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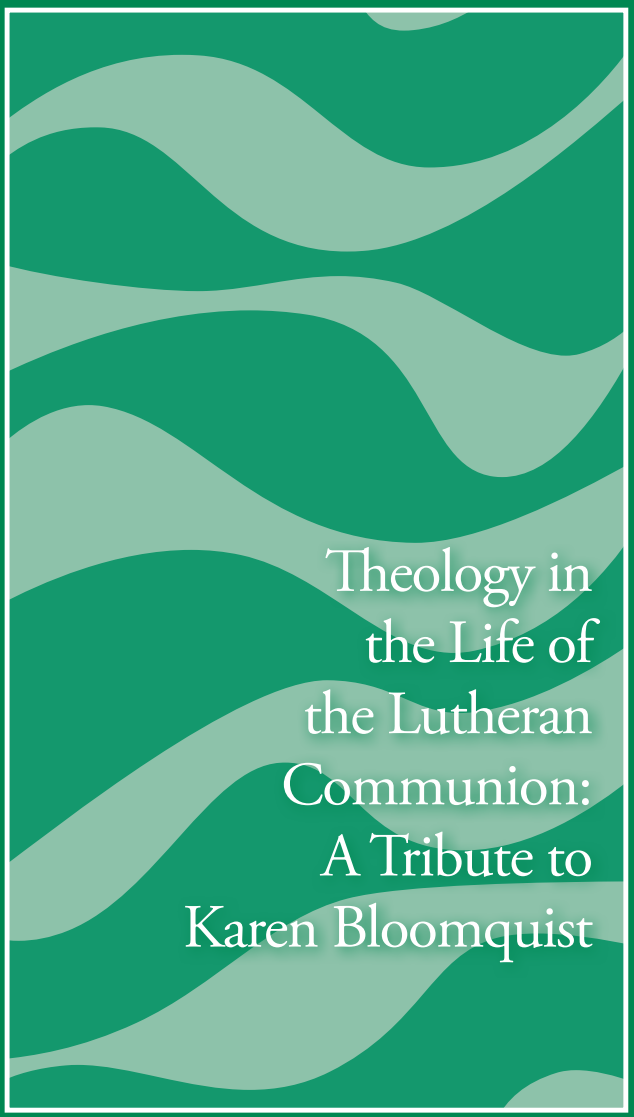

Theology in the Life of the Lutheran Communion: A Tribute to Karen Bloomquist

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Karen Bloomquist

Preaching Helps

Theology in the Life of the Lutheran Communion: A Tribute to Karen Bloomquist

The Lutheran World Federation, through its Department of Theology and Studies (DTS), has carried out a crucial role in maintaining and furthering an ecclesial conversation and theological disposition that has dared to trespass the Nordic confines of the Lutheran theological idiom. What lies ahead, when Lutheranism, following other Christian communions is migrating to the planetary south *en masse*, is still a parchment in wait of scribes to be read. DTS undertook this task, calling a halt to the centuries-long hovering of the theological world of Lutheranism around its north-Atlantic, male-dominated and exclusivist axis. The present issue in this journal is devoted to and a witness to the vibrant theology in the life of the church as it happens in the Lutheran communion thanks to the dedicated work of the Rev. Dr. Karen Bloomquist who, for the last decade, has steered the theological nave through waters largely unknown to the Federation. This volume is dedicated to the resolute work of Bloomquist who not only welcomed the rafts, catamarans and *jangadas,* but adroitly navigated them through the seas of Lutheran communion worldwide.

To this end, the pages that follow offer a slim, nevertheless significant, scope of the contribution of Bloomquist to the attentiveness of the DTS to the throbbing life of theology being done as it departs from fetters that have traditionally anchored it on shores that for long and memorable times captivated it. Due tributes offered (**Noko, Benesch**), and the examination of the significant role voices intoned but not often heard (**Achtelstetter, Isaak, Philip**) offer the frame that encompasses learned treatises on questions of sexuality and the erotic (**Nessan, Gerle**), on the environment (**Moe-Lobeda, Rossing**), religious interface (**Sinn**) and facets of the ecumenical wells of the reforming Christian movement (**Stortz**).

As homage to Karen Bloomquist and the role of theology in the life of the Lutheran world communion, these few pages have been a daunting challenge for its guest editor to bring to visibility the sparkles of many other voices and faces, which human frailty and ignorance have failed to detect or acknowledge.

Even so, Karen, we dare to celebrate with you what has been, is, and is to be.

Vítor Westhelle
Editor for the June 2010 issue

A Tribute to Karen L. Bloomquist

Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko

General Secretary, The Lutheran World Federation

Karen L. Bloomquist served as director of the Department for Theology and Studies of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) from 1999 to 2010. Karen came to the LWF following my "call," which she only accepted after weeks of rumination. I am happy that she agreed to stay beyond the initially agreed upon period of twelve months.

Karen is a woman of many qualities, a "woman for all seasons": her conscience dictates that she not turn her back on what she believes to be right, or on God. She is broad-minded, flexible, adaptable, and accommodating, yet she can also be stubborn and will defend almost ferociously an issue or agenda she believes in. She has a pronounced sense of justice and fairness, challenging others while always seriously taking into account their opinions. She is a full-blooded intellectual and academic who knows how to communicate in ways that do not alienate those who are not familiar with the ways of the academy. She is a passionate, global theologian, at home and known in both the global North and the global South, who has encouraged, nurtured, and facilitated collaborative cross- and trans-contextual theological work, by drawing on a global network of theologians, which she herself established over the years. Her active engagement with theologians from the global South, especially young women, is impressive. She is a woman of the church and an ethicist actively engaged in social justice activism, working on theological rationales for, for instance, opposing unjust economic structures, holding governments accountable, and campaigning and lobbying to limit further climate change and mitigate its effects. She knows how to move beyond the rhetoric, beyond the polemic, by encouraging more complex and grounded understandings of the issues at hand.

During her tenure in Geneva, one of Karen's major foci was the "theology in the life of the church" program. Bringing together theologians from all four corners of the globe, this program sought to ascertain how we can learn from cultural, gender, social, economic, political, and interreligious realities different from our own and be transformed by them. How might these different perspectives become more constitutive and transformative of Lutheran theology in the twenty-first century? The program was a highly successful attempt to bridge the gap between the various theological disciplines and the life of the church. Karen believed in the capacity of those who are normally not invited to participate in scientific theological conversations. Karen is a "people's theologian."

