allegorical interpretation in various forms remained the dominant system of biblical interpretation until the Reformation and the printing press. The invention of the printing press and the massive expansion of literacy that it generated were correlated with the development of print culture and the cataclysmic political, economic, and religious changes of the Reformation. This was the context for the formation of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches that were

Bible Society Symposium Papers on the Bible in the Twenty-First Century (American Bible Society, 1993), 209–230.

in turn energized by the development of new systems of biblical interpretation based on the literal and figural interpretation of the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible that was pioneered by Martin Luther and John Calvin.

The development of historical criticism and modern methods of biblical interpretation that focus on the historical and theological meaning of the biblical texts is correlated with the emergence of the culture of mass literacy and silent reading in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The media culture of this period was defined by the transformation of written literature in general and the Bible in particular into documents that were studied in silence for their referential meaning as sources of historical and theological information.[4] This new interpretive system and the new communication system of mass printing and mass distribution of the Bible were also connected with the development of theological education in the United States and the formation of seminaries such as LSTC. In response to the frequently chaotic conflicts and ever-new schisms and denominations that have followed the development of new interpretations of the Bible by various individuals and groups, historical criticism and an educated clergy provided a source of stability for the Protestant churches that have followed Luther's norm for doctrinal legitimacy, *sola scriptura*. Thus, there has been a correlation between the major media changes in the history of western civilization and the major changes in biblical interpretation.

The development of electronic communication systems in the twentieth century and the emerging dominance of digital communication in the early twenty-first century is the most comprehensive change in communication technology since the development of literate culture in the ancient world. In every previous major change in communication technology and culture, a new paradigm for the interpretation of the Bible has made the Bible vital and meaningful in that new culture. When seen in the context of this history of the megatrends of biblical interpretation, the formation of a new paradigm for the interpretation of the Bible in what can be called digital culture is the most important task for the community of biblical scholarship.

The new paradigm in relation to the Bible's historical context

A brief summary of some of the definitive characteristics of this new paradigm may help to clarify the importance of performance criticism. First, the Bible in its original historical context:

The Bible as sound. Rather than continuing to pursue the anachronistic study of the Bible as a text read in silence by ancient readers, historical scholarship needs to shape its methods for the study of the Bible as sound. Ancient authors composed manuscripts with the assumption that they would be performed and resounded for audiences. What is being called sound mapping of biblical texts in their original languages is a foundational step for the study of the Bible in its original medium.[5]

The Bible as the source of communal memory. The role of memory in the transmission and interpretation of biblical compositions as well as the spiritual formation of individuals and communities

4. See Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

5. See Margaret Ellen Lee and Bernard Brandon Scott, *Sound Mapping the New Testament* (Salem, Ore.: Poleridge Press, 2009).

is essential to the understanding of the biblical tradition in its original cultural context. As Rhoads has frequently argued, the internalization and performance of biblical compositions "by heart" is a crucial step in the perception of the meaning of those compositions in the ancient world. The reassessment of the role of "social memory" as well as individual memory is another dimension of current interdisciplinary research.[6]

The Bible as communal oral tradition. The composers of the foundational stories of the biblical tradition, the Hexateuch and the Gospels/Acts, were setting in motion a communal oral tradition that depended on those works being learned by heart and transmitted by the people of the community. The commandments in the Shema to write the stories on your heart and to tell them to your children (Deut 6:6–7) reflect the fundamental dynamic of every member of the community becoming an agent for the transmission of the tradition. In the early church this expectation to tell the story was extended beyond the family of Israel to the nations of the Gentiles. The exploration of the processes of oral transmission of communal religious traditions needs to be an integral dimension of scholarly research.

The Bible as an anti-war, non-violent tradition. The re-conception of the Bible as oral compositions involves not only the redefinition of its medium but also of its content. When the stories of the Hexateuch and the Gospels/Acts are heard as a whole, their meaning and impact is experienced in a new context that reveals central dimensions of their content. Specifically, the stories of Israel's wars and violence in the Hexateuch end as stories of tragedy rather than victory and peace. The kingdom of David ends on the tragic note of the death of Absalom and the conflicts between the northern and the southern kingdoms that ultimately end in the split between those two kingdoms and their ongoing history of conflict. Those stories end in the conquest of Israel by the Assyrians and of Judea by the Babylonians. Just as the stories of Israel and Judea received their final form in the post-war context of the exile, the Gospels and Acts received their final form in the context of the post-war period following the immense tragedy of the Jewish war. They are the stories of a non-violent Messiah who founded a movement that initiated a new community of reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles. When told as ancient epics, the foundational stories of the Bible have a common content that stands over against the celebration of the heroic warrior and the glories of war that was the dominant theme of the epic stories of the Greco-Roman world.

The new paradigm in post-literate digital culture

These are some of the characteristics of the new paradigm of the Bible in post-literate digital culture:

The centrality of memory. As the source of vital spirituality and communal political and evangelical energy, the interiorization of the Bible in the memory of individuals and communities is a critical dimension of the role of the Bible in a digital age. At the same time that people are being bombarded by ever new appeals to memorize advertising jingles and inane song lyrics, the community of the Bible is called to make its traditions an integral part of individual and communal memory.

The performance of the Scriptures. Implicit in the recognition of the vitality of ancient performance of the Scriptures is the recognition that the performance of

6. See Tom Thatcher, *Why John Wrote a Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

the Scriptures in the church of the digital age is often dismal and boring. Among the performance traditions of the digital world, the Bible is on the one hand the most widely performed literary tradition in the world but it is also the most poorly performed. In most congregations, the performance of the Scriptures receives the least preparation and attention and is frequently a more or less meaningless, emotionless, and flat repetition of words and a dead time in the service. The invitation of the new paradigm is to perform the Scriptures by heart in every worship service of the church after extensive preparation, study, and interiorization.

The pedagogy of biblical study. The recognition of the Bible's original character suggests that a new pedagogy of biblical study be developed for the seminaries and congregations of the church. That pedagogy will be based on the importance of oral performance as well as written papers as the end result of courses. This in turn will require the reconception of the pedagogy of graduate education for the training of biblical professors who at this point have no training in oral performance but are required only to write papers to get a PhD in biblical studies.

Translations for performance. At this point in history, scholars of texts produce biblical translations primarily for silent readers. This evolution of biblical translation has developed in the aftermath of the King James Version that has retained its popularity in part because of its performance values. In a digital age, biblical translation needs to be reoriented to performance, sound, and image.

Performance commentaries. The reorientation of biblical scholarship to the original character of biblical compositions will require the reorientation of commentaries to the meaning of the sounds and performance of these compositions for audiences rather than to the perceptions of ancient manuscripts by silent readers. Furthermore, the commentary literature needs to be redirected to contemporary audiences who will be interested in the experience of the literature as well as its analysis. This will mean that commentaries will need to include multimedia performances of the literature as well as written analysis.

The politics of peace and environmental conservation. The re-conception of the Bible as communal performance rather than individual reading also means that its meaning and impact address the communal issues of warfare and violence and the degradation of the earth as well as the salvation of individuals. It is not a coincidence that David Rhoads' focus on the New Testament as performance literature has led to his leadership in the education and mobilization of the church in relation to the crisis in the global environment. The individual and communal dimensions of human relationship with God in the biblical tradition are intimately related.

These markers of a new paradigm are specific elements of a change in the conception of the medium of the Bible in both its original historical and contemporary contexts. That change in the conception of the medium of the Bible is the foundational shift that is implicit in the scholarship of David Rhoads. The hope implicit in this encomium is that David's work at LSTC will be a foundation for the ongoing evolution of the educational program and spiritual life of the seminary that has been a place of grace for him and to which he has devoted a major part of his life as a scholar and teacher.

Performance Criticism as Critical Pedagogy

Phil Ruge-Jones

Associate Professor of Theology, Texas Lutheran University

Few themes have so dominated contemporary New Testament interpretation in recent years as the Roman imperial context of those writings. Whether interpreting the Gospels, Pauline letters, or Revelation, New Testament scholars have shown how the "empire of God" announced and embodied by Jesus and his followers offered an alternative to the Roman Empire. This paper asks not about the empire that ruled then, but about how power dynamics like those employed by Rome continue to rule today.

Let me pause for a moment of confession regarding this challenge. Sharing the abundance of anti-imperial interpretations opens my university students' eyes to dynamics they had not seen in the texts. Yet, and here the confession, I often suspect that I am promoting anti-imperial ideas through an imperialistic mode of teaching. I struggle within the restraints and possibilities of the twenty-first century higher education classroom to nurture learning as a liberative process for my students. I don't merely want to deliver ideas about transformation and reciprocity, I want us to experience these virtues in the classroom. I fear that the unintended irony a student offered me rings true. He wrote, "Your understanding of freedom captivates me." This current struggle is an old friend; as a parish pastor I longed to help my congregation members to interpret the Bible, yet often ended up teaching them my already defined interpretations.

Performance criticism of biblical texts

I have used biblical performance criticism in several ways in my undergraduate classrooms. I perform stories for my Introduction to Theology students; I have taught a unit on performance criticism in an interpretation course; I have worked with students on extended performances like the Gospel of Mark, Galatians, and the Jacob Esau cycle. I also have participated in congregational "scripture by heart" groups that prepare stories to tell in congregations. A few years back, students who had seen me perform biblical texts in the classroom asked me to teach them how to do it. We set up a one-credit course which involved meeting for one hour a week with a group of five students. We decided that we would all work for six weeks on a single pericope from the Gospel of Luke. I chose the story of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19) because it would come up in the lectionary in seven weeks and thus the students could go out and tell the prepared text in a congregation of their own choosing.

Every time we met we began with exercises that reminded us that we are

embodied people.[1] Then we read the text together, we performed the text, and discussed what we saw as a result. During the first session, I taught them the story using a method in which I would tell the text line by line in an embodied way and they would repeat back to me the words and motions I had offered them. This quickly led to an awareness that my way of embodying the text, while it looked natural when I did it, did not fit for all of them. So once the text was learned in this way, each had the freedom to reinterpret it. We discovered that there are many interpretations of the text that have integrity, but may not be transferable in uncomplicated ways to other interpreters. We also discovered that bodies make a difference. In fact, by the end of the six weeks we found it unbelievable that this text, which deals so much with the relationship between bodies, could be approached by any interpreter in an unembodied way and still be understood.

One exciting thing that took place in our repeated performances of this text was a growing awareness of the multiplicity of meanings possible within a relatively fixed text. Students are accustomed to thinking of texts as having one correct interpretation they must discover, forsaking all the others since those must be wrong. Many scholars and parishioners operate under the same assumption. The act of interpretation becomes profoundly more complex through this repetitive process. While we still know that the text refuses to play a number of ways—most shocking, of course, when we cannot get the text to do what we assumed it does—we discover the amazing diversity of ways that the text can be bodily interpreted with integrity. Some of these ways are mutually negating, but they stubbornly stand there and confront us. Jason played Jesus as wanting distance between himself and the lepers. Taryn saw him drawn to them from the start. Rachel thought Jesus was angry at the ungrateful nine who did not return; I felt him longing for the even grander celebration all ten could have had. In one of the most interesting breakthroughs, David played the Lord squatting down and inviting the leper to stand up. As the leper stood, Jesus continued to crouch on the ground. This image of Jesus physically looking up at the leper standing over him provided an amazing moment of embodiment that surprised and changed us not only as interpreters but also as human beings. Throughout this process, we learned how power is configured in and between bodies—those of the characters in the text as well as our own, in aesthetic performance and in the performance we call life.

One main dynamic of this class continued to excite me. I was responsible for making sure that learning took place, but I was never under the illusion that I could control that process. I guided what one performance pedagogue described as "rigorous indeterminacy and openness."[2] I brought certain skills to the meeting: storytelling experience, knowledge of Greek, knowledge of the ancient context, elements of research I have formulated over the years. While some of the students brought resources like these from their prior training or their weekly homework, I still had an advantage of knowledge in these specific areas.

However, these turned out to be only some of the tools that helped interpret the texts. They may not have even been the

1. We used exercises from Richard Swanson's *Provoking the Gospel* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004).

2. Richard Schechner, "Forward" in *Teaching Performance Studies*, eds. Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer, (Carbondale and Edswardsville, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), x.

most essential. Everyone came with a *body of knowledge* that mattered for interpretation. Some brought theatrical experience, others musical experience. Ritual elements of the text came out as students improvised with drums or piano in the background. A Spanish major stepped into the text speaking a language strange to the audience members, and they saw things anew. A slam poet slammed the text. Some used their sense of humor and timing. Others in stillness told the tale. Beyond these skills, we found that lived experience mattered. The illness that one suffered in his youth brought insight. Time spent as a foreigner in Central America or Africa shaped others. Harassment experienced by a lesbian shaped one interpretation. Rejection by one's own family turned out to be a hermeneutical resource. Recognition and confession of our own prejudices even contributed to engagement of the text. Male and female bodies as well as large and small bodies offered different impacts. Testimony to healing events in life changed the conversation. The embraces we had received throughout our lives came into play. Those who were emotionally in touch and articulate helped us delve into areas others of us would have missed.

In fact, for me, one of the most amazing things happened during a class session in about the fourth week when I personally was shattered by my home congregation's violent conversations around sexuality. I found myself—I definitely did not feel in control here—being cared for and attended to by my students in a way that I would never allow in any other classroom, but which was clearly a gift for me. The community that had lived in Luke's healing story for weeks became a place for my own healing. At other moments, the same happened for others in the group when their needs became present. The community of healing performance shaped us in a way that was truly gracious. I cannot help but wonder how my home congregation's approach to the Bible and each other might have changed if we had engaged in this practice together. We might have noted the complex ways that God has entangled the divine story with our personal stories and thus understood each other better.

The community of healing performance shaped us in a way that was truly gracious.

Performance criticism as critical pedagogy

About forty years ago, Paulo Freire found himself sitting among illiterate peasants in Brazilian villages trying to teach them to read. Dissatisfied with the teaching methods typically used in such contexts, he sought an alternative pedagogy. Freire articulated a way of learning that did not assume that he as the teacher held all knowledge or that he needed to transfer information from his head to his students' minds. Even though he knew how to read and they did not, he understood that education had to be co-intentional. True learning only takes place when the participants, Freire included, respected the concerns, intentions, and wisdom of all. Both he as facilitator and his students as participants read the world together as partners. He critiqued the educational patterns most of us know too well noting that they relied on a banking metaphor:

the teacher deposits a wealth of knowledge into the students' heads. Freire states, "In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing."[3] Students are to "patiently receive, memorize, and repeat."[4] According to Freire, this system creates passive subjects as cogs in the economic machine. Freire deplores how educators with progressive ideas often fall into the same non-progressive pedagogy. He says, "At bottom, this is education reproducing the authoritarianism of the capitalist mode of production. It is deplorable how progressive educators, as they analyze and fight against the reproduction of the dominant ideology in the schools, actually reproduce the authoritarian ideology…."[5]

Let me extend the economic metaphor of capitalism. While many progressive educators do work to oppose the blatantly imperialistic modes of fundamentalism, we often do so with a pedagogy that more closely resembles "free trade" models. We desire to lift the poor out of their state of undeveloped resources and provide them with the tools they need to be truly modern. In free trade agreements, the United States often claims to seek a mutually beneficial model of economic exchange. Yet people outside of the centers of power point out that this mode, which appears kinder or gentler, in fact uses the rhetoric of mutuality to cloak the real domination that occurs. As a Christian friend put it about our liberal interventions in her country's economy, "It is good for the Chilean economy, but not for the people of Chile."

The lack of mutuality in the classroom replicates the values of the larger systems in which it is embedded. Freire believed that education as asking questions and seeking answers in community would create a different kind of world. He expected a world to arise out of dialog that would embody the virtues of 1) faith in our companions on the journey, 2) hope for the transformation of the world, 3) love actively serving the neighbor 4) humility**,** and finally 5) continued dialog in mutuality.[6] While I may not list any of these as course objectives on my syllabi, the students I remember and cherish most are those with whom I have found myself humbly learning into practices of faith, hope, love**,** and mutuality. Among those beloved students are those with whom I studied the story of the ten lepers and many others who have struggled to perform biblical texts faithfully. If this can happen in an academic classroom, how much more might this process radically reshape congregational life into the image of God's empire?

Critical pedagogy and performance criticism

In a journal such as this, I could easily and, without much risk, point out how fundamentalism in its various forms, in both content and process, replicates imperialistic patterns. However, I return to my earlier point: I often find myself captivating my students with lectures on the transforming freedom that God's empire promises. I struggle to find strategies that move toward mutuality, but then often find myself relinquishing the real professorial

3. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* translated by Myra Ramos (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), 58.

4. Ibid.

5. Paulo Freire, "The Pedagogy of Asking Questions" in *The Paulo Freire Reader*, eds. Ana Maria Araújo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000), 229.

6. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 76f.

contributions I could make. In those cases, the students sit in small groups and share their ignorance or boredom or more likely what went on at last night's party. While this is not inevitable and skilled educators know how to avoid these traps, I continue to look for methods that respect what my students and I each bring to the classroom. Performance criticism as I described it above has been the best resource I have found to do this.

The work of Freire has been built on and expanded by bell hooks. She writes passionately about the need for new educational models that move in Freire's trajectory. I will connect the dynamics she speaks of within classrooms to imperialist or anti-imperialist options outside of the classrooms. I will ask how the values in class are replications of the larger systems in which they participate or, alternatively, are visions of the hopes for different systems in the future.

> One of the lovely results of this educational process is that the students all share and see the intellectual work of their peers.

Traditional classrooms, hooks notes, are organized hierarchially. Professors are those who come with knowledge; students at best are those without knowledge resources, or at worst are perceived as those who only have prejudicial and misguided resources that must be wiped away before real intellectual construction can begin. In theology courses, professors may look at students and see biblical illiterates or, worse, Sunday school-educated people with misguided ideas that must first be cleared away before the real learning takes place. In this model, the professor has the resources and the students bring only deficits. Of her own experience, hooks writes, "In the institutions where I have taught, the prevailing pedagogical model is authoritarian, hierarchical in a coercive and often dominating way, and certainly one where the voice of the professors is the 'privileged' transmitter of knowledge."[7] Similar dynamics are not alien to many pastor/laity relationships. These dynamics also reflect international relationships where the centers of power come filled with economic wisdom to bring along those who are bogged down in what are perceived to be backward ways. Once the situation is structured in this way, the one with positive resources will need to control the conversation and practices to produce the desired outcomes. These outcomes are, of course, desired by the center, not the margins.

The multiple resources that facilitate interpretation via performance criticism destabilize the power relationships. If knowledge is based strictly on disciplinary research, the teacher or pastor has a major edge. However, if we recognize the multiple resources that provide insight into performance critical interpretation, then we move toward mutuality because all parties bring resources that will affect the conversation. This does not mean that

7. bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85.

I am no longer responsible for the integrity of the learning process, but that I guide it seeking reciprocity that moves us in the direction of mutuality. Even the sharing of my own expertise becomes a way of better equipping the others for their own interpretive work.

This all happens within the honest recognition that complete mutuality will not be possible since in the end I assign the grade. The cloaking of my real authority does not serve the process well since that same authority tends to assert itself under the table when I do not place it clearly on the table. One of the major issues in the free trade agreements our government makes is that they are publicly presented as an accord made between equal partners at the table. Yet under the table or behind the scenes, the center imposes regulations and restrictions that limit the real options available to their so-called partners. Within our classroom, we mitigated the imbalance of power by having the course be pass/fail, thus allowing the public performance to be the primary motivator of student effort. Fellow classmates and eventual audience provided feedback on the quality of the work. Both content and form came together nicely as we critiqued power relationships between characters within the text while trying to create alternative power relationships within a non-hierarchal classroom.

One of the lovely results of this educational process is that the students all share and see the intellectual work of their peers. In my other courses, most of the assignments involve writing papers or exams that only I ever read. Through performance criticism their personal reflections go public. The students have exerted local control of the product they produced that both serves the world and serves as an opportunity for the enrichment of their own lives.

Performance criticism makes its most impressive contribution to liberative education by acknowledging the role of our bodies in the process of learning. As hooks notes, "Liberative pedagogy really demands that one work in the classroom, and that one work with the limits of the body, work both with and through and against those limits…"[8] While those traditionally granted educational authority can have "the privilege of denying their body,"[9] this is not a luxury offered her as a black woman. The focus on academics as "mind" activity at the expense of body leads to an illusion of neutrality that is a luxury not universally extended. She states,

> The erasure of the body encourages us to think that we are listening to neutral, objective facts, facts that are not particular to who is sharing the information…. We must return ourselves to a state of embodiment in order to deconstruct the way power has been traditionally orchestrated in the classroom, denying subjectivity to some groups and according it to others. By recognizing subjectivity and the limits of identity, we disrupt that objectification that is so necessary in a culture of domination.[10]

What is more, the "luxury" of disembodiment is unhealthy for both the privileged and those denied privilege. We all suffer this separation of mind from body as brokenness and fragmentation. Through the possibilities of performance criticism we can begin to "re-member what has been dismembered."[11] When everyone "struggle[s]

8. Ibid., 138.

9. Ibid., 137.

10. Ibid., 139.

11. Mark Kline Taylor uses this imagery in *Remembering Esperanza: A Cultural-Political Theology for North American Praxis* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 22.

bodily with course content"[12] we come to know things about ourselves, our world, and the texts in a more profound way. We create a literal *body* of knowledge.

This holistic experience of education in the interpretation of biblical texts also allows us to explore emotional dimensions of texts. These were stories that were told with passion. To know them only as words on a page is fundamentally to be ignorant of the way that they were first sent into the world. Knowing through feigned objectivity facilitates ignorance of ourselves as human beings. While Western epistemology has been highly attentive to the way emotional passion can imprison rationality, our learners are aware of how rationality stripped of passion imprisons one in dullness and banality. Embodied interpretation demands the exploration of our own passionate impulses as well as those of the original authors. This too has a transformative effect as we deal with pain in our own lives, pain that is often ignored, above all in the classroom. Having become aware of our own experiences of brokenness, we are broken open to engage compassionately others who suffer. Yet the whole range of human emotions comes into play through performance criticism. The joy and laughter that inevitably pours out of these sessions makes them delightful places to occupy.

Space will not allow me to go into all of the other ways that performance criticism helps us become whole, but I would like to at least suggest some of the borders within and outside of ourselves that performance criticism causes us to cross. As Bible stories intersect with our own lives, we see the religious facet of life reconnected to other aspects of life. We see sacred dimensions as well as those that call for lament in all of life. As a result, classroom life becomes filled with the rest of life and our lives become more reflective of what was learned in the classroom. Study and praxis come together as do work and pleasure. Our explorations in the particular discipline of biblical studies also lead to self-knowledge and awareness of the world. The disciplinary lines that run like scars through our institutions begin to fade as aesthetics, politics, literature, and dramatic media find common ground in performance. In congregations, the theological positions that separate one from another also begin to shift. The divisions of our world break down as we try on, hear, and engage in multiple interpretations bodily. We learn new ways to interact with each other since "performance enables an imaginative leap into other kinds of bodies, other ways of being in the world, and in so doing, it opens up concrete and embodied possibilities for resistance, reform, and renewal."[13]

This holistic practice moves us to know beyond what we have known and to do this bodily. I have tried to follow a pedagogy that hooks maps out in the hope that it will yield something new. She writes of her hope:

> Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education a practice of freedom.[14]

12. Elyse Lamm Pineau, "Critical Performance Pedagogy: Fleshing Out the Politics of Liberatory Education," in *Teaching Performance Studies*, Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer, eds. (Carbondale and Edswardsville, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 50.

13. Ibid., 51.

14. hooks, 12.