For eleven years, Karen has been at the helm of the DTS boat, navigating it with gentle firmness across the rough seas of change. She has managed to stay the course, has been wise and strong enough to know when to "go with the flow," and when to steer against the current. On her return to the United States, she will be able to look back at efforts that were not only groundbreaking and very productive, but also touched the lives of many people around the world.

Huldah at the Table: Reflections on Leadership and the Leadership of Women

Karin Achtelstetter

Director and Editor-in-Chief of The Lutheran World Federation Office for Communication Services and Professor at the Theological Faculty of Erlangen, Germany

> It follows from this argument that all are consecrated priests through baptism, that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops and popes. But they do not all have the same work to do.
>
> Martin Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*[1]

I

Women at the table—leadership in The Lutheran World Federation: a short history—a long way

Within the ecumenical landscape, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has had a considerable record of accomplishment regarding the ordination and participation of women. Women are ordained in 103 of the 140 LWF member churches. In 1992, the German pastor Maria Jepsen became the first Lutheran female bishop in the world. Today, Lutheran women serve their churches as bishops, presidents, and leaders in churches in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America.

It is estimated that five of the 178 delegates, who gathered at the LWF's founding assembly in Lund in 1947, were women.[2] Over the years, the participation of women at LWF assemblies has increased slowly, but significantly. In 1984, the Seventh LWF Assembly resolved that 40 percent of delegates to the Eighth LWF Assembly should be women, with a goal of 50 percent for subsequent assemblies. In 1972, the Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) was opened in the LWF Secretariat.

The Seventh Assembly, held in Budapest, was groundbreaking in terms of women's participation. "The resolution also called for at least a 40 percent representation of women on the Executive Committee, the appointed advisory/governing committees, and in the group of officers. It was also resolved that the Ex-

1. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., *Luther's Works* (*LW*) (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986), 44:127, 129.

2. Violet Cucciniello Little, "Beginnings" in *The Continuing Journey: Women's Participation in The Lutheran World Federation* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1992), 9.

ecutive Committee should exert efforts to increase the number of women employed as programmatic and supervisory staff until there was at least 50 percent representation in these areas."[3]

These decisions were the result of countless discussions about the leadership of women in the church and the understanding of ministry at regional, national, and local levels. The understanding of the Lutheran concept of the "priesthood of all believers" played a key role in these debates.

The seed and the flower—from the priesthood of all believers to the ordained (pastoral) ministry

In Lutheranism, the understanding of leadership within the church is closely linked to the Reformation's rediscovery of the biblical concepts of "vocation" and the "priesthood of all believers."

While these theological insights of the Reformation may have broken "the back of mediaeval clericalism,"[4] they did not significantly alter the church's practice during the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. "They were there waiting like time bombs (seeds) to explode (flower) upon Christian praxis at some future date."[5] The flower the former LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs, Eugene L. Brand, refers to is the ordination of women and their leadership.

Priesthood—according to Martin Luther—is founded on baptism and belief. Before God all are equal: "There is no gradation between a believing peasant woman and a bishop in terms of their sanctity or closeness to God. Both of them are priests."[6] As the priestly concept derives from baptism and thus applies to all Christians, "No baptized person may be exempted from inclusion in the priesthood of all believers."[7] The priesthood of all believers has a christological[8] as well as a sacrificial and a service oriented dimension.[9]

It was just a matter of time until this "seed" would lead to the question about the relationship of the "priesthood of all believers," the "priestly ministry," and the ordained (pastoral) ministry or the ministry of word and sacrament.

As Brand points out, the "Lutheran concept of priestly ministry logically suggests a functional understanding of

3. Ibid., 50.

4. Eugene L. Brand, "Vocation and Ministry" in *In Search of a Round Table: Gender, Theology and Church Leadership,* Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 12.

5. Ibid.

6. Reinhard Boettcher, *Leadership and Power in the Ministry of the Church: A Resource for Discussion* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2007), 16.

7. Brand, 13.

8. "This is a spiritual priesthood held in common by all Christians, through which we are all priests with Christ." In: "The Misuse of the Mass," *LW* 36, 138.

9. "The Reformation concept of priesthood also suggests a sacrificial concept of vocation. In the tradition, priesthood and sacrifice are cognates. Our sacrifice, says St. Paul, is ourselves. That makes our priesthood total; it encompasses all of life and extends to every authentic aspect of creation. If our priesthood has its origin in the waters of baptism, then there is no occasion in our lives in which we are not an instrument of Christ's ministry…Put in the language of cross-bearing…rather the cross is laid on the world, in the context of one's family and social relationships, job obligations, civic responsibilities, etc. It is there that I minister; it is there that authentic cross-bearing occurs; it is there that I live out daily baptismal death and resurrection." Brand, 17ff.

pastoral ministry. If the church's ministry is seen to involve the whole people so that all participate as priests, and if it is the vocational context which makes one's priestly ministry specific, then pastors would be Christian priests whose vocational context is ordained ministry. In other words, ordained ministry differs from other ministries only in function."[10] He concludes: "On the basis of the participation in the baptismal priesthood, the assumption should be that, of course, the pastoral ministry is open to women just as it is to men."[11]

Other key arguments in the debate on women's ordination are:

—the reference in Gal 3:28, "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all are one in Christ Jesus";

—the reference in John 1:14, the word (the divine *logos*) became *sarx* (flesh), not male (against the incarnation argument, that Jesus was a man)[12];

—and the church's eschatological nature: the church as the sign of the kingdom to overcome cultural boundaries and considerations that prohibit women's ordination or leadership.

Shaping the table

Eugene's Brand passionate essay in favor of women's ordination and leadership acknowledges that the question of women's ordination is only the tip of the iceberg: "The problem of women in the priestly ministries, by and large, seems to be that of more equal sharing with men, and not whether or not women may serve. Church councils and other governing groups often have only token female representation. Member churches still tend to send men to international meetings."[13]

The LWF is still challenged in terms of ensuring a 50 percent quota of female staff in programmatic and supervisory roles.

Erika Reichle, the first female director in the LWF, summarized spiritual challenges facing women called to lead as follows:

> It is still a daily experience of many women not [to] be listened to, to be ignored where power is involved, unless they are prepared to give up their identity and to accept that their gifts are used as instruments for the interest of others. Thus, women either stop trying to be heard, or they adjust, or they look for another arena. It will be illusory to think that real progress can be made within the LWF until the number of women in important positions is considerably higher.[14]

To be listened to, to be authentic…these are spiritual quests for women, who hold executive and supervisory positions (our being) and are asking how to live our lives as women in this world (our doing).[15]

Women got through the door and found a place at the table, to use the image Christine Grumm, former LWF Deputy General Secretary, employed, but now we have to reshape the table "to accommodate our presence."[16]

Grumm's round table challenges

10. Ibid., 19.

11. Ibid., 23.

12. Cf. Brand, 25: "It is the *humanity* of Christ, not the *maleness* of Jesus, which is important."

13. Brand, 25.

14. Christine Grumm, "In Search of a Round Table" in *In Search of a Round Table: Gender, Theology and Church Leadership*, Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 29ff.

15. Cf. Sue Howard and DavidWelbourn, *The Spirit at Work Phenomenon* (London: Azure, 2004), 35.

16. Grumm, 28.

forms of traditional leadership, "which depend only on the wisdom of a few to create the vision and solve the subsequent problems." Her vision of a round table community includes leaders, who "listen to the shared wisdom of those in and outside of the institution and then are able to articulate a vision which mirrors people's hopes and dreams."

The Lutheran concept of the priesthood of all believers is reflected in the image of the round table and its trust in the "shared wisdom," which Sr. Mary Benet McKinney describes in her book, *Sharing Wisdom: A Process for Group Decision Making*. "The Spirit, in order to share with us the very wisdom of God, promises to each of us a piece of wisdom.…No one can contain all the wisdom of God, for that would be to be God."[17]

Erika Reichle talked about women's spiritual quests. How does a woman find, make and take her role as woman within a male dominated environment? How can a woman be authentic as woman in her role as a director? How can a woman address issues related to equality, marginalization and discrimination towards women in her context? Where are role models for women in leadership positions?

During the past years, I have sought to integrate spiritual, theological resources with managerial and systemic organizational analysis as part of my day-to-day reflections, my decision-making processes and my presentations.

My reflections on Huldah are an excerpt from a longer article on women and leadership[18] focusing also on Miriam, Martha and Mary. Huldah, like the other women, is part of the Judeo-Christian narrative community *(Erzählgemeinschaft)*. In this essay I let myself be guided by the understanding of the narrative community and the fluidity of the narrative which is necessary to adapt it to changing situations, such as the working environment and systemic organizational analysis—admittedly a rather unorthodox and experimental approach.

17. Ibid., 35.

18. Copies of the paper can be obtained from the author: ka@lutheranworld.org

II
Huldah
Variations on Finding, Making, Taking the Role as a Woman

> So the priest Hil· kī'ah, A·hī'kam, Ach'bor, Shā'phan, and A·sāi'ah went to the prophetess Hul'dah the wife of Shal'um son of Tik'vah, son of Har'has, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. She declared to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to me, Thus says the LORD, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched.'"
>
> 2 Kings 22:8–17

Biblical/Theological Reflections

Why Huldah? Much could be said about Miriam, the mediator, percussionist, lyricist, vocalist, prophet, theologian, and member of a leadership team, or about Deborah, the judge, who combines all forms of leadership—religious, military, juridical and poetical—and who leads in an era of decentralized power and ad hoc

leaders[19] and "times of crisis and social dysfunction."[20]

I chose Huldah for several reasons:

—her unique impact on Jewish as well as Christian traditions;

—her naming of the true word, which has become an important feature in my own reflections on leadership; and

—ambiguity in the interpretation of her role, which is typical for women holding leading positions.

Although biblical reference to her is limited, Huldah played a significant role for leaders of the synagogue and the church.

As Arlene Swidler says, "The authority to pass judgement on this initial entry into the canon was given to a woman."[21]

According to Jewish tradition, Huldah conducted an academy in Jerusalem.[22] Huldah's example encouraged the early church to ordain women to sacred office. Phipps cites a prayer for deaconess ordination dated in the late fourth century. "Creator of man and woman, who filled Deborah, Anna, and Huldah with the spirit…look upon your servant who is chosen for the ministry and grant your Holy Spirit."[23]

The example of Huldah led John Calvin to argue in favor of the government of women, and a century later the "Quakers became the first Christian denomination to advocate the equality of men and women,"[24] referring to Huldah as one example.

Huldah inspired women in the nineteenth century, such as the Calvinist Elizabeth Stanton, who helped publish *The Woman's Bible*, one of the first attempts by women to evaluate the Judeo-Christian legacy's impact on women. It states:

> Her wisdom and insight were well known to Josiah the king; and when the wise men came to him with the "Book of the Law," to learn what was written therein, Josiah ordered them to take it to Huldah, as neither the wise men nor Josiah himself could interpret its contents. It is fair to suppose that there was not a man at court who could read the book; hence the honor devolved upon Huldah.[25]

Finding, Making, and Taking Roles

I. The Incident: The Discovery of the Book of the Law

To apply the "Finding, Making and Taking Roles" process as used in leadership formation to biblical texts has limitations. Dialogue and exchange is only possible on the basis of exegetical and historical interpretations and assumptions. The Scripture nevertheless gives a clear account of the critical incident.

During the reign of King Josiah of Judah, Shapan, Josiah's secretary, went to the temple to pay the craftsmen, who were renovating the Jerusalem Temple. The supervisors and craftsmen, who worked under the direction of Hilkiah, the high priest, were paid from donations. Hilkiah,

19. Cf. Hackett, 26.

20. Ogden Bellis, 116.

21. Arlene Swidler, "In Search of Huldah." *The Bible Today* 98 (November 1978), 1738.

22. Joyce Hollyday, *Clothed with the Sun: Biblical Women, Social Justice and Us* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 149.

23. William E. Phipps, "A Woman Was the First to Declare Scripture Holy." *Bible Review,* (April 1990), BAS Library, http://members.bib-arch.org (without page count).

24. Ibid.

25. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible,* edited and with an introduction by Dale Spender (Edinburgh: Polygon Books, 1985), 81–82.

who was asked to count the money, showed Shapan a script, which he called the "Book of the Law" and which he found in the Temple. Shapan read the book and then returned to the King. He read it to Josiah, who became distressed, comparing the contents with the prevailing practices in the state of Judah. Josiah feared God's wrath. He commissioned his "top officers"[26] to find out whether the book's content was an authentic expression of God's will. They went to see the prophetess Huldah to get her assessment.

II. The System: The Era Josiah

Josiah was depicted as a reformer reviving the cultic innovations of Hezekiah and bringing to an end the counter-reformation of his grandfather Manasseh.[27] With the renovation of the Jerusalem Temple Josiah was restoring the purity of the Temple, and asserting the centrality of the sanctuary and its priesthood.