Final confession

I began with a confession and I conclude with another. I am aware that these little gatherings of learning communities will not bring multinational hierarchies to their knees. Global imperialism did not crumble as a handful of us gathered in a classroom in Seguin, Texas, and embodied God's word, any more than Rome rolled over and died in the presence of Jesus and the divine empire that he announced. I am aware that I may be guilty here of what McLaren and Farahmandpur call "airbrushed insurgency"[15] and "Jacuzzi socialism."[16] Yet there are ways that I have sought to move the analysis of these texts beyond resistance to classroom imperialism and out into the world for transformation.

First of all, we linked power challenges within the texts to power relationships in our context. Where it was not possible to make this apparent in performance, we at least discussed it in our conversations. What are the mechanisms of exclusion and domination in our own world that mirror the dynamics reported in the text? In a later course, the key to attending to these dynamics has been immersion experiences in marginalized communities. A trip to the U.S.-Mexican border opens ours eyes to see global dynamics that are hidden from us on campus. Several of our participants lived for a full semester in Africa, Spain, or other global contexts. They came with lived experiences and tools for political, economic interpretation. We welcomed the perspectives that their travel offered on the biblical texts.

Ideally, the participants in my courses are as diverse as the university campus itself, with members of different classes, ethnicities, genders, nationalities, sexual orientations, and religious identifications. Beyond this, we must struggle to make our universities and congregations places that more accurately represent these same kinds of diversity present in our surrounding communities. In a world where even hints of mutuality are all too rare, perhaps a concrete taste of partnership in a learning community or congregational Bible study will create a longing that inspires us to ask: What would the world be like if this kind of reciprocity were to spring up in the cracks of globalization? Might it look like the mustard weed infestation—decentralized, multi-formed, out of control, but alive—description in Jesus' parable (Mark 4:30–32)? Thus the community of storytellers, while not bringing in the fullness of God's empire, could experience "'a staging ground for self and social renewal' by requiring students and teachers [or pastors and laity] to rehearse more equitable and impassioned ways of being and behaving."[17] To participate in and contribute to such a vision is a gift and challenge that not only has renewed my pedagogy, but disclosed and nurtured the power of Christian hope in my life.

15. Peter McLaren and Ramin Farahmandpur, *Teaching Against Global Capitalism and the New Imperialism: A Critical Pedagogy* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 18.

16. Ibid., 21.

17. Pineau, 53. restating and expanding a quotation from a Western States Communication Conference Keynote address by Earnest Boyer in 1994.

The Power of Words in Mark: Their Potential and Their Limits

James Maxey
Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship
American Bible Society

Introduction[1]

A predominantly oral society such as first-century Palestine perceives words as events; words have power to do things. Mark's Gospel demonstrates the power of words. Through the methods of performance criticism and speech-act theory, I look systematically at the narrative world of Mark and its use of words and how the story assumes and demonstrates a context in which words have power. I begin by discussing briefly the particularities of oral societies. A limited presentation of speech-act theory follows and is applied to Mark's use of words. The insights gained from these two areas of study—performance criticism and speech-act theory—are then applied to specific passages of Mark's Gospel.

In Mark's Gospel, words have the capacity to create reality. The power of words is demonstrated as Jesus is named and identified, by Jesus' inauguration of God's rule, in Jesus' encounters with spirits, storms, illness, blessings, curses, and oracles. Nevertheless, there is a limit to power through words. There is a connection in Mark between the effectiveness of words and faith. Such limitations provide an opportunity to understand that the rule of God that Jesus establishes in power has the foremost value of service to others. This service is a consequence of being dependent upon God's rule, which is portrayed in Mark through prayer. Jesus generates God's rule by word and action; both are events. My focus is on words as events, and their power, impact, and limitations in Mark.

Communication and Mark's Gospel

There are two communication settings in Mark's Gospel. The first is the historical first-century world of the audiences that first heard Mark's story. A great deal of research has been done on this communication

1. There are several roles that Dave Rhoads has played in relation to me: professor, mentor, colleague, editor, and most importantly—friend. Having been involved in Bible translation for over a decade in Africa, I arrived at my first class in my doctoral program and experienced for the first time Dave's performance of Luke's passages on poverty. I was hooked. Something very influential happened at that and subsequent performances with Dave. Taking my experience in translation, I combined it with what has become known as performance criticism. This essay combines the criticisms of narrative, social science, and performance with speech-act theory—all methodologies I learned from Dave.

setting.[2] However, I focus on a second setting that reflects the historical one: Mark's narrative world. Scholars have argued convincingly that the historical world of Mark's time was predominantly oral, or scribal.[3] My proposal is that Mark's narrative world presupposes this predominantly oral communication setting. Generally speaking, oral societies appreciate the ability of the spoken word to do things. Richard Horsley's chapter on "Mark as Oral" describes the first-century world of Mark's original audiences. "Outside of a few aristocrats and scribes in ancient Greece, Rome, and Israel, however, virtually no one could read and write.…The vast majority of people, the Galilean, Judean, and other villagers, were largely illiterate. One recent study places the literacy rate in Roman Palestine as low as 3 percent."[4]

For the twenty-first century person from a literate-print society, a paradigmatic shift is required to imagine how orality issues permeate Mark's Gospel. The New Testament writings as well as other ancient literature were performed. As David Rhoads states, "The collection of Second Testament writings we now have are records of what early Christians experienced in speech by performers in the community. They were either written 'transcriptions' of oral narratives that had been composed in performance or they were composed orally by dictation and written for use in oral performance. These compositions *were* oral presentations."[5] Mark's Gospel follows many of the characteristics mentioned in Walter Ong's description of orality: additive constructions, mnemonic patterns, and repetition of ideas/words/sounds.[6] I understand that these oral characteristics are linked to a perception of the power of the words. "Sometimes the repetition of (sequences of) words and sounds not only aids the communication between performer and audience, but also emphasizes the power of Jesus' speech and confirms the trust that petitioners have in his power."[7]

Speech-act theory

Speech-act theory began with John Austin's lectures at Harvard in 1955, later published as *How to Do Things with Words*.[8] This notion that words do not just describe things but also actually do things is central to what I am proposing in this paper. Employing speech-act theory, biblical scholar Anthony Thiselton makes some important observations that follow the earlier work of Austin:

> There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain

2. The literature in support of this is immense. For a substantive bibliography, see the performance criticism Web site: www.biblicalperformancecriticism.org.

3. For example, Werner Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

4. Richard Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 53, 55.

5. David Rhoads, "Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies—Part I," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 36, no. 3 (2006): 1.

6. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982). Joanna Dewey, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991): 221–231.

7. Horsley, 69.

8. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. J. O. Urmson, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).

> conventional effect [on] that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and… the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.[9]

This notion in combination with the understanding that Mark is located in a predominantly oral society clarifies the events of Mark's Gospel as we try to understand the "conventions" of Mark's story world and his audience. Linked to this idea of convention is authority. As stated above, in order for words to be able to do things, there has to be an accepted convention involving "certain persons." The people who do things with words are recognized by society as being given the authority to do these things. This authority is derived from Jesus' identity in Mark's Gospel. This identity is developed by showing that people identified Jesus as an honorable person with authority.

Jesus' authority in relation to God's rule

Jesus' power is exhibited in a fusion of action and word. Critical to a person's ability to use words in a powerful way is the identity of that person. This identity relates to Jesus' honor status. Jesus acquires honor through a series of challenges and ripostes with Pharisees and scribes. This acquired honor is recognized by the crowd: "…for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (1:22). Jesus is also recognized as being the recipient of ascribed honor. Throughout Mark's story, Mark's audience hears various appellations of Jesus which assure the hearer that Jesus is a person of authority and therefore his words will perform powerfully. At Jesus' baptism (1:11) we hear that he is God's Son and at his transfiguration (9:7) we hear that he is God's beloved Son. In the discussions about the Sabbath, Jesus claims for himself that he is master of the Sabbath (2:28). Unclean spirits address him as the Son of (the Most High) God (3:11; 5:7). Through the mouths of followers, Jesus is acclaimed as the Messiah (8:29), the Son of David (10:47), and the one who comes in the name of the Lord (11:9). We hear the words of a Roman soldier who identifies Jesus: "Truly he was the Son of God" (15:39). Such an identity allows Jesus to be perceived as one whose words purport authority. Each of these titles demonstrates the speech act of naming. Jesus is named by God, by followers, and even by unclean spirits as God's agent.

Fundamental to Mark's story is Jesus' establishment of God's rule on earth. Jesus announces: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near" (1:15). These words are not to be understood as an assertion or as a simple prediction of events. Rather, these words are creative by shaping the world, by inaugurating the kingdom. Jesus inaugurates God's rule through this illocutionary act of declaration.

Early in Mark's story Jesus' identity is questioned. Is he God's agent or Beelzebul's? It is through this challenge to Jesus' identity and authority that we learn more about how authority works in Mark's story world. The conflict between Jesus and Satan is first introduced with Jesus' temptation in the desert (1:13). It is only later, through one of Jesus' riddles, that we understand how this temptation scene is related to Jesus' authority over evil spirits. "But no one can enter a strong man's

9. Cited in Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation, Toward a Hermeneutic of Self-Involvement* (Edinburgh & New York: T & T Clark, 2001), 39.

house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered" (3:27). Jesus' actions are signs of God's rule having been inaugurated and Jesus is identified as an agent of that rule. In the following sections we witness how Jesus "plunders the strong man's house" through exorcisms and healings.

Case studies of Jesus' authority in Mark

In the following pages I present five case studies that relate to Jesus' authority. I continue to utilize the narrative approach by using Mark's description of Jesus' interactions with characters in his story world.

Authority over spirits

According to Mark's cosmology, Jesus as God's agent has authority over these spirits and illnesses. Following Jesus' riddle, he has bound Satan and now can plunder his goods by exorcizing spirits. In speech-act perspective, when Jesus speaks to spirits, he is performing an illocutionary act—a directive—where the spirit recognizes Jesus' superior authority over them. As a privileged audience, we already know of Jesus' baptism where he is identified as God's Son. We also know of Jesus' conflict with Satan in the desert (1:12). It is in Capernaum that we first witness, with the characters in the story, that Jesus does have authority over Satan's unclean spirits (1:21–27). By the reaction of the crowd Mark underscores that this scene is meant to show Jesus' authority in his words that command the unclean spirits. Mark's audience hears with those of Capernaum the spoken words: "Be silent, and come out of him!" (1:25). Two commands are given: the first to silence the spirit's naming of Jesus, the second to liberate the man from the spirit.

Authority over nature

Another example of Jesus' authority may be somewhat confusing for a modern reader. Asleep at the stern of the boat, Jesus is awakened by his disciples who are in great fear for their lives. A squall has appeared and is threatening to sink the boat. Jesus speaks to the squall: "Peace, be still" (4:39). Given the worldview of the first-century Mediterranean region, we understand that Jesus is not speaking to a force of nature. Rather the sea is personified, able to hear and obey the authoritative word of Jesus. He commands calm, and the sea is obliged to obey his words. Mark ends this scene with the rhetorical question: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41). This rhetorical device is similar to Jesus' first exorcism in Capernaum: "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him" (1:27). Although the hearers of Mark's story are privy to Jesus' identity through his baptism (and later through Jesus' transfiguration), Mark takes advantage of these scenes of Jesus' authoritative words to instigate reflection with the hearer. Jesus is truly God's agent, endowed with authority to speak commanding words to spirits and seas.

Authority over illness

Jesus is presented in Mark's Gospel as one who not only has authority over evil spirits and nature, but also has the authority to heal those who are sick. In response to a leper's request, Jesus says to him, "I do choose. Be made clean" (1:41). Jesus' words shape the world by cleansing the leper. The words occur as Jesus stretches out his hand to touch the leper. Action and words together fuse into a healing power. To whom does Jesus address the words? It is to the leper, but beyond him to the leprosy itself in a way that can be compared

to an exorcism. Jesus' authoritative words cast out leprosy and transform a person's health and community status.

The effect of Jesus' words is witnessed in the healing of a paralytic (2:1–12). From the worldview of Jesus' and Mark's audience, a physical healing demonstrates God's authority. However, a further component is added to this scene: the forgiveness of sins. Such authority to forgive sins belongs to God. Nevertheless, Jesus announces the paralytic's forgiveness and quickly supports his words with others, the effects of which can be observed by all. The pronouncement of forgiveness is understood by Jesus as more difficult than the physical healing. When the paralytic walks, everyone is confronted with the possibility that Jesus' words have also enacted forgiveness. More will be said about these healings in regard to how faith relates to Jesus' authoritative capacity.

Blessings and curses

Another way that Jesus' words shape the world is with blessings and curses. Both blessings and curses invoke God, but they differ in the aim: for well-being or for ill. Thiselton notes, "Austin includes blessing and cursing in a sub-class of performatives which he calls 'behabitives.' A man who pronounces a blessing is not primarily describing his own feelings; his words have 'power' in as far as they constitute an act of blessing."[10] Thiselton describes how blessings functioned in the Jewish scriptures. "Acts of blessing in the Old Testament rest on accepted *conventions*; on procedures or institutions accepted within Israelite society, and usually involving conventionally accepted formulae."[11] This corresponds with Jesus' blessing of children. "And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them" (10:16). It is clear that people were bringing children to Jesus with the expectation that his words of blessing would be efficacious.

Such performance is also understood in the cursing of the fig tree (11:14). Just as the sea was personified when Jesus calmed the storm, so too is the fig tree personified in Mark's story world and must obey Jesus' command. Jesus' pronouncement causes the tree to shrivel up. There is an immediate consequence to the pronouncement of the words: "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." The effective cursing of the fig tree presents Jesus as one who can transform things through malediction as well as benediction. Curses are also directed toward humans: "Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (3:19). Another example is recorded in 14:21: "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Such an ill-boding statement determines the world of the one who betrays Jesus.

Promise and judgment

Two sets of prophecies are recorded in Mark. In the first set, Mark cites several passages from the Jewish scriptures. These passages are treated as oracles in Mark's Gospel. The opening verses of Mark's story describe how God will send a messenger to prepare the way. Jesus later explains that John the Baptist came in the manner of Elijah as the messenger to prepare Jesus' way (9:12–13). Jesus relates the fact that his followers do not understand his parables

10. Anthony C. Thiselton, "The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1974): 293.

11. Ibid., 294.

as an example of the oracle that people "may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand" (4:12). As a critique of the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus uses an oracle to describe their behavior: "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines" (7:6–7). Another example is how Jesus' passion causes his followers to scatter: "'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (14:27). Mark's Jesus treats these ancient prophecies as performative in that Jewish oracles are used to describe events surrounding Jesus. The central prophecies of Jesus that are fulfilled within the story are his predictions of his passion and subsequent resurrection (8:31; 9:31; 10:33). From the perspective of speech-act theory, Jesus' identity as God's agent is reinforced by the credibility of his fulfilled prophecies.

Jesus' other prophecies are not (yet) fulfilled within Mark's story. The majority of these "unfulfilled prophecies" are located in Mark 13:1–26. If we locate the date of the writing of Mark in proximity to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, many of these prophecies are already fulfilled for Mark's audience. If not yet fulfilled, they can easily be foreseen. Persecution and further Roman domination are already a part of life for Mark's audience. These difficulties are assuaged in part by the fact that they are understood as not a surprise to Jesus—he predicted them. In part, the difficulties are bearable because Jesus has promised that they will not endure forever. Jesus had already promised: "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power" (9:1). And with God's kingdom coming in power, so too will come the Son of Man: "…you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (14:62). By the end of Mark's story the hearer is convinced that Jesus is God's agent. As God's agent, Jesus' words have a creative, commanding, healing, and predictive power. Mark's audience anticipates Jesus' words to come true; they recognize them to be oracles.

Limited power

Despite the display of the power of Jesus' words, they do have limits. Jesus' creative pronouncement of the establishment of God's rule is initially seen as an overwhelming force that cannot be denied. Spirits are rebuked, illness is wiped away, winds are calmed, and the dead are brought back to life. In the parable of the sower, the seeds of performative words are able to yield "thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold" (4:8). However, Jesus' words *can* be resisted. When the leper is told to "say nothing," (1:44) he went out and "proclaimed freely." Unlike the fishermen disciples and Levi the tax collector who obey Jesus' words to "follow me," the wealthy man seeking eternal life refuses Jesus' same words to "come, follow me" (10:21). Even the disciples who did respond to Jesus' call are not able to follow his words to "keep awake" as Jesus goes off to pray in Gethsemane (14:34). Whereas unclean spirits, the sea, and illness cannot refuse Jesus' words, simple human beings have the power to refrain from obeying.

Throughout Mark's Gospel, a key condition to experiencing God's power is faith—a relational trust in God and God's agent, Jesus. Jesus adjoins to his proclamation of God's rule: "believe in the good news" (1:15). Jesus encourages Jairus, "Do not fear, only believe" (5:36), thus supplying the converse to trust: fear. In order to experience the power of Jesus' words one needs to believe, for "All things can be done for the one who believes,"

which is what Jesus says to the father of the boy before exorcizing a spirit (9:23). Similarly, Jesus assures his disciples: "… if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you" (11:23). Twice Jesus sends off ones who have been healed with the words, "your faith has made you well" (5:34; 10:52). Jesus' pronouncement of their wellness is not just a description, but rather a performance—as an illocutionary force it is a declarative. This performance is linked to the faith of the supplicant. In Mark's Gospel there is a difference between non-human entities (spirits) who are the object of Jesus' commands in that they have no choice but to obey. For humans, however, their choice is lived out in the trust that they have in both the person and words of Jesus. They can choose to obey or refuse Jesus' words.

Despite the power of Jesus' words over spirits, illness, and personified nature, Jesus embodies how this power is not meant for domination over people but rather to serve them.

If trust is the posture of those who experience Jesus' powerful words, prayer is the posture of those who speak on behalf of God's rule and are able to express it mightily. Prayer is a reference to the connection of authority found in God's rule. It is an acknowledgment that the power does not originate with self, but its source is God. Jesus demonstrates this connection several times as he is described as going out to pray (1:35; 6:46). Long after the disciples have already demonstrated that they can cast out demons "in Jesus' name," they find that they are incapable of a further performance when Jesus reminds them: "This kind can come out only through prayer" (9:29). The disciples' incapacity to exorcize spirits reflects their insubordination to God's rule. Such insubordination is also exemplified by James and John in their request: "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (10:37). Their request is juxtaposed with the exchange between Jesus and blind Bartimaeus: "Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again'" (10:51). I suggest that the granting of Bartimaeus' request (and not James and John's) demonstrates how the effect of Jesus' authority is limited by the request's relation to God's rule.

The preceding paragraphs have described two conditions to words being effective. Following Austin's speech-act criteria of convention with "particular persons and situations," faith in God and God's agents are one component of the convention that Mark's story presents in order for words to have power. Likewise, subordination to God's rule is a component of this extra-linguistic convention. Without trust and recognition of God's rule, words fall powerless, without effect.

Power for service

Throughout this essay I have connected Jesus' words to power. Jesus has power

over illness, unclean spirits, death, and windstorms. Yet power is conditioned in relation to humanity, both through the recipient's trust and through the speaker's subordination to God's rule. It is this subordination to God's rule that differentiates the qualities of Jesus' power with other powers. These different qualities are first highlighted in Jesus' encounters with his disciples and then further underscored by Jesus' passion.

Jesus instructs his disciples about the power of God's rule by contrasting it to Roman rule: "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them" (10:42). Roman rule also demonstrated the power of words. The Roman governor Pilate demonstrated his power by speaking words of liberty (to Barabbas) and condemnation (to Jesus) (15:15). Although a similar type of dominating power was demonstrated by Jesus in regard to spirits, Jesus did not practice such a dominating power with people. In fact, his words, emanating from God's rule, were ineffective when they did not encounter trust. Jesus informs the disciples that power in God's rule is intended for service, in a posture of vulnerability. To make it clear, Jesus explicates that those who announce God's rule are to be slaves, relinquishing power over others (10:44). They are to present themselves as a small child, thus replicating their vulnerable social status (9:36).

As indicated above, words and deeds are viewed as being linked in Mark's Gospel. Jesus' teaching to the disciples about the power to serve is lived out by Jesus himself: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (10:45). Jesus accepts circumstances forced upon him by those who are not ruled by God: "The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" (14:41). Jesus' powerful words are used to identify him when he responds to the chief priest's question of whether he is the Messiah, "I am" (14:62), and is subsequently condemned. After being crucified, Mark's audience hears a final Aramaic phrase, which embodies the power of God's rule of service from a position of vulnerability: "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani*?—My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34). Where is the power in such words? Jesus' subordination to God's rule has led him to be subdued by humanity, abandoned by his disciples. Despite the power of Jesus' words over spirits, illness, and personified nature, Jesus embodies how this power is not meant for domination over people but rather to serve them.

Conclusion

In Mark's story Jesus' words do things. His words create something out of nothing. They transform broken bodies into whole people. Even squalling seas are hushed. Yet Jesus' powerful words can be ineffective when spoken to those who are afraid and without trust. Likewise, such words are powerless when the speaker is not acting under God's rule. Connected to God's rule through prayer, Jesus teaches and demonstrates another type of power that does not coerce or dominate; rather, it serves and gives. Jesus' words usher in God's rule and perform God's acts of power through service.

How Performance Changed My (Scholarly) Life

Margaret E. Lee
Tulsa Community College, Tulsa, Oklahoma

My title frames the topic of performance criticism in terms of a conversion narrative, and is only partly tongue-in-cheek. Performance criticism erupted into my scholarly work like a geyser, baptizing familiar analytical tools with a salty spray. The tonic tasted bad but it did its work. I hope this essay will suggest how this curative can shape a scholar and influence interpretation.

My interest in biblical material rests on my concern that the New Testament too often supports inaccurate perceptions of the world. Its use over two millennia has too often been used to authorize interpretations of its contents as mandates for brutality and oppression. Yet scholarly explorations of the historical Jesus and our growing understanding of the history of early Christianity strongly indicate a different trajectory for the Jesus movement at its inception.[1] I have therefore sought clues for faithful readings of the New Testament that promise different results in our own time. My efforts have assumed that faithful readings begin in the language of the compositions themselves. In an effort to retrieve aspects of earlier interpretative traditions of the New Testament and the materials used to compose it, I have asked how its original audiences may have experienced these literary compositions as spoken performances.

Orality studies inaugurated by Walter Ong and in New Testament studies by Werner Kelber have awakened a modern appreciation of the public, performed character of ancient literature.[2] What we read silently, ancient audiences heard in theaters, courtrooms, and marketplaces. This realization challenges conventional understandings of literary composition and publication as we learn to appreciate that the elements of composition in antiquity were not letters or even words, but sounds. Thus, I have sought to invent an empirically based method to analyze Hellenistic Greek literature as speech and to approach New Testament compositions as linear streams of sound.[3]

The power and beauty of spoken

1. See Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: the Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994); John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); Robert W. Funk, R. W. Hoover, et al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993).

2. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982); Werner Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

3. Margaret E. Lee, and B. B. Scott, *Sound Mapping the New Testament* (Salem, Ore.: Polebridge, 2009).

sound have persuaded me that the New Testament's very language enshrouds a code that prescribes fresh interpretation. By analyzing the spoken sounds of the New Testament at the level of the phoneme, syllable, and colon, I have noticed complex systems of auditory patterns, even in literary strata sometimes judged to be devoid of sophisticated technique, such as Q and the Gospel of Mark. Such patterns function at the level of the signifier rather than the signified; in other words, they occur in units of language that do not necessarily carry semantic meaning. Since such patterns operate independently of semantics, their impact on meaning sometimes is not immediately apparent. Each composition's sounds, not its words, create its structure. A composition's auditory architecture frames the house in which its meaning resides. So the relationship sound to meaning becomes comprehensible first in its structural integrity, its design, rather than in its "message." In fact, the notion that a New Testament composition *has* a message for the individual, solitary reader is presumptive. It skips over multiple vehicles of meaning inherent in the composition's language and neglects its social impact as performance.