The renovation of the Jerusalem Temple had ideological and political dimensions. "In terms of national ideals, the assertion of the centrality of Jerusalem served to unify the country and strengthen the central government."[28]

The script obviously contained rules that went far beyond the reform Josiah was undertaking. Josiah was impressed by the scroll, but unsure of its divine authority. "If the scroll contained an authentic revelation from God, he would need to embark on much more sweeping reforms than he had anticipated."[29]

Hypothesis I

What was the reason for choosing Huldah? Was it to name the true word? The laws demanded radical changes in the religious and social spheres, which Josiah may not have been ready to address openly. Somebody else had to initiate the radical transformation.

The exclusive focus on Yahweh (mono-Yahwism), as reestablished by Josiah, needs to be visibly expressed within the social sphere. This also applies to the abolition of other cults, including the cult of Ba'al and Asherah, the demolition of sacred poles and pillars and the dismissal of the cultic personnel.[30] The challenge posed by the "Book of the Law," probably an early version of the book of Deuteronomy, is to achieve a proper balance between religious expression or cult and the social justice dimension *(shalom)*.

Josiah is distressed by the content of the "Book of the Law" and seeks divine approval from Huldah, a representative of the powerless—women, children, and slaves. The "Book of the Law," as an early version of Deuteronomy, most certainly reflected deuteronomic concerns for widows, orphans, and aliens.

By calling on Huldah, Josiah safeguards the support of the powerless and marginalized in a radical transformation. Huldah dares to say aloud what others may have sensed already. By canonizing the "Book of the Law," she provided Josiah

26. Ibid.

27. 2 Kings 21: 2ff: "For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hez·e·kī'ah had destroyed; he erected altars for Bā'al, made a sacred pole, as King Ā'hab of Israel had done, worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.…He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD…he practiced sooth-saying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger."

28. Siegfried H. Horn and P. Kyle McCarter, "The Divided Monarch: The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel" Ancient Israel (1999), BAS Library, http://members.bib-arch.org (without page count).

29. Phipps.

30. Cf. 2 Kings 23:4–14.

with the crucial impetus and the purpose for his reform.

Hypothesis II

A second hypothesis suggests that Huldah plays a crucial role in Josiah's unification attempts.

Duane L. Christensen suggests that Huldah represents the interests of a group, referred to as the "men of Anathoth," who sought to preserve the Ephraimite tradition. They were critical of the monarchy, which they ultimately held responsible for all that was wrong in ancient Israel—including the role of women. "The social stratification introduced by a new economic and political order, and the royal harem in particular, as introduced by Solomon, were responsible for subtle and far-reaching changes in the status of women."[31]

Huldah's act of "canonization" of the "Book of the Law" could therefore be interpreted as a "religious compromise which brought back the 'Moses group'…It was this alternative view of Israel's ancient story that was in fact the more archaic."[32]

In its efforts to unify the country and strengthen the central government, Josiah needed the active involvement of this group. Huldah restores this marginalized tradition and places social justice at the center of the reform. The book of Deuteronomy corresponds to the point of view of this group.[33]

Hypothesis III

In recent years, Huldah's role has been scrutinized with more skepticism. Was she really the woman who brought about a "theological revolution"?[34] Or, was she a "deuteronomistic puppet," "validating the deuteronomic doctrine of 'exact retribution' about to fall on Judah"[35] (cf. 2 Kings 23), as Judith E. McKinlay suggests.

McKinlay asks, why Huldah, who only has this one great entrance? She comes to the conclusion, that "the deuteronomistic writers may have been employing her as a woman to set the Josiah reforms in train."[36] One of the features of Josiah's reform was the removal of the worship of Asherah, as the wife of Yahweh, whose cult was especially associated with women (cf. 2 Kings 23:7).

According to McKinlay, Huldah was set up to justify a particular cultural heritage. "Even a woman recognized the need for such action."[37]

Is that what happened with Huldah? McKinlay asks. "…I now see a Huldah standing there, facing those authoritative and high-ranking men, quickly getting into line and justifying an orthodoxy: the Asherah, the Baals et al., are to be silenced without question. Huldah's words are all that is needed. She, as a woman, has been used…to give voice to a theological template that justifies the silencing of the feminine aspect of deity." [38]

Is there any evidence for this hypoth-

31. Duane L. Christensen, "Huldah and the Men of Anathoth: Women in Leadership in the Deuteronomic History," *The Berkeley Institute of Biblical Archaeology & Literature* (1984) www.bibal.net/01/dlc-articles.html (without page count).

32. **Ibid.**

33. Cf. ibid.

34. Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy's Theological Revolution," *Bible Review* (February 1996), BAS Library, http://members.bib-arch.org (without page count).

35. Judith E. McKinlay, "Gazing at Huldah," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 1 (2005), 4.

36. **Ibid., 1.**

37. **Ibid.**

38. **Ibid., 5.**

esis? Probably the most striking evidence is that, despite her significant role at the beginning of Josiah's reform as well as in the canonization process of the Holy Scripture, she disappears completely from the biblical screen.

Huldah Comments:
Somehow, I see truth in all three hypotheses. I also had this lurking feeling that Josiah's delegation may have a hidden agenda.

I am used to being on guard. No wonder, among the court prophets I am the only woman.

It is possible, that they chose me—a woman— to verify the scroll, as it requested the abolishment of the asheras.

Josiah had already started his reform process and sooner or later during the renovation of the Temple, he would have given the order to remove the Ba'al and Asherah vessels, just like his great grandfather Hezekiah had done.

Indeed, you may accuse me of having justified the destruction of the asherahs. However, has the Asherah cult ever helped women to reach a higher status or social justice during the times of monarchy? I dare to say, No!

So, they may have chosen me to justify their future actions with regard to the holy places and the worship life, but when I saw the "Book of the Law," I realized its potential for addressing issues with regard to the marginalized in our society: the widows, the orphans, and the foreigners.

Josiah was mainly focusing on restoring the purity of the cult; my concern was how his religious reform could also have a positive impact on our society and our social system.

I am glad, that this scroll was found and that I—with the help of God—could recognize its true value. It laid the basis to a much more detailed text of law, with significant changes in both beliefs and worship as well as in social and moral values.

Review and Learning

Reflecting together with other women on Huldah brought back to us moments when we felt we were the "token woman":
—the only woman on the panel;
—the one brought in to balance gender representation.

From Huldah, women learn to seize these opportunities and turn them it into an authentic role, which serves the system in which we work.

Huldah is a biblical figure from whom we can learn. She was not afraid to speak out, to say unpopular things or initiate radical transformation. Although in danger of being used by the system, she was able to gain the necessary distance and "chooses life." (Deut 30:19)

This essay is dedicated to my trusted colleague and fellow LWF Cabinet member Karen Bloomquist, whom I would like to thank for the many years of close and fruitful cooperation at the Cabinet 'table.'

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Studying and Doing Theologies in the Life of the Churches

Paul John Isaak

Professor of Missiology at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland, and Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia

Introduction

Over the past one hundred years, Christianity has experienced a profound Southern shift in its geographical centre of gravity. In 1893, 80 percent of those who professed the Christian faith lived in Europe and North America, while by the end of the twentieth century almost 60 percent lived in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific. "Christianity began in the twentieth century as a Western religion, and indeed *the* Western religion; it ended the century as a non-Western religion, on track to become progressively more so."[1] Today, the churches of the global South are more typical representatives of Christianity than those in North America or Europe. In the midst of such a demographic shift, churches are asking themselves, "How well will Christianity navigate its increasingly diverse composition and Southern majority?"

In order to address such a question I shall in bold humility provide two answers. First, I will focus on one of the programs of the Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), namely the Theology in the Life of the Church program, which was designed by Karen L. Bloomquist and several other theologians, to interpret the signs of the times in light of the demographic shift in world and global Christianity.[2] Second, such a reading of the times requires a focus on the relationship between studying and doing theologies, or how to bridge the dilemma of the perceived [Lutheran] tension between faith and good works or what might be considered to divide a more classical from more contextual approaches to theology. The aim here would be to promote a more engaged and critical role of a specific theology in the life of a specific church. We now turn to these two aspects:

Theology in the life of the church

At the outset let us reformulate the name of the theological program as follows: Studying and doing theologies in the life of the churches. One should avoid creating the impression that there is a universal [Lutheran] theology and one united [Lutheran] church. However, in the best

1. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 242.

2. For the difference between global and world Christianity see Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 22. According to Sanneh, global Christianity describes the perspective of the churches of the Western world, also formerly known as "sending" or "older" churches, whereas world Christianity is indicative of the perspectives of the churches of the South and East, formerly known as "receiving" or "younger" churches.

tradition of Luther's theology[3] one should accept diverse theologies that do not necessarily exclude each other; they form a multicolored mosaic of complementary and mutually enriching as well as mutually challenging frames of reference.[4] This fact is affirmed by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in its *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*[5] which identifies seventeen distinct theologies including African theology, Asian theology, Black theology, Feminist theology, Womanist theology, Liberation theology, and Minjung theology. All of these are attempts critically to reflect on the praxis in light of the word of God. At this critical point, studying and doing theologies in the life of the churches most disturbs classical or what is known as "academic theology."[6]

The demographic shift of studying and doing theologies in the life of the churches means that the time has passed when Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific sat at the feet of Europe and North America in order to learn theology. Instead, the partner and addressee of theological reflection became much less the non-believing and secular person than those involved in the struggle for human dignity. To put it differently, Matt 25:31–46 answers the important question: Who and where is Jesus Christ for us today?

Jesus comes to us in those who are hungry, homeless, sick, and imprisoned. Basic human needs are listed here—food, clothing, shelter, health care, and, by implication, the basic political need for human dignity and integrity. In other words, studying and doing theologies in the life of the churches tells us the good news that in a very real yet mysterious sense, the poor are "proxies for Christ."[7] To put it differently, loving the Triune God and loving our neighbor is a single, not a sequential act. We should remember that the new thing about Jesus was that he mentions the two commandments in Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 in the same breath and gives them equal weight. In other words, Jesus makes the two commandments virtually one, such that there is no sense in which we can love God at the expense of our neighbor or vice versa.

The difficulty at this point, it seems, is to find some road map, some access, some point of leverage between *missio Dei* (mission of God), spirituality, doctrines, and church unity, and the diaconal ministries of the churches. Put differently: Is it possible to find some common ground between faith and good works? Or must we settle with the image of the elephant and the whale, whose modes of existence are so utterly alien to each other that, finally, the most they can do is to stare at each other for a moment, quizzically and uncompromisingly, before each turns and goes its separate way? Where, then, does all this leave us?

Are we left with either an elephant or a

3. At the outset let us note that "Martin Luther's theology" is directly coming from Luther himself in his original writings. The notions of "Lutheran theology/theologies" are interpretations of Luther's theology. In our interpretations and applications we cannot have one single Lutheran theology in the life of one single Lutheran Church. Both notions of a single Lutheran theology and a single Lutheran Church are non-existing.

4. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 8.

5. Nicholas Lossky et al, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement- Second Edition* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2002), 1099–1133.

6. Ibid., 1119–1120.

7. Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, eds., *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 52.

whale? I think not. According to Karl Barth, there is unity, not identity, between theology and social ethics, or there is unity, not identity, between faith and good works. Barth declares such unity by stating that "the doctrine of God is ethics."[8] Such a grounding of ethics in the doctrine of God means that God's activity does not abrogate human activities but does relativize them. In other words, God is not the enemy of our action to build reconciled and healing communities, gender equality, freedom, peace, and justice. According to the Constitution of Namibia such rights and freedoms are recognized as "…the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family…" and that they are "…indispensable for freedom, justice and peace;…regardless of race, colour, ethnic origin, sex, religion, creed or social or economic status;…the said rights are most effectively maintained and protected in a democratic society, where the government is responsible to freely elected representatives of the people, operating under a sovereign constitution and a free and independent judiciary."[9] In fact, "God is not exalted in the suppression of the creature. God does not find his triumph in the creature's lack of freedom or power as compared with his own unconditional and irresistible lordship. He does not work alone when He works all in all."[10]

In light of such trends in global Christianity, DTS recognized the process of doing theologies from the perspectives of diversity and contextualization.

> [In] the history of the LWF as a communion of diverse churches, the awareness of the tension between the gospel that holds us together, and the diversity with which we express it, grew as a creative challenge for both the self-understanding of the LWF as a communion and its theological practice. This challenge offers new opportunities for the exercise of theology in the LWF through which the communion will be promoted if, and only if, these characteristics of a theological practice are followed: a) the LWF offers itself as a place for different articulations of diverse experiences; b) as a catalyst for innovation within theologies in different contexts; and c) as a guarantor of both the diversity and of the necessity of expressing commonalities.[11]

Studying and doing theologies in the life of the churches means to study and do theologies in relation to contemporary contextual challenges that churches face in their respective settings. Such theologies remind us not only of the pluriformity of world religions, but also of the pluralism of the society in which we live. There can be little doubt that the relationship of Christianity to our own contexts will not be enforced from one type of Christianity because we are no longer onlookers or hikers but [Lutheran] Christians who are shaking off the mental slavery and cultural domination, thereby taking responsibilities for studying and doing theologies in our own contexts and situations.