The relevance of performance criticism to these concerns might seem obvious, but it took a long time to dawn on me, primarily because my work had engaged the Greek text, whereas performances for contemporary audiences necessarily take place in modern languages. I had long since resigned myself to the irrecoverable loss of anything like an ancient performance experience. I knew something of what Professor Rhoads, his colleagues, and students were about, but I reckoned their concerns to be different from mine and their trajectory aimed toward a divergent goal: making the New Testament "come alive" for the modern believer. In other words, I did not appreciate the value of performance criticism as criticism.

In 2008, Professor Rhoads challenged me to perform the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7), the New Testament passage whose sounds I had studied most closely. I accepted his challenge as an experiment and without desiring or expecting any particular outcome. I have now performed the Sermon on the Mount twice for two similar audiences—by any account, a modest if not minimal body of experience. Nevertheless, the work of performance has reorganized my working understanding of the Sermon because it presents questions that seldom arise in the course of biblical criticism conducted silently.

In a subsequent conversation in which Professor Rhoads and I reflected on the power of performance to transform interpretation, he issued a second challenge: to write a performance commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. Such a commentary remains beyond the scope of this article, nor can my limited experience with performance criticism yet support such a comprehensive effort. Yet I offer the following reflection as an attempt to come to terms with all that performance criticism has to offer. More importantly, I offer this essay as a tribute to Professor Rhoads' inspiration for scholars newly introduced to performance criticism, and as a promise to pursue his vision.

I will consider various aspects of performance as they relate to the Sermon on the Mount and expand interpretative possibilities presented by the challenge of performance.

Setting

The gallons of ink that have been spilled analyzing the setting of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel do not begin to address the challenges that face a

contemporary performer of the Sermon.[4] No such performance even attempts to recreate an ancient performance context, since modern and ancient audiences share so little in common. Nevertheless, every performance must create some context, or at least acknowledge that the failure to do so implies a context.

In Matthew's Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount is a speech framed by a narrative. In the case of my performances, the Sermon functioned as a dramatic performance framed by a scholarly lecture. Stripped of its narrative frame, the Sermon lacks all the echoes of its framing story: paternity questions (1:1–17; 3:9–17), authority problems (2:1–23; 3:7–10), and the conflict between demonstrated righteousness and righteousness that remains hidden (1:18–25; 3:13–15). A faithful performance of the Sermon on the Mount must somehow capture these resonances or risk reducing the Sermon to a litany of moralistic platitudes.

In addition to creating a narrative frame for performance, a performer must cast the audience in a dramatic role. In a performance of the Sermon on the Mount, a performer must decide whether to deliver the Sermon as if audience members were receiving it from their contemporary points of view, or whether they are cast as characters in the larger gospel narrative, with opportunities to build sympathy for its protagonist or create allegiances with other characters or factions.

In my case, motivated primarily by pragmatic concerns relating to performance time limits, I chose to address the Sermon to my listeners' native context, insofar as I imagined it. The first problem that attends such a decision is that of avoiding anachronism. Choosing modern equivalents for "when you are offering your gift at the altar" (5:23), "no one can serve two masters" (6:24), or the lilies of the field "neither toil nor spin" (6:28) challenges a performer of the Sermon on the Mount to navigate between the Scylla of irrelevance and the Charybdis of infidelity to the text.

Translating an ancient composition into a contemporary context presents interpretative opportunities, especially in matters of style. Colloquialisms such as, "back in the day they used to say…" for "you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times" (5:21, 33), can signal that the audience is not expected to adopt a persona in Matthew's narrative, but that the Sermon is directed to them in their current context. Like most other choices about a performance context, this choice presents problems that challenge interpretation. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount a series of prohibitions in 6:19–7:6 addresses the audience directly and criticizes their actions: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth" (6:19); "Do not worry about your life" (6:25); "Do not judge" (7:1); "Do not give what is holy to dogs" (7:6). The Sermon's criticism increases in intensity until in 7:5 the speaker resorts to name-calling ("You hypocrite"). Although it only occurs once, this instance of name-calling gains force from the preceding section of the Sermon (6:1–18) in which the audience is exhorted not to behave like "the hypocrites" (6:2, 5, 16), so when this label is applied to the audience, its effect is stronger than mild criticism. It carries the sting of condemnation.

In a silent reading of the Sermon, it is easy to miss the significance of the word, "hypocrite," when it is directed at the Sermon's audience. But in a performance, its negative impact is inescapable and influences the Sermon's tone from beginning

4. A classic example is William D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

to end. If, at the heart of the Sermon, the audience is cast into the same category as their enemies, then perhaps in 5:1 Jesus flees the crowds more by intent than by accident.[5] The possibility of antagonism between Jesus and the crowd suggests that the beatitudes should be delivered less as consolation and more as criticism. This possibility seems even more compelling as the beatitudes are followed by a section of the Sermon that likens the audience to salt and light, then contemplates their potential failures: "salt has lost its taste" (5:13); "No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket" (5:15). Moreover, the Sermon progresses by implying that the audience has misunderstood the speaker: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets" (5:17). Thus it appears that a sustained critique of the audience builds from the Sermon's beginning and is not limited to a momentary eruption in 7:5.

Characterization

Having cast the audience in a narrative role, a performer confronts decisions about the characterizations of other actors in the performed speech or narrative. In a performance of the Sermon on the Mount, the precise identity of the "hypocrites" who are held up as a negative model remains somewhat unclear. Even "Gentiles" and "the scribes and Pharisees," designate vaguely defined groups who are too often associated in the contemporary reader's mind respectively as "unbelievers" and "Jews," based on the Gospel's history of interpretation. These are dangerous identifications that not only disturb modern social and political interactions but they also distort Matthew's narrative. A performance that neglects this problem by simply rendering literally the terms, "Gentiles," and "scribes and Pharisees," not only invites these distorted ideas, but also gives them vivid, embodied form. A responsible performance chooses different designations that capture the author's characterization, either in an ancient context or in a contemporary one.

In my performances of the Sermon on the Mount, I have rendered "Gentiles" as "foreigners," since *ethnos* primarily denotes foreign nations or people from a foreign ethnic group.[6] "Scribes and Pharisees" is more problematic because the group is more narrowly delineated. In my performances, I have used the phrase, "news anchors and pundits" because it names speakers who command some authority in our culture, just as the scribes and Pharisees spoke with authority among Jews. Today, news anchors and pundits remain vulnerable to questioning and ridicule, even among those who grant them authority. Similarly, in Matthew's Gospel, the scribes and Pharisees probably were simultaneously honored and disdained by Jewish believers.

Problems of the same nature attend the rendering of those blessed in the beatitudes, such as "the poor in spirit" (5:3), "the meek," (5:5), and the "merciful" (5:7). In private study, such phrases conjure specific images for the silent reader but usually the spontaneous characterizations that these phrases evoke remain unconscious, even while they shape a reader's interpretation

5. Matthew introduces his parables discourse in a similar way, as Jesus distances himself from the crowd before speaking to them in 13:1–2.

6. See F. W. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 276. The NRSV uses "gentile" in Matt 4:15; 6:32; 10:5; 10:18; 12:18; 12:21; 20:19 and 20:25. It uses "people" in 21:43, then "nation(s)" in 24:7 (two times), 24:9; 24:14; 25:32 and 28:19.

of the text. However, a performer must commit to a specific identity for those whom the text names only in vague terms. Are those blessed in the beatitudes individuals with particular moral or personality characteristics? Are they actual characters who are known to the audience and are being upheld as exemplary? Or do they represent members of the audience? Standard commentaries register some uncertainty about the specific identity of those addressed but performance presses the question.[7] A performer's decisions about such characterizations shape the tone of the performance.

Translation for performance is dynamic. It can and must respond to each audience's particularity.

Translation

The art of translation deserves separate treatment in its own right. This effort has been undertaken elsewhere by many who are far more qualified than I to elucidate translation's challenges. However, problems that attend translation take on new dimensions under the demands of performance. Printed translations necessarily serve a broad audience and need a long enough shelf life to justify the expenses of printing, publicity, and distribution. Translation for performance is dynamic. It can and must respond to each audience's particularity. It is difficult to render briefly into English Matthew's notions of "the kingdom of heaven" or "righteousness." Even more, the demands of modern performance suggest that no single solution to such conundrums will serve every audience. While silent criticism can be content to exegete the text, performance criticism must also exegete the audience and address its unique characteristics.

Sometimes the dynamics of performance can point out translation problems. The issues of setting and characterization analyzed above suggest that, contrary to many modern renditions of the Sermon on the Mount that present it as generalized moral instruction, performance criticism shows that the Sermon aims a sharp critique at its audience and seeks to redirect its attention and priorities. Thus, performance tests the Sermon's prohibition of anxiety, which is typically construed as general reassurance in the face of anxiety.

The Greek word *merimna* in this passage is usually rendered, "worry," or "anxiety."[8] Yet its fundamental meaning includes a sense of being intent upon

7. See William D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 429; Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, Minn.: Michael Glazier, 1991), 78; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 224.

8. The NRSV has "care" for the verbal forms in 1 Cor 12:25 and "concerned" in Phil 2:20. Ten of the nineteen occurrences of this verb in the New Testament occur in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke where they incorporate the prohibition of anxiety from Q. Two of the remaining nine usages of this verb occur in Matt 10:19 and Luke 10:41, and the other seven occur in Paul (1 Cor 7:32, 33, 34 [two times]; 12:25; Phil 2:20; 4:6).

something or of having solicitude.[9] So in a performance context for the Sermon on the Mount, translations that capture this sense seem appropriate. They suggest that, for the Gospel's author, Q's prohibition of anxiety should not be reduced to consolations about the needlessness or futility of worry, but that the prohibition gently scolds the audience for attending to the wrong issue, and redirects their attention. A translation for modern performance might therefore render the verb in multiple ways, such as, "I'm telling you not to *focus so much* on your survival needs…. Which one of you, by *obsessing about it*, could extend your life by even half a yard?…And clothes—why *zero in* on that?…So quit *fussing and whining*…." (6:25, 27-28, 31). Such renderings do not simply dismiss worry as needless but they view it negatively.

Since translation for performance recaptures a composition's spoken character, it should consider the added dimension of a composition's sounds in its original language. While the creation of a translation for silent reading focuses primarily on the meaning of a composition's words, translation for performance challenges a performer not only to capture semantic meaning but also to convey the connections between words and phrases that are implied by rhyme and other forms of repetition. Thus a performance translation of Matt 5:15 should perhaps choose rhyming words for "bushel basket" and "lampstand," since they rhyme in Greek and thereby heighten the contrast between the outcome of setting a lamp in each place. Similarly, the Greek words for "distort" and "show" in 6:16 sound similar because they share a common lexical stem. But sound does not associate these words in English. A performance translation might capture this resonance and reinforce its point by stating, "Don't be like those who distort their *appearance* so their fasting is *apparent* to others."

Translation for performance becomes more difficult when attempting to capture the performed effect of onomatopoeia, since this sound effect in Greek often is not confined to a single word but is frequently carried out over several words or phrases. Rendering the semantic meaning of Matt 6:26 into English presents no particular difficulty ("Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"). But to be faithful to the Greek text, a performance of this verse should sound like birdsong, employing frequent "t," "s," "st," and "ps" sounds.

Translation for performance differs from translation for print because it presents spoken sounds, not silent printed marks. The added acoustic dimension illustrates that sound can contribute to sense in ways that remain independent of the meanings of words. Silent criticism can ignore this acoustic, non-semantic dimension of meaning, but performance criticism cannot.

Linear processing

The audible dimension of performance points out one of the most fundamental differences between silent reading and spoken word: time. The passage of time in silent reading remains under a reader's control, allowing a reader to linger over passages at will and ruminate over their

9. See Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, et al. *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 1104; F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 632; R. Bultmann, "Merimnao," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), IV**:** 589–593.

meaning. In performance, meaning-making is time-bound. Audiences must attend to sights and sounds as they happen. Every sound has only the moment of articulation to make its impact. For this reason, repetition takes on particular importance as a primary tool for focusing a listening audience's attention.

Performance relies on repetition to convey a composition's structural integrity. Many scholarly commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount interpret the Lord's Prayer as central to its meaning because they construe the Sermon's structure to draw attention to the Lord's Prayer as the Sermon's centerpiece.[10] Similarly, other commentators identify the phrase, "the law and the prophets," as an organizing feature because it occurs near the Sermon's beginning and again near its end.[11] As logical as these proposals might seem when reading the Sermon silently, performance does not support them. Although the Lord's Prayer lies near the Sermon's center, it cannot be presumed to function as its core theme solely on this basis. A listener must be able to apprehend in real time the thematic importance of the Lord's Prayer. Yet when listeners experience a composition as a linear stream of sound, they cannot know when they arrive at a composition's center, since centrality is evident only in retrospect.

Yet when listeners experience a composition as a linear stream of sound, they cannot know when they arrive at a composition's center, since centrality is evident only in retrospect.

Similarly, the supposedly framing occurrences of "the law and the prophets" must occur close enough in time for listeners to connect the two occurrences, if they are to function as an organizing device. But the two occurrences of "the law and the prophets" are separated by nearly three chapters, or approximately fifteen minutes of speech. Many vivid sounds and repetitions intervene between these occurrences, such as the repetitive structure of the antitheses ("you have heard that it was said…but I say to you….") (5:21–22, 27–28, 31–32, 33–34, 38–39, 43–44) and the repeated admonition not to be like the "hypocrites" (6:2, 5, 16). The acoustic impact of a brief phrase such as "the law and the prophets" that is repeated only once is not sufficient to organize the Sermon.

Blocking

The spatial realization of a performance, or its blocking on stage, gains energy from a composition's audible structural features.

10. See Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 211–12.

11. See Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 63; Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T &T Clark, 1992), 297–298.

An audience's discernment of structure in performance gives their listening experience a sense of movement or progress. For example, a performer can imply the Sermon's larger structural features, such as its organization into eight sections, by tracing a path in the performance space and performing each of the composition's distinct sections in different space. A performer can even cue an audience to their narrative role by choosing how close to the audience to stand, whether to embellish or partition the performance space with a podium or other props, how, physically, to approach the audience by walking toward or away from them, how loudly to speak, and even what to wear.

Memorization

Memorizing a performance presents perhaps the greatest challenge to a modern performer since, unlike the ancients, our culture does not encourage us to train our mnemonic powers. Performance criticism has prompted new studies of memory for performance.[12] It reminds us that performers in antiquity found ways to bring long compositions into performance space whole and intact, without the assistance of prompts. Listeners, too, held literature in memory and processed its meaning skillfully, without the aid of print. Performance retrieves this ancient art. A powerful performance temporarily interrupts our contemporary trade in the sound bite and proves that modern audiences can indeed concentrate for longer periods than the time between television commercials or mouse clicks.

Summary

In this essay, I have attempted to suggest how performance changes an interpreter's perception of an ancient composition. My observations come from minimal experience, yet even brief experience with performance can transform interpretation. The pioneering work of Professor Rhoads in performing the New Testament inspires a wealth of understanding, not just by making the biblical material more immediate, but also by furnishing the scholar with a fresh critical process that is accessible only through performance.

12. See Whitney Taylor Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2003), 103–121.

Truth, Method, and Multiplicity: Performance as a Mode of Interpretation

Richard W. Swanson

Chair, Humanities Division and Professor of Religion/Philosophy/Classics
Augustana College, Sioux Falls

A pastor sits with a text and a task. The text is clear enough: that is the gift of lectionaries. The task is also clear enough: analyze and experience the text so as to be able to speak the word of gospel appropriate to this moment and this particular audience. The unity of God and the clarity of the gospel conspire together to suggest that there will be a single, clear, trumpet-like call to be heard out of this single text. And so the pastor begins her work, using the tools provided by her education and experience.

Interpretation and the unity of truth

We have before us a paradox, or if not a paradox, then an odd and ironical complication. Modes of biblical interpretation are developed in an effort to crystallize and regularize interpretive practice and results. Thus it was that early historical criticism hoped for a set of scientific protocols that would yield replicable results in the hands of any competent interpreter. Thus it was that early structuralist study expected that precise attention to the exact structure of language would yield results that were also precise and exact. Thus it was with method after method: interpretive methods emerge out of our (understandable) desire for univocal interpretation.

Of course, textual interpretation has always proved more complicated than might have been hoped. Each drive for universal agreement has yielded global variety. Each attempt at precision has had to recognize that anything that is "cut ahead of time" (the implied root action behind the word "pre-cise") is acted on outside of the precise boundaries of methodological purity. And, perhaps oddest of all, each proposed single method has yielded burgeoning elaboration and variegation. What, exactly, is historical criticism? The more one knows about the study of history, the more complicated answers one is compelled to give to this simple question. Military history interacts with political history interacts with economic history interacts with social history interacts with archaeology, and each of them comes to different conclusions. What, exactly, is linguistic criticism? The more one knows about language(s), the more complications and contradictions one will have to reckon with to answer this question. Grammar generates syntax generates poetics generates semantics generates culture generates societies that study grammar. What does it mean to study biblical literature? Even if we were to confine the answer to the matter of literary approaches to biblical texts, the history of this fascinating enterprise

attests to the tangles that attend such a venture.

And now there arrives on the desk of our imagined pastor a new mode of study: performance criticism. It is, itself, an approach to biblical literature, but aims to study not the private reading of a silent text (though this would be a justifiable approach since "lit-erature" is, after all, *lis-able*), but aims rather to discover how a text is read when it is embodied, performed for an audience. But even this specification does not yield a simplification, since there are at least two separate but interlocked kinds of reading involved in performance: the reading done by the performer in preparation for performance, and the reading done by the audience that is present for the performance.

Everywhere one looks in an effort to find simplicity one finds complexity. Every attempt to create a text with a single voice finds itself entangled in pluriform methods and polyvalent meanings. In this essay I will explore this complexity and its importance for those who will interpret Scripture in public.

Performance criticism as a method among methods

There may be those who argue that performance criticism is the method that will displace all previous interpretive methods for biblical narratives, but most such statements are more street theatre than serious claim. Sometimes it takes overstatement to get a public hearing; that is not new. When such arguments are advanced more seriously, it is because biblical texts come to us out of a world that knew professional literacy, but not public literacy.[1] It is frequently noted that the world out of which biblical texts come also understood orality and the function of memory in a way foreign to present-day interpreters.[2] Thus, for the sake of intellectual honesty and philosophical adequacy, we must not maintain that the arguments for the primacy of performance criticism are based on historical analysis.

This, of course, is no surprise to any of the interpreters involved. But it is worth noting that, entirely apart from considerations of ancient orality, performance criticism cannot stand alone because careful historical analysis is necessary for any performance of any text. Detailed study of the culture of origin is essential when a text is to be performed, whether that text is part of the dramatic canon or the biblical canon, if only to clarify the oddities that attend any text that comes to us from a world in which we do not, and could not, live. Everyone knows this, as well.

It is also no surprise to careful performers that texts require careful literary analysis. Regardless of its orally composed origins, biblical stories are now most assuredly texts and have been read and reworked as texts since early in their history. While much of the history of interpretation is tangled in assumptions imported along with the idea that, for instance, a gospel is a thing that someone, someday, sat down to write, still the legacy of that history of interpretation of the Bible as a text now hangs around each biblical

1. Holly E. Hearon, Philip Ruge-Jones, and Thomas E. Boomershine, *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media: Story and Performance*, Biblical Performance Criticism (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2009). See especially the excellent essay by Robert M. Fowler, "Why Everything We Know About the Bible Is Wrong: Lessons in the Media History of the Bible", 3–18.

2. For an excellent discussion of this, see Margaret Ellen Lee and Bernard Brandon Scott, *Sound Mapping the New Testament* (Salem, Ore.: Polebridge Press, 2009).

scene, each gospel pericope, and the wise performer remembers this. Though gospel texts, for instance, are surely in their origins oral compositions, their long interaction with and—for many, many centuries—existence as texts means that literary analysis is necessary if we are to hear them in their woven interconnectedness.

As is the case with historical analysis, there are more complications here than might meet the eye. One frequently hears students of orality argue that certain kinds of connections and allusions are only possible when one presupposes that an interpreter can have fingers marking places in a codex (a page-book), and that such connections and allusions would not be heard by the audience at an oral performance. Again, this is likely true, but biblical texts have been read by interpreters with fingers in their books since at least the fourth century of the Common Era. Whether the connections and allusions these interpreters now hear would have been part of an ancient audience's understanding is beyond knowing, but we surely do know that this has become part of our contemporary hearing of these texts. We cannot un-ring the textual bell; we cannot un-hear the history of interpretation of these texts; we cannot take our own fingers out of the book, even when we perform the texts. We ought to remember this.

Beyond this foundational recognition, there is also the set of insights brought into view by the explicitly literary critical readings of the last half of the twentieth century. While some of these readings surely exhausted themselves (and their readers) in arcane labyrinths,[3] even the most obscure of these readings opened insights into the ways biblical stories deploy themselves, and most of the work done by literary critics was not at all arcane or obscurantist. More than a generation of preachers have benefited from the work of literary readings of Elizabeth Malbon, Joanna Dewey, Sharon Ringe, Robert Fowler, Donald Juel, and (to be sure) David Rhoads. Though most of the studies by interpreters in this list at least begin with the assumption of a literary author, still the insights offered are indispensible for any performer.

And surely performers are required also to engage in theological analysis if the text is to be attended to as Scripture. Biblical narratives are not simply fascinating stories out of the Greco-Roman past (though they are surely that, as well), they are received also as Scripture, and even that bare fact requires careful theological attention. Different communities, different audiences will mean different things by this. For some, to say that something is "scripture" means that it has some sort of supernatural origin. For others, "scripture" emerges out of a process of human sorting and discovering by which communities develop and recognize those texts that are so durably generative that they are finally called sacred. For any community that understands the Bible to be Scripture, regardless of how they imagine that title being acquired and applied, there will be a powerful intensity to the reading of any scriptural text. But even this intense read-

3. While there are surely egregious examples to be found, I count it good practice to avoid them. But even very good work, like that of Stephen Moore, can be off-putting to the uninitiated. For instance, see the first paragraph of his treatment of the Gospel of Mark: "Leaf through this book, recently a tree. Penned to its trunk are two readings. One is of Mark, 'The Gospel of the Mark,' the other is of Luke, 'The Gospel of the Look '… Between them, Jesus hangs suspended. He may or may not have escaped decomposition, but how could he escape deconstruction?" Stephen D. Moore, *Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspectives: Jesus Begins to Write* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), xiii.

ing shows variegation. For some, reading Scripture is a fetish, a superstitious act laden with ill-considered ritual mumbo-jumbo. For others reading Scripture means that they repeat, with the Søren Kierkegaard of *For Self Examination*, "It is talking to me. It is talking about me."[4] For others, reading Scripture means hearing in every sentence insight into "life, the universe, and everything," to quote (with only a little co(s)mic intent) *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.[5] An interpreter (and most certainly a performer) will need to understand these theological complexities, or she will run the risk of creating simple and pointless offense.

Theological analysis is necessary in the first place, of course, because of what Nils Dahl called the "neglected factor" in New Testament theology: God.[6] Though technical biblical studies may well make their way by setting the Deity aside, it's a poor sermon that does the same. And if, as Dahl points out, biblical texts present to an audience an address from a God with a particular shape, then any performance of these texts must find a way to embody this divine address. This comes with all manner of risks, but may represent one of the most important gains that come with performance criticism as a mode of biblical interpretation. A performer cannot elide the matter of God's address. There can be no "neglected factor" in a successful performance of a biblical text, if only because the script will not tolerate it.