Studying and doing theologies

There are two schools of thought when it comes to the question of whether one is

8. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* Volume 2, Part 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1936–1969), 515.

9. *The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia* www.orusovo.com/namcon/

10. **Barth,** *Church Dogmatics,* Volume 3, Part 3, 130.

11. See the "Ten Theses on the Role of Theology in the LWF" as formulated by the Program Committee for Theology and Studies at its meeting in 1995. *Proceedings,* LWF Program Committee for Theology and Studies, Exhibit 3, 2–3.

studying or doing theology. One school claims that if you study theology you immerse yourself deeper and deeper into the ocean of knowledge. The deeper you go, the better you will know all the classical books in their original in the best libraries. The other school says that while it is beautiful to delve deeper and deeper to the bottom of the ocean of libraries found in the greatest cities and intellectual centers of the world, the journey does not end there. This is so because of the many voices crying and calling us to come back to the shores and to share the good news so that our world will be a reconciled and healing community. I submit that while we ought to go deeper and deeper into the oceans of libraries we cannot remain deep down there. It is equally important that we come back to the deserts, the flea markets, and the dusty streets to share the well-known Gospel of Luke 4:16–21. At the outset let us state that studying and doing theologies in the life of the churches is an attempt to bridge what have been significant divides between the more classical and more contextual approaches to theology and to promote a more engaged and critical role of a specific theology in the life of the church. According to John de Gruchy:

> …those training for the ordained ministry go to college, so we say, to study or, as it is described in some universities, to "read theology." It all sounds so academic. The advantage of using the phrase, "doing theology," is that it indicates that theology is not simply something one learns about through reading textbooks, or listening to lectures, but through engaging in doing theology in particular contexts and situations. [12]

In other words, we need to study and do a theology with the aim of going deeper into the ocean of knowledge, but at the same time return to the desert as soon as possible to share the good news with those in need. According to an African proverb, if the shepherds are limping, the flocks will not reach the green pastures. This proverb reminds me of the narrative of David, King Saul, and Goliath during the war between the Israelites and the Philistines in 1 Sam 17. David, a young shepherd, was sent by his father to take provisions to his three brothers on the battlefield. On arrival, David became curious about Goliath, the Philistine giant whom no Israelite dared approach. Despite his brothers' anger wanting to silence him, David expressed an interest in fighting Goliath and word of this reached King Saul. Although he was young, David had had some experience with fighting lions and bears when they attacked his flock. So King Saul allowed David to face Goliath, but insisted on clothing David in his armor and strapping him with his sword. But David could not walk! In place of the armor and sword, David pulled out his own simple slingshot and killed the giant.

Today we must ask ourselves: How do we avoid imposing foreign tools and methods on our theological education and formation? How to we transmit to students of theology habits that sustain a life-long intellectual exploration of love of the Triune God and knowledge of God in service of God's world? How do we help them acquire a conviction that theology is done for an encompassing way of life rather than simply to satisfy intellectual curiosity, earn a living, or dazzle others with brilliance? How do we inculcate a sense that theology is itself a way of life—a life of love and service to God and fellow human beings—so that one is a theologian with one's whole life—not an "ordained

12. John de Gruchy and C. Villa-Vicencio, *Doing theology in context: South African perspectives* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), 2.

technician" but a "practical theologian."[13] In other words, studying and doing theologies can never be a neutral exercise or academic detachment, nor can it be a substitution for faith and commitment. Instead, it assumes faith in the Triune God, and it requires commitment to the causes of our neighbors in need. To paraphrase Luther, the question: "Where do we find a merciful God?" is always related to the cry: "How can we be merciful neighbors to one another?"

But what does it mean to keep God at the centre of our efforts as theologians? Let me explore one possible answer by looking at Luther's central theological category, namely the question of how one finds a gracious God. At the very outset, it needs to be underscored that, when Martin Luther inserts the word "alone" when speaking of "justification by faith alone," this does not mean a lack of interest in works.[14] On the contrary; Luther is interested precisely in the purity of works when he inserts the word "alone." Although emphasizing that justification occurs by faith alone, Luther wishes to keep the God-relationship free from all thoughts of merit and to keep the neighbor-relationship free from all religious self-interest. But the question still remains, Why is justification solely by faith, independent of faith's works?[15]

According to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, signed and celebrated on 31 October 1999 in Augsburg, Germany, by the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church, the biblical teaching on justification by faith and grace means that:

> We together confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping us for and calling us to good works.[16]

In other words, having been made righteous by Christ, we become "a Christ" toward our neighbor by enabling the poor to have their daily bread.[17] This kind of God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and this kind of action constitutes the core of the gospel. This radical alteration in the human condition—*simul iustus et peccator*—must surely engage justified sinners in altering prevailing social relationships if they wish to profess their faith convincingly.

The centrality of faith in the Triune God is poignantly expressed in the story of a refugee in Burundi, a country that has been plagued by violent ethnic conflict for many years. Like thousands of others in the Great Lakes region of central Africa, this refugee was obliged to leave his home and run for his life. All he took along with him was a torn blanket to cover his body at night, and a cross.

What a naive faith! This is surely how many of us respond when hearing of a person whose most prized possession, the one thing he could not leave behind when fleeing for his life, was a cross. Yet, it was this cross that gave him inner solace, comfort,

13. Ibid., 3.

14. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1955–1986), *volume 26,* 29–30. Hereafter refer to as *LW and by specific volume* (For example, *LW 26).*

15. Paul John Isaak "Justification by faith and economic justice," *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia, Vol. 1. No. 1.* (Windhoek: University of Namibia-Ecumenical Institute for Namibia Publications 1999), 88–111.

16. Letter signed by Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of The Lutheran World Federation, and Walter Cardinal Kasper, President of Pontifical Council of the Roman Catholic Church for Promoting Christian Unity. The letter was dated 6 February 2004 and was issued simultaneously from Geneva and the Vatican.

17. Luther, *LW 31,* 367.

security and hope which no human power could snatch away. Day and night, he walked with his cross, drawing from it the spiritual sustenance and energy to move on. In the loneliness of the tropical forest, this man entered into a new relationship with God, the "I AM" who encountered Moses when he was a refugee in the wilderness; the "I AM" who cannot remain indifferent to the cries of those suffering from the pains of poverty.[18] In other words, in a holistic sense both the starting and the end points for theology, the church and human life, is always God. Properly understood, theology is God's job description, capturing both who God is and what God does. Although the church has certainly never denied this, there is a dangerous tendency to over-emphasize the goals of the institutionalized church and to forget who God is and what God does. God is always bigger than our image of God, and God always does bigger things for us. According to the African American ex-slave Sojourner Truth, "Oh, God, I did not know you were so big."[19] In short, Jesus is God's mission, and Christians and theologians need to participate in studying and doing theologies because people today search and yearn for God's love, compassion, and salvation in building reconciled and healing communities.

Conclusion

Studying and doing theologies in the life of the churches directly challenges and corrects the tendency to a certain intellectualism in the *sola scriptura* (preaching) tradition and to ritualism in the sacramental traditions. Instead, studying and doing theologies in our various churches creates a new culture, ethos, and spirituality of receiving and sharing the gospel.[20] Likewise, in Martin Luther's theology, human beings are God-related individuals and all human activity is directed to the benefit of the human race. Such a movement toward the neighbor starts with divine approval. As Luther observes, he or she who wants to be a true Christian must be truly a believer. But he or she does not truly believe if works of love do not follow his/her faith.[21] To put it differently, love of God and love of neighbor cannot be separated. In *The Freedom of a Christian* Luther speaks of being a Christ to one's neighbor. That is, in serving one's neighbor, we are not serving God; on the contrary, we are being united with God by faith, and participate in the *missio Dei*.[22] In short, having been made righteous by Christ, we become "a Christ" toward the neighbor by enabling the poor to have their daily bread.[23]

A Christian's zeal for God's honor and dignity must show itself in corresponding action that is directed toward the neighbor. Such an understanding of the *missio Dei* and the Christian ministry means that God breaks into our world and invites us to be involved in the creative and liberating dynamics of God's love in history. Moreover, while human efforts cannot remove sin from the world, God's creativity involves us in these dynamics, so that we engage in seeking partial, provisional, and relative victories today. Our theological reflections (studying theology) and practical applications (doing theology) are interwoven. We are convinced that the Spirit is the One who moves us on our journey of studying and doing theologies in the life of the churches.

18. S. Bakare, *The Drumbeat of Life* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 23.

19. Roger Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 13.

20. Nicholas Lossky et al, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement,* 705.

21. Luther, *LW 31,* 364–367.

22. Luther, *LW 27,* 30.

23. Ibid., 367.

Three Theses on the Theological Discussion of Homosexuality in the Global Lutheran Communion

Craig L. Nessan

Dean, Wartburg Theological Seminary

How can the global Lutheran communion negotiate vast differences of opinion among its member churches about the church's response to homosexuality? Following the August 2009 decisions at the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and in response to the policies of the Church of Sweden (and other northern European Lutheran church bodies) regarding the ordination and pastoral service of gay and lesbian individuals in committed, lifelong, monogamous relationships (or, marriages), The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) faces the challenge of entering into serious theological dialogue of an issue that reveals widely divergent viewpoints and summons forth strong moral reactions.

For instance, the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania issued the Bukoba Statement in 2004, which reads in part:

> **3.4.1** We object to legalization of same sex marriage, which in essence is not a marriage but a complacent act of giving in to human desires. The only marriage act that we can bless is the union between two different sexes. This understanding of marriage is derived from God's order of Creation of man and woman. The entire order of creation, including other animals and plants, was declared by God to be "very good" (Gen 1:31). We thus find any attempt to change God's intentions for the sake of a few individuals with divergent sexual views and acts is in itself sinful and evil.
>
> **3.6.2** The Conference of Bishops rejects biblical expositions done by some theologians and scholars with intent to affirm and legalize homosexuality. The Bible is the foundation of Christian faith and thus the church has an indisputable authority to rightly and scripturally explain faith based on God's word. The church's expositions do not necessarily have to agree with those of the scholars.
>
> **3.7** We do not agree with those seeking to ordain homosexuals into the ministry of Word and Sacrament. We even do not accept evangelists, elders and other church rostered servants who are homosexuals. Instead we call upon the church of Christ worldwide to sympathize with them, pray for them and counsel them how to be transformed in their thoughts and intentions.[1]

The gulf between the actions taken by some of the Northern members of the

1. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, "The Bukoba Statement," issued May 5, 2004, Press release No. 001/05/2004, www.elct.org/news/2004.05.001.html

global Lutheran communion and the views expressed in this statement is vast.

For its part the Church of Sweden has issued information from its Doctrine Commission on the matter of same-sex marriage from the context of a nation that has legalized marriage between same-sex couples. The Theological Committee states in its conclusions:

> In an Evangelical Lutheran understanding, marriage is a social institution regulated by the civil authorities. From a Creation theology perspective, the purpose of marriage is to support the mutual relationship between the spouses and provide a secure framework in which to bring up children. These needs also exist in relationships between people of the same sex. From the perspective of biblical theology, the commandment of love is superior to all other commandments and prohibitions in the Bible. The decisive factor where forms of cohabitation are concerned is not individual bible passages but what is of benefit or of harm to people. This means that when the Church is to form an opinion on marriage for same-sex couples, a relevant question to ask is whether this harms or benefits people.[2]

When one juxtaposes excerpts from these two statements by sister churches of the LWF, we begin to recognize the divergent forms of reasoning and contradictory conclusions drawn for church practice. How can the global Lutheran communion navigate this level of disagreement?

While the LWF Council has received "Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality: Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue" from the work of a task force which suggested a five-year period for consultation on the pertinent issues, to date the discussion of matters pertaining to homosexuality in the publications of the LWF has been quite limited.[3] On the one hand, there is expressed recognition of the importance of establishing clarity regarding issues of biblical authority and interpretation, because these have serious implications for an assessment of same-sex relations.[4] Recently, the LWF has issued a "Thinking It Over…" discussion piece by David Brondos on the theme, "*Sola Scriptura* as a Liberating Principle: Reflections from the Global South."[5] Brondos emphasizes the value of Lutheran interpretive principles for reading the Bible, including attention to the original context and the distinction between "letter" and "spirit" in biblical interpretation. A Lutheran mode of interpretation counters oppressive readings of Scripture, such as those defended by many evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, for example regarding the role

2. Doctrine Commission of the Church of Sweden, "Information on a possible decision by the Church of Sweden regarding same-sex marriages" (September 17, 2009), 40.

3. Lutheran World Federation, "Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality: Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue," March 22,2007. www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/2007_Council/Task_Force_Report-EN.pdf

4. Cf. Reinhard Boettcher, "Introduction," in *Witnessing to God's Faithfulness: Issues of Biblical Authority*, LWF Studies 02/2006 (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2006), 9.