But then theological analysis is all the more necessary, if only to ensure that unexamined presuppositions do not hijack the interpretive process and deliver a predetermined dogmatic solution before the text's questions are even properly heard. There are many handbooks for performing Bible stories on the market these days. Many are quite good, but the largest number, even of the very good ones, imagine that the setting for performance is camp and congregation and the task of a performer is evangelism, pure and simple. Even the exemplary book by Dean J. Seal (who was the producer of the Minnesota Fringe Festival in Minneapolis, and thus involved in public theatre at its most public) shows evidence of this. The title is *Church & Stage: Producing Theater for Education, Praxis, Outreach and Fundraising*.[7] This is a very good book, and useful, but the title (in some tension with the content of the book itself) understands performance instrumentally, as a tool to be used by an ideological organization for its own purposes (including fundraising). Theorists in the theatre have long warned of the dangers of instrumental performance: ideology twists and deforms the theatre, and in the hands of religious ideology the result is what Shimon Levy calls "the 'kitsch or pathos' syndrome so typical to holy shows."[8] While Dean Seal is certainly not engaging in either pathos or kitsch, Levy's warning is a good one; one a theologian ought take to heart.

4. Søren Kierkegaard, Edna H. Hong, and Howard V. Hong, *For Self-Examination, Recommended for the Times* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1940).

5. Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy : A Trilogy in Five Parts* (London: Heinemann, 1995).

6. Nils Alstrup Dahl, with Donald Juel, ed., *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991). See the essay, "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology," 153–163.

7. Dean J. Seal, *Church & Stage: Producing Theater for Education, Praxis, Outreach, and Fundraising* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Publications, 2005).

8. Shimon Levy, *The Bible as Theatre* (Brighton; Portland, Ore.: Sussex Academic Press, 2000), ix.

Unregulated ideology, even when it is a very good ideology held by a very good community of faith, twists performance and deforms it. Predetermined dogmatic solutions make dramatic catharsis impossible or pointless.

Performance criticism: Risks and rewards

Our pastor is still sitting at her desk, still preparing to interpret the lectionary text assigned for preaching. Suppose that she buys the historical argument that the text comes out of a world in which orality was the norm. Suppose that she accepts the premise that the text on the desk preserves a remembrance of a performance, and that it exists to be the script for future performances, much as sheet music exists for musical performance. Why ought she, herself, perform the text?

For one thing, anyone who would perform a biblical text must learn the text by heart. The effort to learn a text by heart yields a kind of close reading that is surely valuable, though one needs to think carefully to determine how this might differ from other kinds of close reading that do not aim at performance or eventuate in it. Both kinds of close reading yield an intimate awareness of the words and flow of the text. Both yield an awareness of the tensions and aporia of the texts, and of their completeness. Because performance critical analysis adds the surprising and disturbing element of live performance, this intimate awareness may be taken deeper, and may develop earlier. This is certainly the effect that I see with my students when I use this mode of analysis in my teaching. I have taught at Augustana College for twenty years so far, and have used performance as a mode of teaching and interpreting for ten of them. In the last ten years I have had many more students come to class bubbling with new understandings and insights that came to them as they were developing a text for performance. "Before we do anything else," they say, "could we please try out this strange idea that came to me when I woke up at 3:00 a.m.? I think it helps." There's nothing quite like having to learn a story and embody it in front of an audience to focus the attention. Perhaps this sort of gain is worth a pastor's effort as well.

On the other side of the ledger, one ought to note that this very real, and deeply shared, risk will probably finally limit the acceptance of performance criticism as an interpretive method for wide use. It is not so much that interpreters lack acting ability, though that objection will be cited often and loudly. It is surely, and perhaps mainly, a matter of awareness of the very real risks involved, and the risks are not exhausted when we have dealt with the reluctance to take the risk of performing in front of an audience. The real risk has its roots in something deeper and more disturbing about the interpretation of Scripture. No matter how we try (and we do, mightily) we cannot control what happens when we interpret the Bible. The process, even without performance, requires an offering and a receiving back. Working preachers surely know something of this. Performance criticism intensifies this, not least because the offering and the receiving back happen live and in real time.

The real risk of performance: Multiplicity and the truth of Scripture

Let's come at this slowly.

The effort to prepare a text for performance requires a close encounter with the multiplicity of a text. This is surely true when the mode of engagement is, as in my own work, exploratory ensemble work that proceeds through practiced

improvisation.[9] I work with a group of actors and together we aim to explore the tensions of the text and its texture. We do this through repeated improvisatory performances of the text before us. This will naturally and necessarily yield multiple possible readings of any text.

But this encounter with multiplicity will also be had by standard solo storytelling performances. Even solo performances require interlocking choices about posture, gesture, and tone of voice. Each of these choices has interpretive consequences. Scenes play differently if a sad tone is established rather than if the tone is bitter, though the words may well support either possibility. Even a decision to perform everything in a tone that one of my actors calls "Biblical Ponderous"[10] points out the problem of multiplicity rather than solving it.

At the same time, performance requires the making of choices, and this will always yield a kind of singularity that requires reflection. Because no performance can be endless (though some may seem interminable at the time), all performative interpretation must be constrained, if only by the clock and the presumed patience of the audience. Choices will have to be made. Out of the (sometimes wild) multiplicity of possibilities, a single way to perform will have to be brought forward.

I find that the very act of making choices (impossible to miss in performance) is instructive. Choosing again and again makes one pointedly aware of the *Vorverständnisse*, the "pre-understandings," the prior, unspoken agreements and deals that interpreters and interpretive communities make with their sacred texts. Interpreters and interpretive communities agree ahead of time what kind of salvation the texts will offer and what kinds they will not, what kinds of challenges will be licit and what kinds will not even be hinted at, what kinds of hope are to be mediated through encounter with the community's sacred texts and what kinds cannot even be imagined. Again and again while working with my actors, we find moments of choice when the "obvious" choice is the ideological choice, the choice that fits the operating *Vorverständnisse*. Again and again we find these pre-set interpretations elbowing their way into our work, regardless of how ill-suited they are to the problem that the text has set for us.[11]

In the face of the paired polyvalent multiplicities of scripture and life, a vigorously active canon-within-the-canon is, of course, very helpful. But if the point and expectation of biblical interpretation is the ever-new, ever renewing encounter with God (and, as a Lutheran Christian, I at least claim to believe this), then too-easy and too-early recourse to dogmatic solutions betray a certain feebleness in our resolve, a certain inappropriate reticence in our practice and approach. We surely cannot read without presupposition, without

9. See Richard W. Swanson, *Provoking the Gospel: Methods to Embody Biblical Storytelling through Drama* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2004). See also the Web site for my ensemble, Provokingthegospel.com.

10. Here consider again Shimon Levy's warning about the dangers of "kitsch or pathos" in the performance of "holy shows," noted earlier.

11. Here see the sensitive and careful discussion in Nicholas Davey's exploration of Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. He notes that Gadamer "undertak[es] a larger strategic maneuver which aims to strengthen an orientation toward hermeneutical openness as opposed to the temptations of methodological closure." Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Suny Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2006), 26.

dogma, without a canon (with a canon within it), and we do badly when we imagine that we do. But just as surely, we do not read the Bible if we only read our dogma out of it. We ought to read that conclusion out of the work of the biblical prophets, including Jesus. But this points out a basic risk with which any interpreter must contend: this moment of encounter with our very old text might become the occasion for the eruption of something very new, something quite unimagined. But if this is so, if the old text can be expected to generate a new encounter with God, then the multiplicity on the other end of the interpretive process (that provided by the audience in the act of offering and receiving back) becomes even more problematic. Every working preacher has been complimented (or lambasted) for insights gained from a sermon, insights that had not occurred to the preacher, not in the preparation and not in the performance of the sermon. Audiences hear creatively, and nothing will change that. Any attempt to control their hearing will require drastic measures, perhaps involving putting the audience to sleep. Long dogmatic orations might serve the dual purposes of controlling the evocative power of a text and of putting the audience out of its creative (but dangerous) misery, but performance is not discourse. Performance lacks the kind of controls that argumentative discourse can provide. The result is that the wild potential of a text to be heard creatively and uncontrollably is increased when a text is performed and not tied to the block of tradition by chains of ideological argumentation and assertion. Performance sets a text free, and there are real risks that go with that meaning-producing freedom.

As any circus performer or theologian knows, balancing cannot be done ahead of time, but only in real time with real risk on the table. The question is not whether one balances freedom and constraint, but how one does it.

Is this safe?

In a word, no.

Performance criticism makes clear how it is that all the multiplying interpretive disciplines need each other: there can be no doubt as to the need for historical study (both to settle multifarious text and to understand it in a world in which change is the only constant), for literary study (because polyvalence is not simply polysyllabic jargon, but a measure of the real power of a text to transgress boundaries), and for theological study (multiplicity reminds the interpreter that after the howling wind and quaking earth of "the interesting" and after the fire of ideology there is still the voice of sheer silence that could say anything).[12] I owe this reading

12. See 1 Kings 19.

of the story of Elijah on Mount Horeb to Howard Hong, noted translator of the work of Søren Kierkegaard. I studied with Hong during my undergraduate education and heard him use this story to make sense of Kierkegaard's three stages of life: the aesthetic stage (which exhausts itself chasing anything interesting), the ethical stage (which establishes itself amid structured answers to every possible question), and the religious stage (which discovers itself in the vibrating moment of real life in which anything could happen). I find this reading of the story (one of a great many possible readings) to be instructive for the process of interpreting biblical stories through embodied performance. Those who run to one interpretive method or the other in an effort to make biblical stories univocal (single-voiced) do so because they fear that hearing the multitude of voices will be like hearing no voice at all. But the multitude of voices is real, as is the consequent possibility that something unheard of will suddenly erupt. This is precisely the situation in which interpreters of the Bible have always found themselves: in the sheer silence of multiple possibilities, anything could happen.

It is my contention that our pastor sitting at her desk will best discover this generative silence if she performs the text. In the voice of sheer silence she will hear the call of wild multiplicity of meaning and the call of the need to make single choices. She will hear the call of ideology and also the call for something more, the call for dogmatic certainty and for public risk.

Is the interpretation of Scripture best served by freedom or constraint? Of course, the answer is "yes." In the end, there will be a need for some kind of careful balancing. We all knew that at the outset. So why ask the question in the first place? Perhaps because, as any circus performer or theologian knows, balancing cannot be done ahead of time, but only in real time with real risk on the table. The question is not whether one balances freedom and constraint, but how one does it.

Performance criticism, because it is risky, creates the conditions that go with reading the Bible as sacred Scripture. This is, in my judgment, the most important gain that comes with this new method of interpretation. Embodied performance creates an encounter with Scripture that breaks open ideology, opening our pastor to the risky balancing of real scriptural interpretation. She will find herself doing more than reprocessing dogmatic answers to pre-programmed questions for communities that already knew the right questions and the right answers. Our pastor, if she takes the demands of performance seriously, will find herself suspended between an ancient world that is wildly complicated and a contemporary world that is intricate beyond comprehension. Our pastor, if she accepts the unsettling risks of performance, will find herself stretched between a private community of faith and a variegated public with many communities, some faithful, some not. Our pastor, if she attempts to tell the truth and does not settle for delivering a "Biblical Ponderous" performance, will find that truth calls to the text from the audience, to the audience from the text, and to her from both audience and text. Our pastor, if she performs, will find that old understandings are shattered, old unities are broken, old texts are cracked open. Out of this cracking comes life-giving biblical interpretation, for as songwriter and poet, Leonard Cohen has written:

> There is a crack in everything
>
> That's how the light gets in.
>
> This cracking is a gift from God. But it is not safe.

Peter: Confessor, Denier, Proclaimer, Validator of Proclamation —A Study in Diversity

Edgar Krentz

Christ Seminary—Seminex Professor of New Testament, Emeritus

David Rhoads has contributed to New Testament scholarship in many areas: history of New Testament era,[1] literary criticism,[2] diversity in the New Testament,[3] environmental concerns,[4] and most recently performance criticism.[5] He has also been an outstanding, creative classroom teacher and advisor of doctoral candidates. It is difficult to find a topic that fits into this multi-faceted friend's scholarly contributions that combines historical criticism, literary criticism, and David's stress on the importance of diversity in the New Testament.[6] I settled on looking at the variety of issues that early Christian texts associate with Peter. He appears in New Testament texts, patristic texts, and in a surprising number of non-canonical New Testament apocryphal documents to support an amazing variety of interests. In that respect he is an archetypal figure in early Christianity—and serves to support different stresses in Christianity to this day.[7]

1. David Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution 6–74 C. E.: A Political History based on the Writings of Josephus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

2. David Rhoads, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel,* revised edition, with Joanna Dewey and Donald Michie (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); *Characterization in the Gospels: Rethinking Narrative Criticism*, ed. with Kari Syreeni (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); *Reading Mark, Engaging the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

3. David Rhoads, *The Challenge of Diversity: The Witness of Paul and the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

4. David Rhoads, ed., *An Environmental Guide for Churches, their Buildings and Grounds*, co-edited with David Glover. (Web of Creation, 2006)www.webofcreation.org (accessed June 13, 2010); David Rhoads, ed., *Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet* (New York: Continuum Press, 2007).

5. *Performance Criticism* (Spokane: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming).

6. See "Faith and Earthkeeping: A Tribute to the Environmental Ministry of David Rhoads," by Barbara Rossing and Robert Saler, *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37 (2010): 82–83.

7. Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Minneapolis: Augsburg; New York, Paramus, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1973) contains valuable material. It was produced as part of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, which somewhat shapes its contents.

The Pauline Peter

The oldest references to Peter occur in 1 Corinthians and Galatians. Paul refers to him most often as Cephas (1Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14). Paul discusses his own apostleship in relation to an early Christian creedal statement (1 Cor 15:1–11; the tradition is in 15:3–5). According to that tradition Peter is the primary witness to the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 15:5);[8] that also makes him the apostolic standard by which Paul judges himself as an apostle. On the one hand, Paul uses Peter (and other resurrection appearances to James and "all the apostles") to validate his gospel.[9] "Whether therefore I or they (i.e., earlier apostles), that's the way we proclaimed and that's the way you came to faith" (1 Cor 15:11). On the other hand, Paul stresses that he became an apostle "later" than the earlier apostles, but also by a resurrection appearance. In brief, he measures up to Peter in terms of qualifications.

Paul discusses his freedom and authority as an apostle in 1 Cor 9:1–6. He, Paul, has seen the Lord (1 Cor 15:1). He has the qualifications to be an apostle. He and Barnabas have as much "right" to marry as "the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas" (1 Cor 9:1–6). He singles out Peter by name as the standard of freedom and apostolic authority. It is not surprising, therefore, that he does not fault Peter for divisions that gather around Apollos, Cephas, and Paul himself in Corinth (1 Cor 1:12). In the long discussion of divisions (1 Cor 1:10—4:21) Paul pays more attention to Apollos than to Cephas, whom he mentions again only in 1 Cor 3:22: "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, whether the universe or life or death, whether present things or future things, all are yours!" In 1 Corinthians Peter is the standard of apostleship for Paul.

Galatians expands and modifies this picture. In Gal 1:18 Paul notes that after three years (i.e., after his call, Gal 1:15) he went to Jerusalem to interrogate Peter (*historêsai Kêphan*). Paul recognized Peter as a key figure in the early community, but the initiative is Paul's, not Peter's; hence, Peter did not summon him. Paul recognizes that James (the brother of Jesus), Peter, and John are key figures (*styloi,* Gal 2:9; cf. 2:2, 6), people with strong public recognition in the Jerusalem church. The phrase *hoi dokountes styloi einai* (Gal 2:9) does not imply doubt or hesitation on Paul's part; rather the term *dokountes* is related to *doxa,* a term which implies positive recognition, a good reputation, significant public recognition.[10] Paul makes it clear that he went to Jerusalem because of a revelation, not because he was called to account by the Jerusalem authorities.[11] The conclusion of the meeting indicates that Paul is Peter's equal; the Jerusalem leaders, who "give him the right hand of fellowship," acknowledge Paul. Peter is to evangelize Jews; Paul is to evangelize Gentiles.

In Gal 2:11–14 Paul rebukes Peter

8. Paul cites a tradition that he inherits in 1 Cor 15:3–5; thus this reference to Peter as resurrection witness goes back before Paul's reference to it. *Parelabon* and *paredôka* in 15:3 are translations of the technical terms in Hebrew for the reception and the handing on of oral tradition. See also 1 Cor 11:23. Paul nowhere refers to the women who are the first witnesses of the resurrection in the four Gospels.

9. Karl Donfried, "Peter (PERSON)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5.251.

10. See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) s.v. *dokeô,* 2.a.b, and also s.v. *doxa* 3.

11. According to Acts 15:1–2 the initiative for the meeting comes from Jerusalem, not Paul.

for inconsistency in relation to Gentile Christians (Gal 2:12). Peter vacillates, first eating with Gentiles, but then "trimming his sails" (*hypestellen*) and separating himself from them because of fear of people from James (i.e., Jerusalem). His actions cause other Jews, even Barnabas, to follow suit. Paul publicly rebukes Peter for this inconsistency, regarding it as action that contradicts the Gospel (2:14, *ouk orthopodousin pros tên alêtheian tou euangeliou*). It is not immediately clear from the text of Gal 2:11–21 that Paul was successful in this case; Paul segues from the specific case of Peter and other Jews into his discussion of justification by faith, not works of the law. But Peter here stands for a false understanding of justification, a topic that will dominate the next two chapters.

Gospel portraits

The Gospels show immense variety in presentations of Peter. All of them recount a call narrative, portray him as the spokesperson for the twelve in the confession (at Caesarea Philippi in Mark and Matthew), and describe his role in the passion account. But they vary in the picture of Peter that results.

The Gospel of Mark

Mark has a unique interpretation of Jesus' disciples. In sequence, they are called, misunderstand Jesus' message, oppose his need to be crucified, and finally desert him after Gethsemane. Mark's Peter does all of these and more, explicitly denying Jesus. Mark uses the name Peter nineteen times, Simon eight times, but never uses Cephas.[12] He reports the call of Simon in Mark 1:16–17, and notes that Jesus gave him the name Peter in the list of the twelve (Mark 3:16). Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31). He, along with James and John seems to have a special relationship with Jesus (5:37 in Jairus' house; 9:2 at the transfiguration; 13:3 as auditor of the apocalyptic discourse; 14:33 in Gethsemane).

Peter is in many respects the speaker for the twelve (see Mark 9:5, 10:28, 11:21), but also represents their failing relationship to Jesus.[13] He falls under Jesus' negative evaluation of the twelve in Mark 8:17–18, which applies the Isaiah passage describing outsiders in Mark 4:11–12 to the disciples. While Peter confesses Jesus as the "anointed [king]" in Mark 8:29, he rebukes Jesus for the first passion prediction; in response Jesus calls him "Satan," "for not thinking the affairs of God, but of humans" (Mark 8:32–33). He follows Jesus to the High Priest's house (Mark 14:54), where he denies Jesus three times (Mark 14:66–72) after he boldly claimed at the Last Supper that he would not be "offended" because of Jesus, even if everyone else would be (Mark 14:29).

There is no rehabilitation of Peter in Mark, though the young man at the tomb instructs the women to tell the disciples and Peter that they would see him in Galilee (Mark 16:7). But the Gospel ends with the women silent, for they were filled with fear (*phobos*) or perhaps "religious awe."[14] Peter has representative value in

12. Mark 3:16, the list of the twelve, refers to Simon whom he named Peter. Mark 1:16, 29, 30, and 36 refer to him as Simon. Simon only appears after that in Mark 14:37. See *Peter in the New Testament*, 58, note 129.

13. "Precisely because he is portrayed as prominent, on those occasions when the disciples of Jesus do *not* live up to their call, Peter is often the embodiment of their failure." *Peter in the New Testament,* 61.

14. The Gospel ends at Mark 16:8. Later scribes tried to "harmonize" Mark with

Mark: he typifies the disciples before the resurrection. The original readers of Mark's Gospel have as much to base their faith on as Peter—the story of Jesus' ministry interpreted by the annunciation of the resurrection in Mark 16.

The Gospel of Matthew

It is more difficult to describe the role of Peter in Matthew and Luke, since both evangelists preserve many features found in Mark. One must concentrate interest on the modifications each evangelist makes to the Markan texts and to the additions each makes to Mark's text. Matthew refers to Peter as Simon five times: in his call (Matt 4:18), in the list of the twelve (Matt 10:2), in Caesarea Philippi at his confession (Matt 16:16–17), and in Matt 17:25 about the question of paying the *didrachma* tax. He refers to Peter twenty-three times, but never uses Cephas. Matthew largely reproduces the Markan references to Peter. Thus, in the common material, he often simply reproduces Mark.[15] He is again the representative of the twelve when he asks Jesus to explain the parable in Matt 15:15.[16] As in Mark, Peter denies Jesus (Matt 26:69–75). Then he recalls Jesus' prediction, goes outside and weeps bitterly.

As Joseph Burgess points out, three distinctive passages interpret Peter's role in a way that differs from Mark's: Matt 14:28–31, Matt 16:16b–19, and Matt 17:24–27.[17] All three passages have elements unique to Matthew; all occur between the third discourse in Matthew 13 and the fourth in Matthew 18. Matthew adds the incident of Peter walking on the water (14:28–31) to Mark 6:45–52, which recounts Jesus walking on the water.[18] Harrington points to Psalm 69 (68 LXX) as significant for the interpretation: it pictures its singer as calling on God for salvation (69:1, 15) when in danger of drowning (69:2).[19] Peter is "a model both of faith and of lack of faith."[20] Matthew's

Matthew and Luke by adding shorter or longer (Mark 16:9–20, with an added long insertion added in the Freer Codex located in the Library of Congress). See the apparatus in the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece,* 27th revised edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 147–149.

15. Matt 4:18; 8:14; 10:2; 15:15; 17:1–4; 17:24; 26:33; 26:37–40; 26:58; 26:69–75.

16. In Mark 7:17 the disciples ask for the interpretation.

17. *Peter in the New Testament*, 78.

18. Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus,* Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament 1 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1968), 366, holds that Matthew composed the insertion into Mark's story. He details the uniquely Matthean vocabulary in the passage.

19. Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew,* Sacra Pagina 1 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 226.

20. Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14–28 Word Biblical Commentary* 33b; (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 423. Günther Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew,* by Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Hans Joachim Held (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963) interprets the passage as a model for the church. The term *oligopistos* (Matt 14:31) is a favorite term for Matthew: 6:30 (par. Luke 12:28), 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; Grundmann, *Matthäus,* 366. Other unusual terms include *ta hydata* (14:28, 29); *keleuein* (14:28), *katapontizein* (14:30), and *distazein* (14:31). See Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus,* Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament 1 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 275, also argues for Matthean composition of the insertion.

editorial changes to the Markan story stress the significance of Jesus. Peter appeals to Jesus in words the Old Testament uses in an appeal to God: "Lord, rescue me" (*sôson me*, cf. Matt 8:25). His words imply faith in the middle of lack of faith (cf. Matt 14:31). Mark ended the story with the disciples wondering who this Jesus might be; in Matt 14:33, the disciples prostrate themselves before him and acclaim him: "Truly, you are God's Son," a title based on 2 Sam 7:14. Peter's faith in the middle of lack of faith reveals Jesus' true identity.

Matt 16:17–19 inserts a Petrine passage into Mark 8:27–30 (the Confession at Caesarea Philippi, Matt 16:13–20) in a similar manner. Peter confesses Jesus as "the anointed one (the Messianic King), the Son of the Living God." This is the first time a disciple calls Jesus Messiah in Matthew. In response, Jesus addresses Peter with a beatitude crediting him with receiving a divine revelation (16:17). Jesus goes on to give a second revelation ("and I say to you") in which he plays on the word rock (*petra*) in relation to the assembly (*ekklêsia*).[21] The usual translation for the term is "church;" "assembly" is a more accurate translation; it is the citizens of a *polis* gathered to function as the legal or judicial body for the city.[22] The translators of the Septuagint used the term to translate *edah* or *qehal*, terms for the congregation of Israel, the people of God. When Matt 16:18 says that Jesus calls Peter the rock on which he (Jesus) will build his *ekklêsia*, Isa 51:1–2 shimmers in the background:

> Look to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.

Yelammedenu, a later Jewish homiletic Midrash, says that when a king planned to build a palace he dug in several places seeking proper ground for a foundation; at last he struck rock beneath, and said, "Here I will build," so he laid the foundation and built. Just so, when God sought to create the world, God examined the generation of Enosh and the generation of the Flood, and said, "How can I create the world when these wicked people will rise up and provoke me to anger?" When God saw Abraham who was to arise, God said, "Now I have found a rock (*petra)* on which to build and establish the world." For this reason He calls Abraham a rock (Isa 51:1–2).[23]

Jesus stresses that Peter could confess him only because Jesus' Father had revealed Jesus' significance to him.[24] Then Jesus

21. Matthew alone among the four Gospels uses the term *ekklêsia* (Matt 16:18; 18:17).

22. *Lidell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, with later reprints and supplements) s.v., defines it as "assembly duly summoned," and notes that in the Septuagint it is "the Jewish congregation." *BDAG*, s.v., defines it as "a regularly summoned legislative body, *assembly.*" In relation to the New Testament usage *BDAG*, s.v. 3.b, states "the term *e*. apparently became popular among Christians in Greek-speaking areas for chiefly two reasons: to affirm continuity with Israel through the use of a term found in Gk. translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, and to allay and suspicion, esp. in political circles, that Christians were a disorderly group."

23. George F. Moore, *Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954 originally published 1927–30), 1.538, cited in T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1950), 202–203.

24. Matt 11:25–27 prepared the way for this statement by Jesus: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you

gives him a new revelation: Peter is to be for Christ's assembly what Abraham had been for Israel, the patriarch from whom it takes its foundation, i.e., beginning. As Abraham's response to God's call was the starting point for Israel, so Peter's confessional response is the starting point for Jesus' people.[25] However, just as Abraham was not repeatable, so Peter's role here is not repeatable. The Matthean community has what Judaism had, a founding father. It is a new community that begins with one who confessed Jesus as the Anointed One, the Son of the living God (Matt 16:16).[26] Peter, the confessor, plays a unique role in the origins of this community, a non-repeatable role. He receives the authority to forgive or not forgive sins. In Matt 18:15–20 the authority to bind and loose, given to Peter in Matt 16:19, is given to the entire community. Bornkamm argues there is a difference between the two passages. Peter is "the model disciple in his ability and lack of ability, in his daring and denying, in everything in relation to Jesus himself."[27] When Matthew writes, says Bornkamm, Matthew stands as the one who manages the teaching of Jesus for the church and so is understood as an authority.[28]

The third unique Matthean passage is Matt 17:24–27, the paying of the temple tax with the coin from a fish. Here Peter is told that Jesus is free, not obligated to pay the tax as the "Son of the King." By implication Peter—and the Christian community—is also free. Peter as a person of faith plays a unique role in Matthew: that of a free person who is basic to the beginning of the Matthean community. As Donfried puts it:

> …, it is certain that for Matthew's community Peter exercises a teaching authority in the name of Jesus, an authority already ascribed to him in Matt 16:18–19. Not only in terms of this pericope but also for Matthew's presentation of Peter as a whole, it can be said that he extends Peter's preeminence from the ministry of Jesus into the church situation that Matthew addresses. As in 15:15 (Jewish food regulations) and 18:21–22 (forgiveness), so here it is Peter who poses a problem facing the Christian community.[29]

The church no longer is obligated to pay the temple tax; here Peter represents the church of Matthew's day. In summary, Peter is the disciple who is the teacher of the post-Easter church, and as such, the rock on which Jesus' assembly is founded. His position parallels that of Abraham in Israel; like Abraham his role is unique, unrepeatable and yet essential.

The Gospel of Luke and Acts

In Luke, as in Matthew, we concentrate in the unique Lukan material, recognizing that Luke also keeps much of the Markan interpretation of Peter. Luke uses the name

---

have not revealed this to the wise and practical minded, but unto infants. Yes, Father, that was your gracious decision."

25. Note that Isa 51:1–2 also mentions Sarah, the only mention she gets after Genesis.

26. This passage has been controversial since the Reformation, since it is the primary passage on which the authority of the bishop of Rome, the Pope, rests. See *Peter in the New Testament,* 83–101. Ulrich Lutz, *Matthew 8—20,* Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 370–377, discusses the interpretation and use of this passage in the subsequent history of the church.

27. Bornkamm, "Binde," 46.

28. Ibid., 47.

29. Karl Donfried, "Peter (PERSON)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5. 258.

Peter nineteen times, Simon ten times (4:38 bis; 5:3, 4, 5, 8, 10; 6:14; 22:31; 24:34), but never uses Cephas.[30] Luke reproduces much of Mark's interpretation of Peter, but makes some significant modifications. Luke-Acts has a clear pro-Peter apologetic. It begins with his modification of the Synoptic call narrative of the disciples (Mark 1:16–20) in Luke 5:1–11.[31] "This is the beginning of the special story that Luke will tell about Simon in his own narrative account."[32] Where Mark 1:18–22 reports the call of two pairs of brothers (Peter and Andrew, James and John), Luke concentrates interest on Peter. The story includes a miraculous catch of fish. It leads to Peter reacting to Jesus as if he had a theophany, falling down before Jesus (Luke 5:8, *prosepesen tois gonasin*).[33] He exclaims, "Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord," for *thambos perieschen auton* (awe had seized him, v. 8).[34] Confrontation with this miracle worker reveals the contrast between them. Jesus responds to Peter alone: *mê phobou* in the singular.[35] This phrase occurs when one confronts a heavenly figure; see Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10; 8:50; 12:32; Acts 18:9; 27:24. It supports the interpretation of the story as containing elements of a theophany. This theophany leads to a commission from Jesus: "From this moment you will be catching people" (Luke 5:10). By "commissioning him for his [Jesus'] own program, Jesus pronounces an absolution that would never be superseded. Not a word is spoken about assurance of forgiveness."[36] Luke likely reacts to an anti-Peter attack on Peter as a denier of Jesus in the context in which he writes.[37]

Perhaps the most significant passage about Peter in Luke occurs at the Last Supper, which Luke presents as a Greek symposium (Luke 22:14–38). Jesus reclines at table with the disciples (*anepesen kai hoi apostoloi syn autô,* Luke 22:14), suggesting a dinner reclining on couches. At the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus gives a farewell ad-

30. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I–IX) Anchor Bible* 28; (New York, et al.: Doubleday, 1981), 564, points out that Luke calls Peter "Simon" before Luke 6:14, where Jesus names him "Peter."

31. See Brown, et al., *Peter in the New Testament,* 109–128.

32. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (I–IX), 564.

33. Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas,* Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament III (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), 115.

34. See *BDAG*, s.v. for the translation. The term is Lukan, occurring only in Luke 4:36, 5:9, 26; Acts 3:10.

35. James and John only come into the story tangentially in Luke 5:10.

36. Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel,* Revised and expanded edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 117. Luke rarely mentions forgiveness. When he does, it is either in Jewish contexts or in traditional material. His conception of salvation does involve *metanoia,* a change of direction in following Jesus. Luke presents Jesus' death on the cross as an evil done to him, as a miscarriage of justice that God corrects by the resurrection. See the threefold pronouncement of Jesus' innocence by Pilate (Luke 23: 4, 14, 22), the statement by the repentant thief (Luke 23:41), and the centurion's words in Luke 23:47. Finally, Peter's sermon on Pentecost cites Ps 110:1 in Acts 2:34–35 and goes on to say that God "made him Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

37. Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke,* tr. by David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 102–103, notes the many points of contact with John 21:1–14 (22). He suggests that John 21 is a transformation of Luke's story into an Easter narrative.

dress (Luke 22:12–38).[38] Neyrey, using *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* as control model, finds four elements common to such farewell speeches: 1) prediction of death; 2) prediction of attacks on the speaker's followers (Luke 22:31–34); 3) urging of appropriate behavior (Luke 22:24–27); and 4) commission for future action (Luke 22:32).[39] These four elements are also found in Jesus' upper room discourse in John 13–17.

During the symposium conversation Jesus announces his death (Luke 22:15, 22), relating the bread and cup to his death. Luke then notes the prediction of Judas' betrayal of Jesus (Luke 22:21–22), which leads to a dispute among the disciples about status (Luke 22:23–24). This, in turn, leads Jesus to describe their relationship to one another as service (Luke 22:25–27). He then describes their future inheritance[40] based on their fidelity to him: they will eat and drink at his table and judge Israel from thrones (Luke 22:28–30). Luke 22:35–38 describes their mode of life after his death. Luke inserts a unique speech to Peter between these last two sections: Jesus' warning to Peter about Satan's testing and his commission to Peter to strengthen his brothers (and sisters?) after his turning back (*epistrepsas,* c.32), thus preparing for Peter's significant role in Acts. Donald Senior says of this passage, "Peter is an example of how loyalty, weakness, and ultimate redemption can all exist in the same person."[41]

Luke omits the negative evaluation of the disciples found in Mark 8:14–21 and does not include Peter's objection to Jesus' first passion prediction after Luke 9:21, as Mark 8:32–33 does. On the other hand, Peter appears as spokesperson for the disciples, e.g., in Luke 12:41, where his question sharpens Jesus' statement about vigilance (see also Luke 8:45 and 18:28).[42] Such activity prepares for Peter's leading role in Acts. Luke also mentions that Peter acted on the women's announcement of the resurrection by running to the tomb, looking in, and being amazed (Luke 24:12). Finally, Cleopas and his companion (wife?) refer to a resurrection appearance to Peter in Luke 24:34.

Acts mentions Peter fifty-six times, Simon thirteen times, but never uses Cephas. Peter clearly is the leader of the apostles in Acts. He proposes the election to replace Judas in Acts 1:15, preaches the great sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14–35), deals with Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1–11), checks out Philip's preaching in Samaria (Acts 8:14–25), preaches to Cornelius in Acts 10:34–43, defends this action before Jewish Christians in Acts 11:1–18, and makes a decisive speech about proclamation to Gentiles in Acts 15:7–11. Acts makes clear what strengthening the brothers meant in Luke.[43] Peter appears as a model missionary in Acts 1—15, in favor of the mission to non-Jews.

The Gospel of John

John refers to Peter thirty-four times, to Simon twenty–five times, and uses Cephas only once (John 1:42) in the Johannine call narrative.[44] John 1:40–42 has a unique

38. Jerome Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke's Soteriology* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), 5–48.

39. Ibid, 7.

40. *diatithemai,* v. 29, is a technical term.

41. Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), 75–76.

42. See Brown, et al., *Peter in the New Testament,* 113–114.

43. Ibid., 39–56.

44. Nine occurrences of Peter are in John 21, an appendix to the Gospel by a different writer. Taken together with the rest

call narrative for Peter; he is not a fisherman and is called because Andrew, his brother, follows Jesus first and seeks him out. Jesus immediately calls him Peter, but does not give an interpretation to the new name. "Perhaps he was aware that Peter's subsequent career would not bear out" the interpretation that the name denoted a change in character.[45] John's story of Peter's confession in 6:66–71 presents Peter as speaking for all the disciples (he speaks in the first person plural!); the confession is not a major turning point in the narrative, as it is in the Synoptic Gospels, though it does end the Galilean ministry in John. Thus, the material similar to the Synoptic Gospels bears a very different interpretation.[46]

Peter plays a major role in the Passion account. In John13:5–12 Peter's dialogue with Jesus at the foot washing clarifies what Jesus is about. The washing is a purification rite and a model for future disciple action. Peter does not understand at first, and then impulsively asks for more than Jesus, the host at the meal, offers. Later in the chapter Peter impulsively states that he would give up his life on behalf of Jesus (13:37), which leads Jesus to predict Peter's denial (John 13:38), which takes place in John 18:15–18 and 18:25–27. There is no prediction of his future leading role, as there is in Luke, no prediction of his foundational role for the church as in Matthew.[47] Indeed, in John 19:26–27 Jesus sees his mother Mary and the "beloved disciple" standing at the foot of the cross. He says that in the future they are to be in the relation of mother and son.[48] In my opinion, John uses this fictive familial language to describe the future church. When Jesus dies John says *paredôken to pneuma,* literally "he handed over the Spirit" (John 19:30). John thus describes the beginning of the church at the cross, where he is glorified. Peter is not the foundation of the church here. It is striking that John 20:3–10 has Peter and the "beloved disciple" both run to the tomb of Jesus, both go into the tomb and see the burial cloth, but only the beloved disciple is said to see "and believe" (John 20:8).

John 21 is an appendix to the Gospel, written by someone other than the writer of John 1—20.[49] The vocabulary in the chapter differs from that in chapters 1 to 20.[50] The writer probably drew on the same tradition that Luke used in Luke 5:1–11. For the first time in John, Simon Peter acts as a fisherman; six other

of the Gospel, John has more references to Peter than any other New Testament text.

45. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), 152.

46. "John agrees with the Synoptic Gospels in many features concerning the role and character of Peter; yet much of the material that John reports about Peter is not the same as what is reported in the Synoptic Gospels." Raymond E. Brown, "Peter in the Gospel of John," in *Peter in the New Testament,* 129.

47. Brown, *Peter in the New Testament,* 133–139 compares Peter to the "beloved disciple." This recurs in John 21.

48. Barrett, 459.

49. "It is, however, simpler to assume that another than the Evangelist wrote the chapter, since it has an emphasis on the situation of the Church and its leaders beyond anything in the body of the Gospel." George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 396. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 700–702, details the linguistic and vocabulary peculiarities of John 21 and gives other arguments to support the authorship by a different hand.

50. Barrett, 479, summarizes the data.

disciples (Thomas, Nathaniel, the sons of Zebedee, and two unnamed disciples) accompany him. But Peter is the center of attention. When Jesus learns they have caught nothing, he instructs them to throw their net on the right side of the boat—and they catch 153 great fish. As in Luke 5 the stress is on Peter. He dresses (he was nude), jumps into the water, and comes to Jesus. "The main point seems to lie in the association and contrast of Peter and the beloved disciple," according to Barrett.[51] The narrative reaches its climax in the three questions Jesus puts to Peter and his subsequent commands to feed his sheep and lambs (John 21:15–19).

Jesus here rehabilitates Peter after his denial in John 18:15–18, 25–27. He is to serve Jesus' flock as Jesus served him, a role he is now assigned (cf. the foot washing in John 13:1–17). He receives a servant's position, not a leadership position as in Luke-Acts.

The Petrine Letters

1 Peter

There is almost nothing of Peter in this letter. Early Christian traditions suggest that Peter moved west to Rome. Papias, our oldest extra-biblical witness, holds that Mark heard Peter's homilies from which he gathered the stories about Jesus and put them into his Gospel, though without good order.[52] Nothing in the patristic tradition indicates that Peter ever worked in what we call Asia Minor.[53] Yet toward the end of the first Christian century the author writes 1 Peter in the name of Peter, "an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:1).[54] Paul Achtemeier, after an extended discussion of all relevant factors, proposes a date somewhere between 80 and 100 C.E.[55] The writer sends 1 Peter to "the elect resident aliens of the diaspora in Pontos, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia," areas that move in a clockwise circle from the northern coast of Asia Minor. First Pet 5:12–14 mentions Sylvanus, Paul's companion, refers to Babylon (a code name for Rome?), and mentions Mark. This may recall the Roman association of Peter and Mark and may have provided the basis for the ascription of the letter to Peter.

The writer never refers to himself by name again in the letter. He does refer to

51. Ibid, 480.

52. Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 3.39.15. The old Gospel prologue to Mark said Mark wrote after the death of Peter *in partibus Italiae.* Clemens Alexandrinus, *Hypotyposeis* 6 in Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 6.14.6, locates Mark specifically in Rome. There is no suggestion of an association with Asia Minor.

53. 1 Clement 5:4 (ca 95 C.E.) refers to Peter's death in Rome (he "went to his appointed place of glory"). Ignatius, *Rom* 4:3 (ca 115 C.E.) suggests the same. Dionysius of Corinth says that Peter and Paul taught in Rome and were martyred at the same time (in Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 2.25.6). Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereseos* 3.1.2 (ca 180 C.E.) says that Peter and Paul founded the church of Rome, and implies that both died there. The tradition locating Peter in Rome is univocal. References from Karl Hermann Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe Der Judasbrief,* Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 13.2 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1964), 12. No tradition locates Peter in the Roman provinces of Asia Minor.

54. Lutz Doering, "Apostle, Co-Elder, and Witness of Suffering: Author Construction and Peter Image in First Peter," in *Pseudepigraphie und Verfasserfiktion in frühchristlichen Briefen*, eds. Jörg Frey, Jens Herzer, Martina Janssen, and Clare K. Rothschild; WUNT 246 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009): 645–681.

55. Paul Achtemeier, *1 Peter,* Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 50. John Elliott, *1 Peter, Anchor Bible* 37b; (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 138, argues for a date between 72 and 94–96 C.E.

himself in passing in 1 Pet 5:1 as "a fellow presbyter (*sympresbyteros*) and witness of the sufferings of Christ, a participant of the glory that is going to be revealed."[56] These three points suggest the significance Peter plays for the writer. The addressees of the letter are facing pressure from the people among whom they live. Once they were members of the Gentile communities, sharing in their religious life and social customs (1 Pet 1:14). The opposition has apparently become more severe (1 Pet 4:12). The letter claims that Peter occupies the same position as the elders it addresses. Peter has witnessed the sufferings of Christ, sufferings detailed in 1 Pet 2:21–25 and mentioned briefly in 1 Pet 3:18. First Peter makes no mention of or allusion to Peter as denier of Jesus. Rather, as witness of Jesus' suffering, he is uniquely qualified to urge them to imitate Christ in their suffering (e.g., as the letter urges the house slaves in 2:18–21a).[57] He also models for them the manner in which the elders are to shepherd those local Christian groups. Peter both models how to do ministry and encourages the elders to imitate Christ's suffering. The letter crafts a portrait of Peter that relates to the situation of the addressees.

Second Peter

Second Peter is quite different from 1 Peter, a pseudepigraph, probably the last canonical book to be written.[58] The letter was probably written some time in the first four decades of the second century. In this letter Peter is an eyewitness of Jesus' transfiguration, not of his suffering, and this transfiguration is not a myth (2 Pet 1:16–18). He claims that this is his second letter to them (2 Pet 3:1), presumably referring to 1 Peter. The letter defends the writer's position as the orthodox one. In that connection he warns against opponents who twist difficult passages in all the letters of his "beloved brother Paul" (earliest suggestion of a Pauline letter collection) and "the other Scriptures" (3:15–16). Here heretics destined for a fiery end are refuted by an incipient canon of scripture including Paul's letters as well as by tradition derived from eyewitnesses.[59]

Second Peter is the earliest evidence for the discussion about which early Christian writings are authoritative in the church, i. e., the second century begins the discussion of a Christian canon. That occasioned debates about authorship, authority, and proper exegesis of this literature by different parties in the second century. Second Peter takes up such issues. He quietly claims authority as the brother of Paul in the area that Paul evangelized. He was an eyewitness of Jesus' transfiguration (2 Pet 1:16–18) and also of Jesus' glory. But he claims to have the "prophetic word even more certainly." That word had a joint authorship; holy men of God spoke when carried by the Holy Spirit.[60]

56. L. H. Brockington, "The Septuagintal Background to the New Testament use of *doxa*," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. E. Nineham; (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 1–8, presents the Old Testament background very well. *BDAG*, s.v. 1.c., defines it as "The state of being in the next life is thus described as participation in the radiance or glory."

57. There is nothing in the four Gospels to support this claim that Peter witnessed Jesus' sufferings. The writer ascribes a new role to Peter.

58. Jörg Frey, "Autorfiktion und Gegnerbild im Judasbrief und im Zweiten Petrusbrief," *Pseudepigraphie und Verfasserfiktion*, 684–732; 2 Peter, 702–731.

59. Robert Grant, *Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 4.

60. Ancient Greek anthropology held

Therefore true interpretation cannot be individualistic—which is what is wrong with the interpretation of Paul according to 2 Pet 3:14–16. "This presumed origin and setting make the letter apostolic, catholic, traditional, and orthodox. Few later Christian authors would feel able to make such inclusive claims."[61] So now Peter is the defender of orthodoxy, guide to how to interpret the Old Testament (2 Pet 1:20–21), and one who warns against a false interpretation of Paul's letters and the rest of Scripture.

Conclusion

New Testament writers use Peter to represent differing, even contradictory, views for the early Christian communities in different areas of the early Roman Empire. Each writer addresses a different situation. Paul himself gives two different interpretations of Peter, while the four Gospels present Peter in differing interpretations. Moreover, this variant use of Peter continues in the writings of the post-New Testament Christian church.

Peter in early Christian literature and tradition

Papias on Mark

Papias trusted oral tradition more than written documents.[62] "I did not suppose that what came from books (*biblia, scrolls*) would help me as much as what was from a living and enduring voice." According to Papias, Mark got the content of his Gospel by listening to Peter's sermons. He did not leave anything out or falsify it, though he got the order of events wrong, when he composed his Gospel from memory after Peter's death.[63] Papias may have known the tradition reflected in 1 Pet 5:13, which speaks of Mark as Peter's son. For Papias Peter is the guarantor of Mark's Gospel content.

Pseudo-Petrine texts: The Gospel and Apocalypse of Peter

Fragments of Pseudo-Petrine literature from the second century survive. A long fragment of *The Gospel of Peter* survives, together with a fragment of *The Apocalypse of Peter*, in an eighth century vellum codex discovered in 1886–1887 in Akhmim, Egypt.[64] Serapion of Antioch discovered *The Gospel of Peter* in nearby Rhossus. He at first permitted it to be used liturgically; but when he read it, he decided it was not orthodox and would not allow its liturgical use.[65] *The Gospel of Peter* ends in par. 60 as follows: "Now I Simon Peter and Andrew

that only one spirit could inhabit a body at a time. Therefore if individuals were "carried by the Holy Spirit" (*hypo pneumatos hagiou feromenoi*, 2 Pet 1:21), what they said or wrote had a double authorship. Individualistic interpretation contradicted the character of an inspired writing. For an extensive survey of ancient theories of inspiration see Johannes Leipoldt, "Die Frühgeschichte der Lehre von der göttlichen Eingebung," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 44 (1952/53): 118–145.

61. R. Grant, *Heresy and Criticism,* 89.

62. The basic ancient text is given in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.1–7, 14–17, easily available in Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum,* Editio duodecima (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982), 531.

63. Grant, 9.

64. Erich Klostermann edited the Greek text in *Apocrypha I*. Kleine Texte 3, 3rd ed. (Bonn: A Marcus und E. Weber's Verlag, 1933): 2–7. Christian Maurer and Wilhelm Schneemelcher provide an English translation with introduction in *New Testament Apocrypha I: Gospels and Related Writings*, English tr. ed. R. McL. Wilson, Rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 216–227.

65. Grant, 96.

my brother, taking our lines went away to the sea. And there was with us Levi the son of Alpheus, whom the Lord …"—and there it breaks off. It is at least possible that this indicates knowledge of John 21:2 or the use of a common tradition. This is the only mention of Peter in the text.[66]

The fragmentary text of *The Apocalypse of Peter* survives along with *The Gospel of Peter* in the eighth century vellum codex from Akhmim, Egypt (see prior note).[67] Müller dates it to about 135 C.E. and says that "Peter is the decisive witness of the resurrection event" and as such is worthy to receive additional revelations. Here Peter is the medium of apocalyptic revelation according to Müller.[68]

The Kerygma of Peter (KP)

This document survives only in fragments collected from the writings of Clement of Alexandria.[69] It most likely dates before 150 C.E. The *KP* says: "Recognize that there is one God who created the beginning of all things and who has the power to set an end." He "has made all things by the word of his power, that is his Son" (fr. 2.a). The *KP* rejects the worship of the Greeks, who in ignorance worship what God has given them for their use and food (fr. 2.b), though it also claims that Greeks know the same one God (fr. 2.c). The *KP* also rejects Jewish worship, which includes worship of angelic beings. Christians worship God in a new way, since God "has made a new covenant" (fr. 2.d). The apostles are to proclaim the true God (fr. 3.b), drawing from the Old Testament how to understand the torture and crucifixion of Jesus (fr. 4.a). Here Peter's "authorship" supports the proclamation of the one true God over against the Greek worship of idols and the Jewish "worship of angels and archangels, the months and the moon" (fr. 2.c).

The Acts of Peter

This text survives in a Latin text edited by R. A. Lipsius.[70] It gives an account of how Peter comes to Rome. Simon [Magus] is disturbing the Roman church. Peter defeats him in a contest in the Roman forum. The text ends with a description of Peter's death; he is crucified upside down. It is clearly a pious fabrication glorifying Peter as a protector of the church against a false teacher.[71]

66. For a good summary of modern research see Hans-Josef Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction* (London, New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 82–88.

67. Klostermann edited the Greek text in *Apocrypha I*: 8–13. Detlef G. Müller provides an English translation with introduction in *New Testament Apocrypha* II, 620–638.

68. Müller, 625.

69. Greek text in Klostermann, *Apocrypha 1,* 13–16; English translation by Wilhelm Schneemelcher in *New Testament Apocrypha I,* 34–41.

70. R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, eds., *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha,* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959) I: Latin text. Wilhelm Schneemelcher provides an English translation with introduction in *New Testament Apocrypha II: Writings Relating to the Apostles: Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, 271–321.

71. There are other works either ascribed to Peter or that contain stories about Peter. See the entries on "Peter and Paul, Acts of" (*Anchor Bible Dictionary* [*ABD]* 5.263–264), "Peter and Paul, Passion of" (*ABD* 5.264), "Peter and the Twelve Apostles, Acts of" (*ABD* 5.264–265), "Peter to Philip, "Peter, Letter of" (*ABD* 5.265–266), "Peter, Acts of" (*ABD* 5.266–267), "Peter, Martyrdom of" (*ABD* 5.281), "Peter, Passion of" (*ABD* 5.281–282). One can find these texts either in Lipsius-Bonnet or in the texts in the so-called Gnostic library from Nag Hammadi.

Conclusion

Peter wears many hats, so to speak, in early Christian tradition. They range from denier of Christ who does not understand Christ to Peter as founding father of the church, from a defense of Peter to first proclaimer of the resurrected Christ, from reinstated disciple after Easter to proclaimer of the one true God, from model of suffering to guarantor of a Gospel's content, defender of orthodoxy, protector of the church to cleanser of heresy. Peter is clearly a major figure both in the New Testament and in the second century. One can also see how he becomes an authority figure in many ways in the on-going life of the Christian community. I hope that Professor David Rhoads will recognize at least something of his own concern for variety in early Christianity reflected in this brief paper on Peter in early Christianity.

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
2010 - 2011 Events

+ Founders' Day
September 29, 2010
"Ecology, Theology, and the Church:
A Liturgical Manifesto"
The Rev. Dr. H. Paul Santmire, Lutheran pastor and author of *Ritualizing Nature: Renewing Christian Liturgy in a Time of Crisis* (2008).

+ Luther Lecture
November 3, 2010
"Reading Luther as a Postmodern Theologian"
Dr. Kathryn A. Kleinhans, Professor of Religion, Wartburg College

+ Hein-Fry Lecture Series
April 27, 2011
"Hearing the Word: Lutherans Read the Bible with the Ecumenical World"
Speaker to be determined.

All events are open to the public and are held on the PLTS campus. Event details and registration information will be available at www.plts.edu/news.html.

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
2770 Marin Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94708
A seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
A member of the Graduate Theological Union

Book Reviews

The Religion and Science Debate: Why Does It Continue? Edited by Harold W. Attridge. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-300-15299-9. x and 221 pages. Paper. $16.00.

For one hundred years, Yale University's Terry Lectures have offered perspectives on the role of religion in the modern world. They are usually published and this collection of essays provides the research of the most recent Terry Lectures. This volume gathers the thoughts of seven noted American scholars about the relationship of religion and science, especially biological evolution. The essays are accessible to the non-specialist and take readers into new terrain.

In the introduction, Keith Thomson sets a theme for the other essayists by noting that many Americans believe in UFOs and geocentricism: we continue to be superstitious well into the twenty-first century. Likewise, he sees a relationship between science and secularism in Steven Weinberg's contention that "science does not make it impossible to believe in God. It just makes it possible not to believe in God" (p. 10). The question of such secularism is at the center of the inquiry in this volume.

In his essay, Ronald Numbers describes the attitudes of Christians toward biology and geology over the last two hundred years. Early in the nineteenth century, most scholars described their era as an "age of Christian science," since the compatibility between traditional Christian teachings and the natural sciences was emphasized. This was challenged by a wholly naturalistic account of the origin of life and the variety of species. Nineteenth-century scientist Asa Grey and preacher Henry Ward Beecher defended Darwin's teaching, but clearly others, such as the secularist Andrew Dickson White, affirmed an incompatibility between science and religion, which for him, was tantamount to superstition. Others opposed theistic evolution from the perspective of "creationism." Of late, the perspectives of "scientific creationism" and "flood geology" are now taken up by proponents of "intelligent design" with its belief in the "irreducible complexity" of organisms' features. All this defense of traditional views has prompted a virulent new form of atheism that we see in the works of Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins.

In his essay, Kenneth Miller criticizes the intelligent design movement. Advocates of irreducible complexity claim that "complex biological systems are composed of multiple parts, and that the removal of just one part would effectively cause the system to stop functioning" (p. 71). Miller shows that bits and pieces of bacterial flagellums, a standard example for ID, "are indeed functional in a variety of contexts" (p. 72). For all that, Miller disavows a secular perspective. He contends that natural selection is dependent on laws which themselves imply that the universe is one of meaning and purpose (p. 86).

Philosopher Alvin Plantinga notes that science is one thing but the claim that it is enough is a wholly different thing. It is not part of science to make this claim (p. 102). He challenges Richard Dawkins whose reasoning seems to be that if there is no irrefutable objection to the possibility of an idea (evolution as purposeless), then the idea holds true (p. 109). Such reasoning is obviously false. Likewise, Plantinga notes that the randomness of mutations need not entail materialism. Rather, it simply means that they are unrelated to current needs of an organism, and that position by no means excludes God's involvement (p. 117).

In his essay, Lawrence Krauss, like Kenneth Miller, attacks intelligent design. Nevertheless, he affirms Einstein's conviction that "unattainable secrets of the harmony of the universe." Sociologist Robert Wuthnow's essay notes that most people perceive no conflict between religion and science due to their conviction that all reasonable possibilities can be reconciled.

Regardless of one's own personal stance

about evolution, secularism, intelligent design, or creationism, these essays are highly thoughtful, informative, and accessible. These thinkers all aim to affirm that there is an ultimate purpose to the universe. None of them are materialists. Very conservative Christians might be offended with the critique of intelligent design in several of the essays but these essays merit thoughtful attention and reflection. The majority of these essayists affirm teleology as built into the structure of the physical order itself. The laws of chance that permit random mutations are not themselves random but quite orderly—albeit based on probability. The universe is a product of both chance and order for these thinkers. Indeed, there is no chance apart from order. This teleology indirectly is circumstantial evidence for God's existence, even if this is not said in this book. These essays stimulate thinking about matters of origin and are worth our time to read and ponder.

Mark Mattes
Grand View University
Des Moines, Iowa

The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, & Resurrection. By Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007. viii and 248 pages. Paper. $22.00.

Andrea Bieler, professor of worship at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, and Luise Schottroff, professor of New Testament and theology at the University of Kassel, Germany, ask how bodies, bread, and resurrection come together in the Christian eucharist. They believe the meal as presently celebrated in North America emphasizes the work of redemption in Christ Jesus while playing-down God's grace as present in the community's own eating together as the body of Christ. The authors hold that the holy meal must join Jesus' death with that of all suffering human beings so that in the meal the church "remembers" the pain of all oppressed humanity. "Proclaiming the death of the Messiah means telling the truth about human violence" (p. 58). In this way, the eucharist will disrupt convention and usher in new eschatological vision.

Their argument ranges through scriptural interpretation, re-thinking the role of colonialism in understanding apocalyptic and eschatological hope, and seeing the eucharist as a critique of contemporary economic values as they search "for liturgical traditions that do not duplicate the logic of market exchange but point to the traces of an economy of grace" (p. 91). Proposed liturgical changes in the final section of the book make clear the authors' interest in giving voice to present human suffering as the primary *anamnesis*.

The trajectory of argument is, finally, for a greater emphasis on the humanity of Jesus and the life experiences of worshipers being brought into the meal practice, thus privileging immanence over transcendence. The reader may desire further clarification about how contemporary focus on the marginalized helps to further the assembly's thanksgiving for the meal. The authors' claim for this movement is well-articulated. The challenge remains to hold in tension all the polarities of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection so that Jesus' full humanity and divinity is allowed to speak God's grace.

Melinda A. Quivik
Lutheran Theological Seminary
at Philadelphia

Centripetal Worship: The Evangelical Heart of Lutheran Worship. Edited by Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007. 96 pages. Paper. $9.99.

This slim volume, part of the Augsburg Fortress *Worship Matters* series, raises questions about worship in a Lutheran context, and what that means in terms of music, assembly participation, and evangelism. The five essays (all by writers then associated with the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia) lift up the importance of the gathered assembly, "swept up, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into the very center of worship, Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for us" (p. 18).

In the first two chapters, Timothy J.

Wengert introduces, then further explores through the writings of Martin Luther, the concept of worship being centripetal, pulling the Christian assembly toward the merciful God who is at the center. The opposite of this worship mindset would be centrifugal worship, where "we assume that the real action is elsewhere and that worship itself is powerless to anything for us or to us, for that one hour on Sunday let alone for the rest of the week" (p. 12).

Mark Mummert uses the story of Elisha's request for a musician from 2 Kings 3:1–8 as a springboard for discussing how music becomes "the song of God rooted in the praise and proclamation of the gospel" (p. 40). He makes strong argument for diversity in music styles, but cautions against a practice of creating a menu of separate worship options on any given Sunday in a congregation.

For Melinda Quivik, worship is not a passive activity; there are no bystanders. Quivik points to the use of a common lectionary and worship conducted by people gathered to help underscore a sense of liturgical participation.

The final chapter, by Dirk G. Lange, explores evangelism in terms of being sent out from Christ in the center. Sending in worship means "talking about the relationship between the liturgy and what we do with the rest of our lives" (p. 73).

Centripetal Worship would serve well to spark conversation about what is really important in worship among liturgical planners, pastors, and musicians. Study questions at the end of each essay could provide useful starting points for altar guilds and worship committees.

Paul Bailie
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church
San Antonio, Texas

Living Faith: How Faith Inspires Social Justice. By Curtis Paul DeYoung. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007. 186 pages. Paper. $16.00.

The links between deeply-inspired religious experience and passionate work for social change are explored in the book by Curtis Paul DeYoung, who teaches reconciliation studies at Bethel University. The bulk of this volume consists of biographical profiles of three representative leaders in the intersections of spirituality and social justice: German Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, African American Muslim leader Malcolm X, and Burmese Buddhist activist Aung San Suu Kyi.

DeYoung's method is social science portraiture, describing the type of leaders that he calls "mystic-activists," whose social justice activism "compels them to reach passionately toward the divine for sustenance, wisdom, perseverance, and belonging" (p. 7). In addition to the three primary subjects, DeYoung weaves into the conversation quotations and vignettes from the lives of over a dozen other twentieth century mystic-activists. The scope of *Living Faith* is deliberately multicultural, interfaith, and international. Examples range from American civil rights figures (including Fannie Lou Hamer and Howard Thurman) and peace advocates (such as Daniel Berrigan and Dorothy Day) to antiapartheid leaders (like Allan Boesak and Nelson Mandela) to indigenous voices (like Winona LaDuke and Rigoberta Menchú).

This book is neither a comprehensive biography of any of the subjects nor a complete social justice hagiography. What makes this book helpful and unique is its intentionality at making the connections between a person's faith life and actions in the world. For DeYoung, the capacity of these leaders to challenge societal powers and effect change is impacted by the themes of worldview, identity, and revolutionary ethics. Mystic-activists are shaped by spending time with those who live at the margins of societal oppression, rooted in a sense of a common humanity, and informed by a spirit of liberation and empowerment.

Living Faith can provide preachers and religious communities with stories of lived faith put into action. It would be helpful for community organizers and social activists in emphasizing the importance of spirituality in the quest for peace and reconciliation in the world.

Paul Bailie
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church
San Antonio, Texas

The Trinity: A Guide for the Perplexed. By Paul M. Collins. London: Continuum, 2008. 194 pages. Paper. $24.95.

The "Guides for the Perplexed" series is intended to offer "clear, concise and accessible introductions…that students and readers can find especially challenging." My intuition is that readers will indeed find this book challenging. Author Paul Collins has amassed tremendous detail about the church's long discussion over the significance and meaning of the confession that God is triune. It is not likely that one would find as much information about the Trinity amassed in such few pages and, in that regard, this is an excellent overview of the doctrine of the Trinity.

This book delivers: 1) a summary of the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity from the Patristic era to the present; 2) current appropriations of the doctrine with respect to both metaphysical and social relationality; 3) responses to classical objections to the Trinity, such as the Arian, the Socinian, and some feminists; 4) the bearing which the doctrine has on the Christian understanding of God and the nature of the church; and 5) the relation between the economic Trinity (God's life for us) and immanent Trinity (God's own life as such) and the role of the Trinity in divine agency. Collins, an Anglican priest, specifies his criteria for examining theological truth as the same as that of the pivotal Anglican theologian, Richard Hooker: scripture, tradition, and reason; however, following John Wesley, he also adds a fourth: experience (p. 5).

In the wake of Claude Welch's pioneering work, Collins points out that his study must address three Trinitarian matters: first, the relation of the immanent to the economic Trinity, particularly as the revelation of God through Christ and the Spirit in history and salvation; second, the co-eternity and co-equality of the three hypostases; and finally, the internal relations in the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, particularly with respect to the perichoresis or interpenetration of the three persons in their singular agencies. With John D. Zizioulas, Collins affirms that "the rediscovery of the importance of the world of particulars and the economy of salvation and revelation during the course of the twentieth century leads back to the realization that it is necessary to begin with the concrete events, as well as with an event conceptuality" (p. 26). For Collins, the tendency of the last four or five decades has been—with Thèodore de Règnon— to favor the Eastern or "social" model of the Trinity which highlights the interrelationship of the three persons over the Western or "Augustinian" view which privileged the divine unity. Collins believes that this is a false opposition and needs to be debunked. Further research has indicated that Augustine and the Greek Cappadocians were more aligned than has previously been acknowledged. Indeed, for Augustine, the three persons are "subsisting relations" just like Zizioulas' view (p. 59). Hence, for both East and West, there is no unity prior to the Trinity, nor Trinity prior to the unity (p. 61).

Collins' discussion of the social and psychological implications of the concept of personhood as based on the triune relations between the divine persons in Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, and Zizioulas is helpful. Of note is L. Boff's supposition that perichoresis serves in a sense as the model for all reality—since on the basis of contemporary physics one can affirm that every actual event contains aspects of all actual events, even if only in a minor way (p. 82). And, the discussion of "otherness" as an inherent aspect of the triune identity merits attention (p, 122).

This book is fairly meaty for the neophyte of Trinitarian theology. The best audience for this book would be students who have some basic theological understanding. This book accurately portrays the best of contemporary directions in Trinitarian theology.

Mark Mattes
Grand View University
Des Moines, Iowa

Knowing the Context: Frames, Tools, and Signs for Preaching. By James R. Nieman. Fortress Elements of Preaching Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008. viii and 98 pages. Paper. $12.00.

Arguably, one of the most important developments in theological study in the past thirty years has been the emergence of congregational studies with the tools it provides for understanding faith communities. When I was in seminary in the 1970s, my classmates and I were introduced to a diverse and sophisticated array of tools for interpreting texts—still crucial to sound theology and ministry. However, we were given precious few tools for interpreting human communities. At a self-conscious level, hermeneutical approaches to guide the understanding of congregations and the larger contexts in which they exist were almost non-existent. Congregational studies has changed the theological landscape, becoming an important discipline in its own right, and providing frameworks for understanding the ecology, culture, assets, and dynamics of congregational life.

A second, perhaps equally important and related development has been the emergence of Practical Theology as a discipline that seeks to orient theology toward its practical task. This entails shaping the witness and ministry of the church by providing methods to conceptualize and locate various sub-disciplines in relation to theology's ultimately practical task. Don Browning in *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* and Thomas Groome in *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis*, both published in 1991, inaugurated the new discipline of Practical Theology to provide an integrative vision of it's methodology in the service of grounded and transformative ministry. Since then Practical Theology has blossomed and gained credibility as an area of study in its right.

Jim Nieman has worked for some time in congregational studies and Practical Theology. In this brief, yet rich and important book, he employs practical theological methods and harvests the fruit of congregational studies in service of that distinctive activity central to Christian ministry: preaching. Practical theology attends to how the practices of ministry embody theological convictions faithfully and effectively. Nieman's book is rich with the wisdom of Practical Theology and congregational studies.

Preaching as proclamation of God's mercy has the capacity to mediate an encounter with God in the messiness of our lives. Nieman's approach is grounded theologically in an astute sense of that messiness where "reality is labeled in order to obstruct a clear view of the way things are" (p. 8). If the preacher is to address individuals so as to deliver hope, she must attain depth of understanding regarding the distinctive character of her context's messiness. Building on basic pastoral skills—because his is an incarnational approach to ministry and he is acutely aware of the limits of time and energy at our disposal—Nieman shows how intentional and disciplined practice of the skills which most pastors already know in an intuitive way can gain depth through an analysis of the context.

Nieman reflects on preaching in its strengths and limits. Ministry is seen wholistically as preaching works in concert with other pastoral practices. Nieman recognizes that for preaching to matter, the pastor must gain people's trust. He envisions the pastor as curious to understand congregants, approaching them with care and respect; the purpose of fieldwork is not to render judgment, but rather to discover "insight into a faithful people and what drives or constrains their faithfulness" (p. 33). Nieman's pastor/preacher is humble and open to being affected: "The main reason for framing cultural identities in a context should be the self-discovery and personal transformation of the preacher" (p. 27). Moreover, Nieman's pastor has a capacious vision: "Contextual preaching [is] not a matter of style or technique but of persistent theological awareness of what is at stake for a local setting in an encounter with Scripture through preaching" (p. 71). Part of the genius of Practical Theology is the Aristotelian/Thomistic insight that practices ("outward habits") can shape dispositions ("inward habits"). The practices Nieman introduces can

serve as vehicles to help pastors grow in dispositions of care and respect for individuals, openness to being changed by the processes of contextual study, and capacious vision.

Nieman identifies basic tools of ethnographic research that are variations on using one's "pastoral mind" (p. 38). Stressing participant observation and semi-structured interviews, Nieman demonstrates how attentiveness to individuals and to the dynamics of meaning and power can make these practices effective. He also attends to study of artifacts, study of place, and document analysis as tools that can be helpful in identifying the "strong signs" of a cultural context. The purpose of pastoral research is to get hold of these culturally embedded signs. As certain signs are "interpreted iconically [they] manifest an unusual level of depth and significance" (p. 57).

Nieman's theory of symbols or signs carries great theological significance, because signs are the stuff of cultural life that point beyond themselves and become the bearers of God. As such, they are important both to the interpretive task and the preaching task. Following Bultmann, Nieman recognizes that signs can say something about us and something to us, that is, signs function as both mirror and window, Law and Gospel. Sign as mirror (Law) can reveal "distorted language that evokes fixation on ourselves, detachment from others, and shallowness about our common plight" (p. 61). Signs as window (Gospel) indicate "what might be," they are beacons of hope—pointing toward and helping to bring about transformation.

Signs function for interpretation and proclamation not least of all, because they often work by indirection. Strategies of indirection are well-illustrated in the case study that runs throughout the book to animate and give concretness to Nieman's theory. The case study embodies the practical goal which theory seeks to serve. In preaching, the strategy of indirection explores an experience that everyone knows, but is far away from the congregation's current situation. This can help people hear what they otherwise might not hear. "Contextual preaching sometimes calls upon indirection (creating alternative worlds, withholding key connections, or deferring local impact) in order to prepare people to hear what they otherwise might dismiss about their situation" (p. 75).

Here is a vision of preaching that seeks to understand context in depth by harnessing the practices of congregational study—practices that are deepened and disciplined versions of ordinary pastoral ministry. Here is a vision of preaching that aims at disclosing truth about a particular context and how God's mercy can meet that truth. This is a vision that views preaching as one aspect, albeit an essential one, of the overall ministerial task. It is a vision at once realistic and hopeful: "Moving people to deeper honesty is not a short-term proposition" (p. 83). However, *Knowing the Context*, both its vision and practices, can aid mightily in the process.

James M. Brandt
Saint Paul School of Theology
Kansas City, MO

Briefly Noted

The Architecture of Herod the Great Builder. By Ehud Netzer (Baker Academic, $69.99). Netzer, who has excavated a number of Herod's buildings, concludes that Herod not only showed interest in the field of construction but also had a profound understanding of planning and architecture and took an active and important part in the erection of many of his buildings. Six sites are featured in this book: Jerusalem, Caesarea, Sebaste (Samaria), Jericho, Herodium, and Masada. In this paperback edition, Netzer adds a preface in which he describes the mausoleum he has recently discovered on the northeast side of Herodium, which he believes is the burial place of Herod. The book includes reconstructions of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, Caesarea's theater, and the temples of Augustus at Sebaste and Rome. Netzer has training not only in archaeology but also in modern architecture.

Ralph W. Klein

Proverbs 10–31. Anchor Bible 18B. By Michael V. Fox (Yale University Press, $60). This is the second volume of Fox's magisterial commentary on Proverbs and shows the same focus on philology and relationships with other biblical and Ancient Near Eastern wisdom that characterized the first volume as well. In addition to the commentary itself, there are introductory essays on reading Proverbs as a collection, reading an ancient proverb itself, the dating and social setting for the Proverb collection, and concluding essays on the growth of wisdom, ethics, revelation, and knowledge. There are eighty-nine pages of text-critical notes and sixty-three pages of bibliography. Fox dates the proverbs in chapters 10–31 to the time of the monarchy and shows that they come from a royalist perspective. The king provides social stability, justice, and peace. The king is assumed to be inherently just, unless contaminated by the dross of unworthy servants.

Ralph W. Klein

Jeroboam's Wife: The Enduring Contributions of the Old Testament's Least-Known Women. By Robin Gallagher Branch (Hendrickson, $16.95). The five women and two girls studied in this book are Miriam, the sister of Moses in her childhood role; Rizpah, a concubine of king Saul; the wise woman of Abel Beth Maacah, an important character in the story of Absalom; the anonymous wife of Jeroboam, the first king of North Israel; the widow of Zarephath; an Israelite slave girl who sent Naaman to be cured in Israel; and Athaliah, the only reigning queen in the Bible. Athaliah is not as obscure as some of the other women although she is not included in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus despite the other five women who are mentioned there. Branch's methodology is narratology (characterization, setting, conflict, and point of view), and she invites readers to active participation by imagining the scene with the characters and applying the message of the story to one's life.

Ralph W. Klein

Studying the Ancient Israelites. By Victor H. Matthews (Baker Academic, $24.99). This book focuses on biblical and ancient Near Eastern sources and on anthropological, geographic, historical, literary, and sociological methods that make the study of the ancient Israelites more complete. The intended audience is students and laypeople, making this book an ideal addition to church libraries. Matthews addresses the following questions: What do topography, ecology, and climate have to do with shaping the identity of ancient Israel? How does archaeology contribute to our study of Israel? How does critical biblical study lead to new insights? How can social sciences help us reconstruct the world of the ancient Israelites? What do we really know about the history of ancient Israel?

Ralph W. Klein

Judaism of the Second Temple Period, Volume 1: Qumran and Apocalypticism. By David Flusser (Eerdmans, $36). This collection of twenty-one essays by the late David Flusser (1917–2000), most of whose publications were in German or in Hebrew, is a welcome addition to scholarly literature. A number of his essays are also available on the Internet (http://www.jerusalemperspective.com/). Flusser identified the Qumran community with the Essenes and believed that Josephus is a quite accurate witness to their beliefs. He believed that Jesus knew the Essenes but that he rejected their cultish separatism while Qumran theology had more influence on the epistles of Paul.

Ralph W. Klein

Wartburg Theological Seminary

Forming Valued Leaders

Do you recognize **gifts for ministry** in someone you know?

CONFERENCE ON MINISTRY

Considering Your Call **Conference on Ministry**
This weekend at Wartburg Seminary is designed to help individuals explore a call to life in ministry.

Nov. 13-15, 2010 or March 19-21, 2011

EXPLORING SEMINARY

Exploring Seminary **6 Week Online Course**
Learn more about seminary study and discerning a call to public ministry with Professor Craig Nessan.

For more information on all events, classes, programs;
visit www.wartburgseminary.edu

Ask us about
our distance education, residential and online classes for MA, MDiv, and TEEM

Wartburg
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
1.800.225.5987

Preaching Helps

Proper 22/Lectionary 27 – Day of Thanksgiving

How Does Where You Hear Scripture Impact How You Hear Scripture?

I was surprised to find that these little essays of mine are available online.[1] Reading through them one after another, I was even more surprised to see some common themes emerge. I suspect that Fred Craddock is correct: "all preaching [or, in this case, writing about preaching] is to some extent self-disclosure by the preacher."[2] One of the "self-disclosures" that recurs in my essays for "Preaching Helps" is my growing understanding that *where* one reads Scripture impacts *how* one hears and interprets Scripture.

In *What Do They Hear?: Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit and Pew* (Abingdon, 2007), Mark Allen Powell provides a startling study of how differently the pastor and the congregation hear and interpret Scripture. Powell shows how this difference affects what the congregation hears in the sermon, as well as how significant social location—such as age, gender, nationality, race, and education—is when hearing and interpreting Scripture. In *The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context* (Wipf & Stock, 2006) Stanley Saunders and Charles Campbell recount and reflect on their own and their students' experiences of "performing Scripture" in Atlanta's Open Door Community, which ministers to Atlanta's homeless, especially in the area of Ponce de Leon Street.

I spent much of April and May this year traveling to speak in some exciting places with some very interesting people—the ELCA's Montana Synod Ministerium, the Annual Conference of the Association of Parish Clergy, the Church of Sweden's Diocese of Lund, Master of Divinity students at the University of Notre Dame, and pastors and leaders attending the annual theological conference at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Saskatoon. As I engaged these leaders in conversation and listened to sermons in worship, I was struck anew by the ways *where* Scripture is heard impacts *how* Scripture is heard. It occurred to me that, in this age of online (and often free) lectionary exegesis, commentary, and reflection—which is often aimed at the "whole church"—one of the gifts that "Preaching Helps" might offer is particularity. As I recruit writers, I will pay renewed attention to context and ask them to consider the question: "How does where you hear Scripture impact how you hear Scripture?"

My friend, **Kevin A. Ogilvie,** provides the commentary for about half of these preaching helps. Kevin has been president of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Saskatoon since 2006. Prior to assuming the presidency, Kevin served with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as a missionary in Madagascar where he did

---

1. http://findarticles.com/p/search/?qta=0&qt=Craig+A.%20Satterlee&tb=art&qf=all&x=0&y=0

2. Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 23.

evangelism, administration, and directed a seminary. Before that, he served parishes in western New York state, where we were conference colleagues and became dear friends. A graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, President Ogilvie is currently a doctoral candidate in Homiletics at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal at Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. I am hoping and praying that, by the time you receive this, Kevin will have completed the last chapter of his dissertation and I can call him "Doctor." I had the opportunity to hear Kevin preach more than once during the theological conference. I was impressed by his ability to relate experiences from his years as a missionary in Madagascar in ways that meaningfully relate the gospel to God's people worshiping in Saskatoon.

Pastor **Aaron J. Couch** provides the commentary for October 17 and 24. Aaron has lived most of his life in the western United States and has served congregations in California, New Mexico, and Oregon. He is currently co-pastor (with his wife, Melinda Wagner) of First Immanuel Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon, a lively, growing urban congregation in an economically diverse neighborhood. They also share parenting for two growing boys. Before studying for ordained ministry at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Aaron earned a master's degree in Ancient Semitic Language and Literature. He still enjoys the opportunity to be immersed in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Intern **Nicole Wachter** and Pastor **Katrina Holland** offer helps for November 7 and 14 respectively. Nicole Wachter holds a master's degree in Pastoral Counseling from Loyola College in Maryland and is now a student at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. She begins her internship year in August of 2010 in Woodbridge, Virginia, after which she will return for one semester of classes completing her seminary studies in December of 2011. Katrina Holland serves a growing congregation in Jefferson, Maryland, which is nestled in the beautiful Catoctin Mountain area between the artsy-urban Frederick, Maryland and the historic Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

As I write these words, I am beginning a sabbatical, during which I will complete a book titled *Preaching and Stewardship: Proclaiming God's Invitation to Grow* (Alban), as well as some work for the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute for the 2011 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and a project or two for Augsburg Fortress. (I've learned that the minute I say "sabbatical" I need to describe the work, so that people do not mistakenly think I am taking an extended vacation, as some parishioners did when I was a pastor and went to confirmation camp or a national youth gathering.) Rather than sitting at my seminary desk and spending my days teaching seminarians to preach, I will be working out of my home and thinking about money, unity, and baptism. I will also be spending time in New Haven, Ann Arbor, Indiana, Iowa, Upstate New York, and Sweden. Though not a stated goal of the sabbatical, I am anxious to discover how this change of location and perspective impacts how I hear, understand, and interpret Scripture and, as far as "Preaching Helps" is concerned, write about preaching.

I hope that you will get to hear Scripture in new places. We will try to help you to do so in these pages.

Craig A. Satterlee, Editor, Preaching Helps
http://craigasatterlee.com

Proper 22/Lectionary 27
October 3, 2010

Habakkuk 1:1–4; 2:1–4
Psalm 37:1–9
2 Timothy 1:1–14
Luke 17:5–10

Καὶ εἶπαν οἱ ἀπόστολοι τῷ κυρίῳ· πρόσθες ἡμῖν πίστιν. "And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Add faith to us.'" The monumental task of being about constant forgiveness and avoiding giving offence has just been discussed in the verses immediately preceding our reading. Indeed, the entire task of apostleship/discipleship is viewed in grand terms. Getting the world to listen to the message of the in-breaking of the kingdom (16:19–31)—how is that possible? The task is seemingly set to heroic proportions. It is not any wonder then that the apostles ask for the one resource necessary for achieving their purposes: faith. "Fill the tank up, Lord. Add what we need." The response ("If you had faith the size of a mustard seed…") has always appeared to me to be a bit of a put down, a response not dissimilar to "O, ye of little faith," (Matt 6:30; Luke 12:28). Since there has not been a flurry of mulberry trees being uprooted and sent to the sea, it seems no one has had the faith of even a mustard seed!

In the Matthean version (17:20), the object to be moved is a mountain. The verse in this location seemingly underscores the lack of faith of the disciples who were unable to exorcise a certain demon. But is the story about the disciples' lack of faith or does it point in a different direction?

Mustard seeds do not appear in the Septuagint and in only one other parable in the New Testament: Matt 13:31–32, Mark 4:31–32; Luke 13:19. William Willimon points out concerning this parable that mustard, at best, is a small shrub. Indeed, it is a hardy annual that grows in difficult conditions but is hardly a tree. Instead of thinking in grandiose programs and spectacles, Jesus suggests his disciples "think small." Willimon suggests that Jesus would have been more impressed by the faithful pastor of a small congregation who ministers for thirty years with little recognition than by the evangelists and bishops who might have the ear of the prime minister or president.[3]

Here the mustard seed image for faith is followed by a slave's job description. Slaves or servants simply do their job without thinking first of themselves. They do not consider the grand rewards of their labor. That is for the master: a leisurely supper, for example. And when they have done well, they have simply done their duty. In the divine project of the kingdom, stupendous things are happening every day but they are small, incremental movements imperceptible to all except those who are looking for them. Mulberry trees and mountains have and will land in the sea.

"The arc of history is long and bent towards justice," Martin Luther King Jr. once said. The problem for us is that we sit only on the ascending leg of that arc and cannot see so well the downward slope to that promised land. The daily climb on that arc is slow and almost imperceptible. We would rather think in grander programs, grander designs. We want our faith to be so large it could move a mulberry tree instantly, a mountain suddenly, and end poverty or a war today. We would not mind if we could be recognized for it, as well. We mark our success in the church

3. William Willimon, "The Greatest of All Shrubs," in Living by the Word, *The Christian Century* (May 15–22, 1991), 547.

these days not by how many crosses our members adorn but by how many pews they fill.

Jesus invites us to believe the paradox that small actions are where the glory is, where the kingdom matters. Jesus asks us to consider service as its own reward, a duty for those in a realm where mercy has already replaced justice even though the world's rulers and subjects have yet to fully grasp that.

The one who sings a beautiful song for another does not need the approbation of winning American Idol. They already have a place in the celestial chorus, before a more impressive audience. The small faith we have is enough. We do not need to wait for more to do what we have been called to do.

Habakkuk says it this way in the first reading: "For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith." (4:3–4) Reinhold Niebuhr is quoted as saying, "Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime, therefore, we are saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we are saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone. Therefore, we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own; therefore, we are saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness." Faith can and will move mountains. We simply move along that path of faith and God will provide the vision and the victory. KAO

Proper 23/Lectionary 28
October 10, 2010

2 Kings 5:1–3, 7–15c
Psalm 111
2 Timothy 2:8–15
Luke 17:11–19

Foreigners receive and appreciate the saving work of God while locals seem ungrateful for the most wonderful of gifts. Naaman, a foreigner—an Aramean and clearly even an enemy because he has an Israelite slave girl captured on a raid—humbles himself only to find that Israel's God is great and ready to heal. One lone Samaritan finds his way back to Jesus to give God glory. Both discover that 'there is a prophet in Israel' (2 Kings 5:8).

God's healing is offered without price. In both cases nothing is exchanged. In the Naaman and Elisha account this is made explicit by the fact that the gift offered at the end of our pericope (v. 15) is immediately rejected (v. 16) and the point is driven home further when one of Elisha's servants, thinking his master foolish, succeeds in getting recompense from Naaman, and Elisha punishes him with the very leprosy which left Naaman. (vv. 16–27).

For Jesus, healing is a matter of restoration to community and celebration; it is eucharistic (εὐχαριστῶν, v. 16). Thanksgiving is the proper relationship between humans and God and among humans themselves. I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. Richard Jeske[4] for the insight that the collection from Corinth to the suffering saints of Jerusalem was a strategy of Paul's so that the Jewish Christians of

4. Richard Jeske taught New Testament at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. The insights are from lectures heard between 1978 and 1982.

Jerusalem would be obliged to give thanks to God for their Gentile brothers and sisters in Macedonia. Thanksgiving to God creates relationship among people. Of particular importance here is the understanding that healing is not a commodity to be bartered but a gift to be celebrated.

At the beginning of the story of the ten lepers we read that they lifted up their voices (ἦραν φωνὴν , v. 13). Later, when the one returns to give thanks we read that he praised God in a loud voice (φωνῆς μεγάλης, v. 15). Weak voices of supplication are transformed to loud voices of praise to God. Of the nine who did not return we have no report that their healing failed. It seems they are healed, ("…if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself" 2 Tim 2:13). It is the loud voice of the Samaritan that forms the community of thanksgiving to God.

Is health care a commodity? That's the national and international debate of the current age. For many years now, Western medicine has seen the healing arts as a fee-for-service enterprise. Even though the medicine and the treatments are paid for, however, one can still hear the loud voices of today's "Samaritans" giving praise to God for healing along with the those who "raise their voices" in supplication.

In the health clinics and hospitals of the Malagasy Lutheran Church the motto, "We treat. Jesus heals," is boldly displayed. The connection between God's grace in health and our science often seems lost. Recently, a television documentary described ancient Tibetan medical practice that was originally a specialty of the Buddhist monks. After the People's Republic of China annexed Tibet, all spiritual references in the ancient practice were excised. The documentary then noted that medicine became a commodity rather than a spiritual practice.

Health is a gift.

A little more than fifteen years ago, I was sitting by the evening cooking fire at a quarterly meeting of a district in the synod where I was serving as the secretary for evangelism in Madagascar. That morning I had witnessed a possession service where, in one of the indigenous religions of Madagascar, someone—usually a woman—tries to become possessed by a *tromba* (spirit of a deceased king). It was a disturbing sight and I was trying to understand it. One of the women said to me that she had had six *tromba* and her sister then chimed in that she had had twelve. I asked the latter how she became a Christian and she told me that once her child had become extremely ill and her husband had asked her to serve the *tromba*. She did and the spirit told her to sacrifice the family's cooking equipment. They did and the child died. "I decided never to serve the *tromba* again," she told me. Later another child became ill and her husband asked her again to serve the *tromba*. She refused and in desperation, her husband took the child to a local church. The child was completely healed. I will never forget her next comment. She glowed as she said it: "When I saw that Jesus heals free of charge, I decided to be a Christian."

Not every supplication is answered with a miracle. Thanksgiving is not a day on the calendar for Christians, it is a life-long attitude, a response to the overwhelming grace of God that hears even the faintest voice of supplication and transforms it into the boldest shouts of joy. KAO

Proper 24/Lectionary 29
October 17, 2010

Genesis 32:22–31
Psalm 121
2 Timothy 3:14—4:5
Luke 18:1–8

Genesis 32:22–31 tells of Jacob wrestling with a mysterious stranger at the river Jabbok. On his way to meet his brother, Esau, Jacob was attacked by a "man" (v. 23). It is likely, however, that the biblical writer understood the stranger to be God, since the name Israel is construed as "he strives with God." The writer also reports that Jacob named the place Peniel (Hebrew for "face of God"), explaining he had seen God face-to-face. Within the book of Genesis, the story of Jacob wrestling with God serves as part of the preparation for Jacob's meeting and reconciliation with his brother, Esau. Jacob's relationship with his brother is, in some critical way, connected to his relationship with God (33:10).

How surprising is it that Jacob can be said to have prevailed against God! By prevailing, Jacob receives a new future. He will no longer make his way in the world by cheating others. God gives him a new name, which also means a new identity, character and destiny. Prevailing comes with a cost, though. Jacob is permanently marked by his encounter with God. His limp will be a reminder of what was required to extract a blessing.

Words of encouragement, exhortation and warning are offered in 2 Timothy 3:14—4:5. Having described Paul's example of fortitude and faithfulness in the face of many trials (3:10–13), the writer turns his attention to the need for the same qualities on the part of Timothy. Certainly he, too, will face opposition and persecution (3:12), but he will find strength and wisdom by returning to the basics, specifically the treasures of the Jewish scriptures. These sacred writings are a source of life because they are "inspired by God" (*theopneustos*), literally "God-breathed" or "God-spirited." The writer clearly regards the Torah, Prophets and Writings as supremely important because they convey what is needed to help God's people live faithfully so that their lives might produce good works.

The author calls on Timothy to be faithful in the work given to him. Even though people will resist the truth, seeking instead to have their desires validated, Timothy must be consistent and resolute about his work, knowing that it will bring suffering. Paul reminds Timothy that, in order to do ministry faithfully, he will need a thick skin. Sobriety will serve him well too.

The story of the widow and the unjust judge (Luke 18:1–8) reminds the reader not to treat Jesus' parables as simple allegories. The arrogant judge cannot be said to reveal the character of God, except by way of contrast. Jesus is less interested in giving his hearer information about God than in provoking his listener to reflect deeply on how to live in response to the God who freely forgives and calls people to new life. Jesus asserts the certainty of God rendering justice in the time and manner of God's choosing. The significant question concerns whether God's people will hold out against all that undermines trust in God.

The focus of the story, then, is the courageous persistence of the widow. We see this in how the parable is framed by Luke's explanatory introduction (the parable is about the need for persistent prayer) and Jesus' interpretive question (asking, in essence, whether God's people will be as tenacious as the widow). The parable

challenges God's people to demonstrate the boldness, even the chutzpah, of the widow who made the judge fearful of a black eye. It is not that God requires persuading. Rather, the point is that faith must be passionate, honest and bold in order to meet the challenges of real life.

Pastoral Reflection

Within the lectionary, the figure of Jacob wrestling all night with God prepares the listener to reflect on the perseverance of the widow in Jesus' parable. Jacob's determination to receive a blessing is mirrored in the widow's unrelenting demand for justice. She persists against the judge's apathy and indifference. Jesus' story invites us to ponder how committed we are to wrestling with God in prayer.

Jacob emerged from his wrestling match with God as a changed man. He had a new name, a new destiny, and a new limp. Might something similar be true for us? It isn't that we must wear God down with our continual prayers in order to "prevail" and get what we want. Rather, the persistent practice of prayer may reveal the kinds of changes that are necessary for our lives. These transformations may be painful (like Jacob's hip?) or disorienting (like being given a new name?), but by them we are led more deeply into our true identity as children of God. As we continue in prayer, God blesses us by shaping our lives to reflect Jesus' way of service, humility and love. Jesus' story also reminds us to be honest about prayer. It can be hard to learn and hard to persist in the practice of prayer. At times it doesn't feel rewarding. It is difficult to see results. We may go through long seasons when God seems silent. And yet, Jesus also asserts the reliability of God's goodness. He suggests that the value of prayer is not so much in securing blessings from God as in providing a lifeline for believers, keeping us connected to the Creator through difficult and challenging times, even until Christ's return. AJC

Proper 25/Lectionary 30
October 24, 2010

Jeremiah 14:7–10, 19–22
Psalm 84: 1–7
2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18
Luke 18:9–14

Jeremiah 14:7–10, 19–22 begins with the people of Judah making confession of sin to God and calling on God for mercy. The verses immediately preceding our reading make it clear that the problem has been a drought. Drought was not understood as a natural phenomenon. Instead, it was seen as a consequence of the people's faithlessness and is specifically mentioned in Deuteronomy 28 as one of the ways in which judgment will overtake the people if they break the covenant.

The lectionary skips over verses 11–16, where God commands Jeremiah, "Do not pray for the welfare of this people." God will not hear their cry or accept their burnt offerings. Only in 14:17–18 does God indicate that the impending horror rends God's heart and that God weeps for the people night and day for the crushing blow that will destroy them.

The theme of judgment runs through the book of Jeremiah. Calamity is consistently understood as God's judgment, specifically as the curses that are consequences for faithlessness to the covenant. The reader should remember that "covenant" is a human concept, applied by analogy to Israel's relationship with God. John Bracke writes, "This text, which associates a drought with God's judgment, incorporates a perspective

about which we need to exercise great care. It is neither helpful nor possible for us to claim that we understand God's intentions through a natural disaster and so equate the destruction caused by a drought, flood, or hurricane with some human sin."[5]

The Pastoral Epistles represent the application of Pauline teaching and authority to the changing situation of the church at the end of the first century. In 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18, the writer has Paul speak of himself as "poured out like a libation," suggesting his death is a kind of sacrifice. He anticipates the end soon, declaring he has "fought the good fight." He trusts that a crown of righteousness is reserved for him and is confident that "the Lord will rescue me from every evil attack." This picture of Paul seems a larger-than-life depiction of the man, viewed by the church at the end of the first century as a heroic giant of the faith.

For all of the potential problems one might encounter in preaching on a text that is pseudepigrapha, 2 Timothy offers a stirring picture of moral courage. It pictures Paul as he faces death, trusting that God's mercy is stronger than death. Having placed himself in God's mercy, Paul approaches the future with a sense of peace. Looking back over his ministry, he is assured that he has been faithful with regard to what God has given him. He hasn't given up. There is no whining or complaining. Paul intends to glorify God to the end.

In Luke 18:9–14, Jesus tells a parable about a tax collector and a Pharisee praying in the temple. An interpretive comment indicates that Jesus addresses the sort of self-righteousness that regards others with contempt. This condemnation of religious pride is grounded in an awareness of universal human estrangement from God, together with gratitude for the surprising goodness and mercy of God.

The Pharisee's prayer is primarily a prayer of thanksgiving. He gives thanks that he is not like other people. By contrast, the tax collector acknowledges his sinfulness and prays for God's mercy. His acknowledgement of unworthiness is accompanied by beating his breast, a sign of grief and sorrow. It is important, however, to resist romanticizing the tax collector. The Roman system of tax farming placed a crushing burden on peasants, forcing many into debt and causing them to lose their land. In a shocking reversal of expectations, Jesus declares that the tax collector, not the Pharisee, is justified before God.

Pastoral Reflection

The enduring temptation for religious people is to think of ourselves as different from others. In truth, it would be inappropriate to pretend that all of the effort Christians put into prayer, worship and Bible study counts for nothing. These things are important, except when it comes to gaining God's favor. It is dangerous when believers begin to treat their own spiritual accomplishments as something significant to God, and even more dangerous to begin comparing one's spiritual life to that of anyone else. We might begin to fool ourselves into thinking we are not sinners, or that we do not share the human condition. That sort of foolishness will erode our capacity to see our lives with clarity, to feel gratitude, to stand in awe of God's wide mercy and great goodness, and to open our hearts in our own unrestrained expression of thankfulness.

5. John Bracke, *Jeremiah 1—29*, (Louisville: Westminster Bible Companion, 2000), 126.

It would be ironic if Christians listening to Jesus' parable ended up giving thanks that they were not like the Pharisee. It would be profoundly tragic if the church, by its treatment of the character of the Pharisee, were to feed the anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism that have played a sad role in the church's history. Although the Pharisee in the parable displays scorn and contempt, he must not be regarded with scorn and contempt. The preacher might consider how to regard the Pharisee with compassion, since his failings so often reflect the failings of Christians. Perhaps showing compassion for the Pharisee will assist Christians in releasing their own need for superiority. AJC

Reformation Day
October 31, 2010

Jeremiah 31:31–34
Psalm 46
Romans 3:19–28
John 8:31–36

ἱλαστήριον ("mercy seat" or "cover" of the ark of the covenant which received the blood offerings during the annual rite for the atonement of sins) is translated by the New Revised Standard Version as "sacrifice of atonement" (Rom 3:25). The mercy seat is first described in Exodus 25:17ff. It is a rectangular slab of pure gold with cherubim on either end. Their wings overshadow the seat itself. This slab of gold sat on top of the ark of the covenant and God promised to meet with Israel and deliver commands above this ornate cover (Exod 25:22). The mercy seat was therefore both a site of ritual atonement through the sprinkling of blood and a place where God chooses to self-disclose to humans, to Israel. The place of atonement is the place of meeting. It is, if you will, an event.

The righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) has been made known in the meeting at that mercy seat. And that righteousness is an active agent, it makes others righteous; it pronounces, therefore, the mercy that the cover of the ark was to symbolize. This mercy cannot be earned, it can only be received. There is no act or sacrifice to perform. Faith, here, is not portrayed as an act of the will, as an assent of the conscience or a movement of the intellect. Instead, it is a relationship enabled by the mercy seat where God will continue to meet God's people.

God's people gather at the mercy seat, aware that they are not of themselves righteous. Hence, we read the conversation in John 8 between the affronted Jews and the offending Jesus. "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." Here the word "to set free" (ἐλευθερώσει) can also mean "to exempt from (penalty)." As there are often word plays in John's gospel, there might be a little toying with meaning here, too. The assumption of the listeners is a political freedom where Jesus is suggesting a much deeper meaning. The Jews in this passage ironically state that they have never been in servitude to anyone, even though their nation was under Roman control. Truth renders free because Jesus, who is the truth (14:6), is the liberating judgment on this world. Jesus stood before the Roman governor Pilate and bore witness to the truth while Pilate could not see truth standing before him. Knowing Jesus, who is the truth, exempts from penalty. The cross becomes the mercy seat, the place where God and God's people are reconciled and meet again.

"I know your type. You have a secret passion for justice. Why don't you admit it?"

"I have a secret passion for mercy," I said. "But justice is what keeps happening to people."[6]

Law and Order, the NBC television program, ended its twenty-year run this spring. North Americans have a passion for justice. The wicked must be punished, the good vindicated and the victims avenged. The series has been good at noting that the law often is full of grey areas and that justice may be more "near-sighted" rather than "blind." Justice happens and sometimes that means that those who were otherwise 'innocent' must pay a heavy price. The classic examples are those who testify only to lose their life or their position. Yet, the television series, as does real life, produced many more nuanced situations. Justice happens but why do we feel so bad about it in the end?

The word "righteousness" found here in the reading from Romans is translated in many versions as "justice." There is a temptation, then, to confuse justice and mercy. They are not the same. God's justice requires a righting of all wrongs, a re-balancing of the moral equation. But just as on *Law and Order*, righting wrongs does not always make things better.

At the mercy seat God meets God's people again. It is truly mercy for it is not dependent on the moral character or purity of those who approach that throne, only on the sacrifice of the One who is our righteousness. It is not an endless cycle of adjudications and adjustments, interpretations and applications, but rather a freeing from servitude, even the servitude to being correct and right. Truth, in which we are sanctified, is God's Word—a word made flesh, having dwelt among us. The deepest truth is mercy, not justice, which shatters all our expectations. KAO

6. Ross MacDonald, *The Goodbye Look*, (New York: Vintage Crime, 2000), 127.

All Saints' Day
November 1, 2010

Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18
Psalm 149
Ephesians 1:11–23
Luke 6:20–31

There is an irony involved in the celebration by Protestants of All Saints' Day. In its origin, All Saints' was considered the catch-all celebration of all the named and nameless martyrs who have been ushered in to the beatific vision. Ordinary Christians might still have to earn their way to that vision by the purgation that followed death. So All Souls' follows All Saints'. Being justified by grace through faith all are ushered into that beatific vision and so the original "catch all" for martyrs has become a "catch all" for all of us.[7]

The readings before us do not represent an easy, "happy-ever-after" story. Daniel certainly describes the apocalyptic vision of succeeding kingdoms and the eventual rule of "the holy ones of the Most High." The suffering of God's people is assumed, not just their victory. The psalm rejoices in God's victory and exults in the possibility of the faithful ones exacting vengeance (149:6–9), which leads us to understand that the psalm was composed in a period of conflict or oppression. Through the use of the words 'a pledge of our inheritance'

7. For a short history of All Saints' see Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Festivals and Commemorations: Handbook of the Calendar in Lutheran Book of Worship*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 411–412.

(ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν Eph 1:14) we understand that we have the down payment for something not yet fully in our grasp. Finally, where Matthew offers only blessings (Matt 5), Luke adds the corresponding woes. Nothing is guaranteed unless we look under the opposites: persecution is a sign of belonging; wealth is a sign of spiritual poverty, etc. The psalmist might take exception to Jesus' injunction: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,…" (Luke 6:27). What all three readings point to, however, is hope—hope in the vindication of God.

And Christians participate in this vindication as part of their very being. "We have obtained an inheritance…" (ἐκληρώθημεν , Eph 1:11) or "We have been appointed by lots…" "Inheritance" here is the meaning by extension of the metaphor. In English, Hebrew, and Greek the word for a section of land and the way it was assigned is the same: "a lot."[8] Remembering that the casting of lots was a means for determining divine will, we understand then that our "inheriting" what is before is a matter of God's purpose and therefore inherent to who we are "in Christ." We have purpose as the saints of God.[9]

The nature versus nurture debate continues to rage on in our society. What is part of our DNA and what do we learn? And here the question can also come from the pericopes for All Saints' Day. Have we learned from our adversity to become people who are more kind, more tolerant, willing to suffer for others in the name of a self-giving love or are we petty and vengeful?

The psalm makes a fairly clear claim on vengeance much as the school wimp suddenly feeling daring with the linebacker as his new buddy. The desire for retribution, for justice, for payback and a rebalancing of the scales of righteousness runs strong in our veins and is certainly a part of our theological DNA. We call it the law. No North American, I am sure, has forgotten Osama bin Laden or will be particularly sad when he is brought to justice. People under oppression want justice and, of course, justice should not be denied them.

Ephesians 1:11 however suggests that we have a new DNA, something infused in our beings, which has been prescribed to us as our "lot." We now set our hope on Christ rather than on justice or retribution. Luke describes how it looks, turning the other cheek, etc.

During World War II the town of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in the Haute Loire district of France hid and helped transit to Switzerland roughly 3,000 Jews. It was not organized. These Reformed Church Christians, descendants of the Huguenots, were even regularly reminded that lying of any kind was evil and not to be engaged in. If they had been asked if they were hiding Jews, they would have said yes. Luckily, they were not asked, though searches were common. When asked why they did it, they simply responded that they were Huguenots—they knew persecution and they were Christian. It was part of their DNA.

We remain sinners but sinners with a new DNA, one that trusts in Christ and needs no other hope. KAO

8. "κλῆρος" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. III* ΘK, Gerhard Kittel, ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 758

9. See also, "κληρόω" in Kittel, 764–765.

Proper 27/Lectionary 32
November 7, 2010

Job 19:23–27a
Psalm 17:1–9
2 Thessalonians 2:1–5, 13–17
Luke 20:27–38

In the reading from Job that is framed by persecution, Job dares to hope for something more. Job needs to keep his plea for justice alive. He has argued the case for his innocence with the friends, but they have been unwilling or unable to accept the intrinsic worth of his claim. Job has appealed to God for a fair and just hearing, but God has refused to answer him. His desire for his testimony to be "written," "inscribed," and "engraved" is clear as each verb that signifies some means of preservation becomes more permanent than the last. It is to last "forever," beyond the friends' reprimand, beyond God's silence, and beyond his own unanswered cries for justice. Job states insistently what he knows to be true, namely that his redeemer lives. The meaning of what Job says here has long been a source of enormous debate. What many Christians assume to be Christ may in fact be something else. Who is the redeemer in whom Job believes? The redeemer ("go'el") that Job expects to come to his defense may in fact be the same God he yearns to see and ultimately does see (42:5). Perhaps the "go'el" is a third party litigator who will stand between him and his accusers (both divine and human) and argue his case for exoneration. It is in this text that Job returns a third time to the idea that someone, a "go'el", will come to his defense against God and the friends. Job is certain that his redeemer is alive and will come to his defense. For Job, the question is when will this vindication take place?

From a Christian perspective, it is tempting to interpret Job's vindication "at the last" as a witness to the resurrection. However, it is unlikely that this is what Job is referring to. Job ultimately rejects a hope that is without foundation. He also has become increasingly obstinate that a post-mortem vindication cannot satisfy the essential need for justice. There must be some place among the living where the cry for justice gets a hearing (16:18). It is also important to remember that ancient Israelites did not as a rule believe in life after death or the resurrection of the body. Job himself states this view: "mortals lie down and do not rise again; until the heavens are no more, they will not awake or be roused out of their sleep" (14:12). Job knows that a redeemer will rise up and vindicate him after his death, but what he most desires is justice while he is still alive. He wants to be present when his case is brought before the court, to plead his own case, and most importantly, to see God for himself. Buried deep within Job's consciousness is the hope for something more (19:23–27). This hope is real, and it beckons him onward. There is a redeemer, and Job can be certain that in the end the declaration about life will be more than what the present allows him to say.

The gospel reading assigned for the day, comes after a series of events. The authority of Jesus is questioned by the chief priests, scribes, and elders. Jesus followed up their questioning by telling them the parable of the wicked tenants. After hearing this parable, the scribes and chief priests realized that Jesus was telling this parable against them and they wanted to go after him, but feared the people. They then sent spies who pretended to be honest in order to trap Jesus by what he said and then planned to hand him over to the jurisdiction. So they asked him the question regarding taxes and to

whom they are paid. Jesus, who was aware of their efforts to trap him, turned things back on them and they were unable to trap him after all. Our gospel reading is placed here.

Although the Sadducees appear a few times in the book of Acts, the gospel for this day includes the only occurrence of the Sadducees in Luke. Luke reiterates the fact that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees were of the belief that "eternal life" was understood as producing heirs that would continue tending the land. Knowing this piece of information helps the reader to understand from where the question is coming. In the Sadducees' mind, when a brother died it was the responsibility of the other brother to take his brother's wife and produce an heir for his brother to carry on his brother's name, thereby providing "eternal life" for the dead brother.

Jesus deals with the Sadducees' assumption that resurrected life was the same as life before death. Jesus also deals with the assumption that bearing children was a necessity for eternal life.

The Sadducees and Job are all of the same belief when it comes to life after death or the resurrection of the body. God allowed this "test" to happen to Job, as we could read in the first chapter of Job in the conversation between God and the ha-satan. Like the Sadducees who are testing Jesus, we may say that Job, too, is putting God to the test.

What we find in both of these readings is that it seems to be a part of human nature that we want to be in control and we want to know. Our testing can often be to understand more fully just how God is in relationship with each of us. Sometimes life is difficult and that relationship with God can feel strained. Deep within our own consciousness, we, too, have hope for something more—that there is a living God and redeemer for us all. NW

Proper 28/Lectionary 33
November 14, 2010

Malachi 4:1–2a
Psalm 98
2 Thessalonians 3:6–13
Luke 21:5–19

I serve a congregation that identifies itself as a rural community. Decades ago, fertile and fallow farmlands made way for sprawling subdivisions. Where once homogenous crop planting flowed in gently curving lines across the undulating valley floors, now rigidly straight houses stand sentinel against predictable history. It is a kind of kingdom shattering, where generations of identity shaping have, for some, been painfully tilled up to make way for progress. Yet, is the last word one of progress or promise?

As the final prophetic writing of the Book of the Twelve, Malachi's voice, by virtue of canonical placement, gets the last word. The northern kingdom of Israel had fallen to Assyria and less than 200 years later southern Judah fell to Babylon. When the Persian empire claimed power a mere 50 years after Judah's fall, there seemed to be hope that Judah would be restored under this new rule. Malachi, unlike the prophetic book of Zechariah immediately before it, never names a Judean king. For Malachi, God is king, and Israel and Judah are God's people, yoked to God in history and claimed by God in ongoing covenant.

Just before our passage today, the prophet lifts up God's covenant fidelity with Jacob. This is the healer God: the one who saved Jacob from death, the one

who both makes and keeps the covenant, and the one who continually searches for those who embrace the living covenant as healing and relationship with the Healer.

While omitted in our reading today, nature shows us that if their stalls are not clean, the calves cannot leap. Healing wings bring this truth as well. In 2:17 the prophet asks, "Where is the God of justice?" The prophet closes the book with the answer. God will bring the "sun of righteousness" with healing in its wings. God's dividing line parses brokenness and restoration. God chooses restoration for God's people.

Luke brings us a message of Jesus the Christ that draws the dividing line between brokenness and restoration through the center of our own lives. John the Baptist, knee-deep in the waters of new life, called up a vision of a winnowing fork-wielding Son of righteousness. Restoration in his presence will also come from the inside out.

Our gospel reading for the day is a portion of Jesus' final days of teaching in Jerusalem's temple (20:1—21:38). Unlike Matthew and Mark, only Luke's story places these words within the very walls to which Jesus is referring. Jesus begins this final teaching discourse by answering a question about his perceived authority with his own question to the religious establishment's understanding of baptismal divinity and identity. He evokes the baptism of his cousin John and thereby provokes further ire toward him by the chief priests and scribes (20:1–8). Immediately prior to Jesus' prophetic words in our reading, Jesus has just viewed and acknowledged the poor widow and her meagerly extravagant offering. Restoration calls forward from Malachi as, in God's eyes, what could be viewed as a pittance is relished as living in right covenantal relationship.

What was just dimly reflected in Jesus' eyes was witnessed with graphic horror in Luke's. It is not unreasonable to think that buildings were not the only things pillaged and destroyed when Jerusalem's temple was razed. Human lives were lost, or worse yet, they were battered and invaded and left to rot as withered shells. This is the cost of violent loss, and Luke does not spare us in its recounting.

These words draw us into the end of the lectionary year. In truth, there is a very real chance we already have our eyes focused on the manger. We may already feel the cultural tug of Christmas consumerism pulling at these gospel words.

We will turn over this burning, purifying, cleansing good news to the smallest among us. Little Brady will wrap himself up in bathrobes and little Brittney in angel wings, and they will shyly proclaim the good news soon to be birthed in all of us. But I wonder—what if little Brady were to return just four months later and portray the crucified Jesus? Who of us could stomach that graphic image?

The gospel makes no apologies for our discomfort. It makes no excuses for the existence of pain and suffering. Rather, the gospel names them and claims them as places where our relationship with God is broken. It brings gospel cure, delivered on healing wings that fan the burning flames of sin into submission.

When confronting endings, there is the dual need to both look back and forward. As we turn our eyes to endings and new beginnings of the church year, we point from the soon-to-close Pentecost's six-month growing season to an encounter with Elizabeth just two weeks later. She, too, will be in her sixth month, and there is something about that commonly shared time of growth that will reach over from the new beginning and yolk this day's

ending to it. Endings will weave themselves together with beginnings. Violent pain will bear destruction *and* new life. Suffering will produce abject grief *and* cosmic joy.

Luke uses the same word for sign (*symeion*) in v. 7 of this text as he does earlier in 2:12 to describe the newly born Jesus in the manger. In the middle of November, a teacher asked her third-grade students to make Christmas cards. Her intent was to have them professionally printed and sent to the homes of the entire class and overseas to service personnel. She was so disturbed by one child's card that she called his parents, a pastor and his wife, into her office. On the front of the child's card was a manger, from which a cross was rising up. Inside the card read, "What Christmas leads to.... Love, Me." KH

Christ the King/Reign of Christ
November 21, 2010

Jeremiah 23:1–6
Psalm 46:1–11
Colossians 1:11–20
Luke 23:33–43

The story ends as it begins. What Gabriel announced to Mary (Luke 1:32) is now proclaimed on the placard above Jesus' cross: "This is the King of the Jews," (Luke 23:38). So at the end of the liturgical year we start where we began, with Christ the King. Endings as beginnings might be a way of understanding the Cross event. The two criminals crucified with Jesus have an exchange, the first mocking Jesus as a failed messiah and the other in seeming reverence believing in spite of the obvious contradiction what the cross represents at the moment: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." So Joseph asked to be remembered by the chief cup-bearer when the latter was restored to favor with Pharaoh (Gen 40:14). Unlike the cup-bearer who took two years to remember his prison companion, Jesus proclaims, "Today you will be with me in Paradise," (23:43). There is no hesitation, no delay; that kingdom is now, the effects are made present by the cross immediately, not in some future of undetermined date.

Perhaps the cliché of a death-bed conversion is also generated here. There are two attitudes toward Jesus displayed—one of mocking, one of reverence. There is no time given here for "amendment of life," for the one criminal to demonstrate by his changed life a truly repentant heart. He is simply ushered by Jesus into paradise. The other criminal is rebuked as being one under judgment judging and ridiculing another. Belief or trust in Jesus recognizes, therefore, that mutual recrimination and abuse neither serves any real purpose (all are going to die) nor does it open any possibilities (the hope of paradise). One need not be on a cross at any particular moment to understand that.

Kings and people in high places give out favours. Remembering those who have helped your cause is the normal process of political advancement. Trust in the one with authority is the only way, in human society, that power can be managed. It is therefore normal that one would turn to any potentate and seek to be remembered, to receive gifts and to be cared for. In Ephesians (4:8) we hear this made explicit: "Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'" So Paul says in Colossians that we give thanks, "to the Father, who

has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light," (1:12). The eternal King who is described here as the one in whom, "all things in heaven and earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers…" (1:16).

The inheritance, the "share of the lot," (εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου , 1:12) which we have is guaranteed and it is not contingent except on the good will of the monarch. And because we know that "through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things" (1:20), that "share of the lot" is ours now. Today we have been promised paradise.

In our area a new liturgical event has sprung up in Advent. A special worship service is observed for those who have lost a loved one and find the approaching Christmas season too sad to face. The service is called "Blue Christmas." I wonder often if somehow the meaning of Advent has been lost or the practices that tell us our hope is not grounded in this world have become too confused with the Christmas marketing that has already saturated us before the Sunday of Christ the King. So we need a Blue Christmas?

Here in Luke's Gospel two without hope converse. One rails against his fate and mocks the Lord of Life. The other, in spite of the obvious hopelessness of his plight, believes. While the Easter white can be chosen as the liturgical color of the day the focus in the pericope is on Good Friday. Here precisely is the point where a "Blue Christmas" becomes a gate to paradise. The loss and the suffering are not avoided. The last moments of sinners on a cross can hardly be dismissed as painless or easy any more than can the grief of those who mourn and their loneliness be wished away by the trappings of an economic Christmas season.

In 1989 a made-for-television movie, *Long Time Companion*, depicted the lives of a community of gay men living through the beginnings of the AIDS crisis. The story follows their losses as the "companions" die. At the end of the film, the surviving friends walk the beach and the beach becomes a joyous party scene with those who have died back to celebrate. The song that plays over the scene states well the hope we have while acknowledging the loss:

When I cleaned out your room
I painted the walls to cover any memories
But still it seemed like you were hovering over
Still out there keeping an eye on me

Yeah I never really was able to tell you
That's why I'm telling you now that you can't hear
It's not gonna be the same around here without you
And I'm holding back a flood behind one tear

And then comes the statement of hope – an alternate vision of "paradise."
And we'll go down to the post-mortem bar
And catch up on the years that have passed between us
And we'll tell our stories
Do you remember when the world was just like a carnival opening up.[10]

Like the thief on the cross, today paradise is ours, and what stories we will tell! KAO

10. "Post Mortem Bar," Lyrics by Zane Campbell, (www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/z/zane_campbell/post_mortem_bar.html).

Day of Thanksgiving
November 25, 2010

Deuteronomy 26:1–11
Psalm 100:1–5
Philippians 4:4–9
John 6:25–35

The feeding of the multitude is the one miracle reported in all four Gospels. What John does with the text is somewhat different than the Synoptic Gospels. In Mark's Gospel, for example, there are two feeding stories—one of 5,000 and one of 4,000—both followed by scenes in a boat where the bread miracle is highlighted again. In Matthew's Gospel, one story is preserved and again the boat ride and stilling of the storm follow. Luke removes the boat stories from the account and adds the location as Bethsaida ("House of Fishing"). John maintains the boat ride and water miracle after the feeding of the 5,000 and then adds this discourse on the meaning of the bread, which is our reading. In Mark's account, and if, as a majority of scholars suggest, Mark is the first written gospel, the emphasis upon the bread both in the feeding stories and in the boat scenes suggest that what Jesus provides is sufficient, even if it is only one loaf (Mark 8:14–21), which might be seen to be confirmed by the Syrophoenician woman's commendation from Jesus for understanding that even the crumbs in Jesus' kingdom are sufficient for the whole world (Mark 7:24–30). John takes this story and makes this understanding theologically explicit as Jesus says, "I am the bread of life," (John 6:35). He also associates it with the manna provided in the wilderness (John 6:32; Exod 16:4, 15). Bread and salvation are inextricably linked.

In the Deuteronomy passage, the Israelite is encouraged to offer sacrifice, not because the harvest has been good and there is a plenitude of food, but because the Lord has brought him and his ancestor out of bondage in Egypt and into the land that has provided for his or her sustenance. Thanksgiving is for salvation and is therefore appropriate in times of plenty and in times of want. Jesus, in John, draws the line closer. "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world" (v. 33).

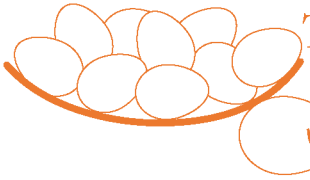
Paul adds to this line of thought by pointing out that supplication is made "with thanksgiving," (Phil 4:6). An implied "because" might then be inserted. What is often spoken as the *Votum*, or benediction following the sermon, is here not in the optative mood ("*May* the peace of God which passes…keep your hearts…") but rather in the future indicative ("The peace of God which passes… *will* keep your hearts…"). Thanksgiving to God is for the entirety of what God has done for us, including, but not limited to, sustenance.

One Christmas morning several years ago, I was driving out of the capital of Antananarivo, Madagascar, to the little mission congregation in Mahitsy where I monthly presided at the sacrament. Perhaps because it was a holiday unlike Sundays, I noticed quite a few poor people in the refuse collection sites looking for food. Every garbage bin had a person sifting through it. I was doubly bothered by this sight because my little congregation was meeting over a bakery where fresh baguettes were made and that odor wafted upward to us in wonderful ways. By our standards, the members of the congregation were not rich either, but they had food on the table. I was struck by the contrast and the fact that it was a feasting holiday and these poor folks in the "dumpsters" were finding

sustenance among the putrid remains of others' "feasts." "I am the bread of life," Jesus said. While I was distributing Holy Communion it dawned on me that Christ was not absent from those "dumpster divers." Wherever there is sustenance, Christ is present—named or unnamed. Thanksgiving is the only response.

Our North American services of Thanksgiving—whether in November (US) or October (Canada)—are often criticized as excessive displays of gluttony and insensitivity to the needs of the poor. The feast, modeled after the biblical feasts, was not intended to be a show of excess but was supposed to remind the one feasting that the Lord provides and so one need not be stingy, preserving for some future famine. So the manna was eaten every day and not saved. God provides daily.

What has often left me wondering is whether or not those picking through the garbage for their day's meal did not also offer thanks. KAO



The Tithing and Stewardship Foundation

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.

Saturday, October 16, 2010 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	**Re-visioning Stewardship** A one-day workshop with a keynote address by Ed Kruse, Director for Stewardship, ELCA Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission followed by responses and discussion.
Saturday, April 2, 2011 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	**Preaching and Stewardship** A one-day workshop to be held in conjunction with the Northern Illinois Synod. This event will include lecture and workshops on preaching on the topic of stewardship.
Saturday, April 30, 2011 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Spring Stewardship event hosted by LSTC and the Metropolitan Chicago Synod on the LSTC campus.

For more information and to register, go to **http://tithing.lstc.edu/** or contact Laura Wilhelm at 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 or call 773-256-0712.

LSTC LUTHERAN SCHOOL of THEOLOGY at CHICAGO
1100 East 55th Street
Chicago, IL 60615

Currents in Theology and Mission
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
1100 East 55th St.
Chicago, IL 60615

Non Profit Org.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 38
Wheeling, IL 60090

Web sites ***produced by professors at the seminaries publishing*** **Currents**

Joan Fumetti: Rural Ministry
http://www.ruralministry.com
Ralph W. Klein (LSTC): Old Testament Studies
http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/
Gary Pence (PLTS): Healing Religion's Harm
http://healingreligion.com
The LSTC Rare Books Collection
http://collections.lstc.edu/gruber/

Change of address?

Please contact us by phone or e-mail (*currents@lstc.edu*), or send your corrected mailing label or a photocopy, or any change-of-address form, to Currents in Theology and Mission, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615, phone 773-256-0751, or fax 773-256-0782 (specify *Currents*). Whether you write or call, **please include the five-digit code at the top left of your address label** for our reference. Thank you.