5. David Brondos, "*Sola Scriptura* as a Liberating Principle: Reflections from the Global South," Thinking It Over #23, (Geneva: LWF, December 2009), www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/Dts/Thinking-It-Over/DTS-Thinking-23A5.pdf [Recently three more issues of the e-journal have been released, including in the last issue (#26) a pertinent reflection by Karen Bloomquist titled "Dare we stay together as a communion?"]

of women in the church.

Karen Bloomquist has provided a constructive framework for discussing sexual ethics in general and homosexuality in particular by building upon Wanda Diefelt's ethic of embodied care.[6] Noting the difficulty of entering into a discussion of topics related to sexuality because of the fear that they might become "church dividing," she suggests that an approach to questions of sexuality which takes seriously human embodiment is a more promising approach for Lutheran ethics than several other alternatives (for example, natural law). An ethic of embodied care allows us to move beyond the assumption "that there can be one global Lutheran ethical position" about the pattern of marriage between a man and a woman, because this would "overlook the quite different contexts within which embodiment and sexuality are lived out."[7]

> For instance, although some Lutherans in Tanzania share missional roots and a long history of relationships with Lutherans in Sweden, their churches' positions, especially on homosexuality, are quite different. An ethics of embodied care does not presume that they will arrive at the same position because what such care entails is related to deeply embedded assumptions and cultural constructs within each of these societies. What is faithful to God's mission in one context, even within the same country, may not be in another context. The big challenge, of course, is whether there can be sufficient mutual appreciation of these differences in order to communicate what is right, good or fitting in each of these contexts. It is ***not*** a matter of one position being imposed on or winning over the other.[8]

In full awareness of the history and power relations within the global Lutheran communion, Bloomquist goes on to add: "Yet, admittedly, the fear in the global South of positions arrived at in the North being imposed on them is all too real, given what has been the pattern throughout painful histories of missionary conquest and imperialism, as well as the power differentials that still prevail."[9]

As a modest contribution to the emerging discussion of homosexuality within the global Lutheran communion, this essay articulates three theses for the theological conversation which is poised to commence, given the invitation to consultation by the LWF Council and the provocation of the actions taken by the Church of Sweden, the ELCA, and other Northern church bodies in the LWF.

Thesis One: The discussion of homosexuality in the global Lutheran communion is about matters of biblical interpretation, not biblical authority.[10]

It is imperative that the discussion of homosexuality in the global Lutheran communion take place with the acknowledgement that positions taken by various member churches have been subjected to careful examination of the testimony of Scripture. One of the most difficult aspects of the homosexuality debate by

6. Cf. Wanda Diefelt, "A Lutheran Ethics of Embodied Care," in *Lutheran Ethics at the Intersections of God's One World*, LWF Studies 02/2005 (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 49–62.

7. Karen L. Bloomquist, "Embodiment Contextualized Sexual Ethics," in *Lutheran Ethics at the Intersections of God's One World*, 82.

8. Ibid., 83–84.

9. Ibid., 84.

10. Cf. LWF, "Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality: Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue," 10–11.

the churches is that faithful Christians come to different—if not mutually irreconcilable—conclusions regarding what the Bible says about homosexuality. On the one hand, a traditional hermeneutic continues to guide church leaders in many parts of the world to conclude that a church blessing of same-gender relationships is precluded. This hermeneutic has prevailed in the life of the churches over the centuries until it began to be challenged in the latter decades of the twentieth century. On the other, a contextual hermeneutic for reading the key biblical texts (Gen 19:1–29, Lev 18:22, Lev 20:13, Judg 19, Rom 1:26–27, 1 Cor 6:9, and 1 Tim 1:10) has emerged which challenges the conclusion that these texts are directly applicable to the current discussion of blessing committed same-sex relationships by those of a same-gender sexual orientation.[11] Both approaches make strong appeals to the authority of Scripture in coming to their divergent conclusions. This creates a dramatic dilemma for a global Lutheran communion that professes *sola Scriptura* as the ultimate principle for deliberating all matters of faith and life. How does the Lutheran communion negotiate its differences when there is no agreement on the proper interpretation of the Bible regarding homosexuality?

Biblical scholarship is itself deeply divided over the interpretation of the relevant texts both exegetically and theologically. Among the most prominent representatives of the traditional hermeneutic are Robert Gagnon and Richard Hayes, while significant representatives of the contextual hermeneutic include Robin Scroggs and Martti Nissinen.[12] As the fierce debate from the United States demonstrates, reputable scholars come to consequentially different conclusions about the meaning and theological significance of particular biblical texts. In every case, however, the Scripture is taken with utmost seriousness as the source and norm of authority for the practice of the church. This scholarship and its use by the churches demonstrate that the fundamental difference is not about biblical authority but rather about how to interpret the Bible.

Thesis Two: The unity of the church (and the global Lutheran communion) is centered on the right preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the proper administration of the

11. See Craig L. Nessan, *Many Members Yet One Body: Committed Same-Gender Relationships and the Mission of the Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), especially, 24–37.

12. Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001); Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); and Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, trans. Kirsi Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998). Other valuable resources include Robert L. Brawley, ed., *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Churches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006); Marion L. Soards, *Scripture and Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995); Choon-Leong Seow, ed., *Homosexuality and Christian Community* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); and Walter Wink, ed., *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

sacraments, not on uniform ritual, cultural, or ethical practices as instituted by human beings.[13]

Article 4 of the Augsburg Confession stresses that human beings "are justified as a gift on account of Christ through faith when they believe that they are received into grace and that their sins are forgiven on account of Christ, who by his death made satisfaction for our sins."[14] Dietrich Bonhoeffer argued that the doctrine of justification serves as the ultimate anchor of Christian faith and ethics, while the penultimate refers to "everything that precedes the ultimate, everything that precedes the justification of the sinner by grace alone, everything which is to be regarded as leading up to the last thing when the last thing has been found."[15]

Ethical issues belong to the realm of the penultimate. This does not mean that penultimate matters are unimportant. Rather, penultimate concerns are of urgent importance. We live most of our lives with regard to penultimate issues that warrant our serious attention and highest quality reflection. Such penultimate matters contribute greatly to the welfare of other individuals and the integrity of God's creation. We are called to give careful and wise consideration to a host of penultimate issues, including our best thought in deliberating the place for homosexuality in the life of the churches. Clearly defining the ultimate, however, does mean that penultimate matters must finally yield to the ultimate as the center of the church's faith, unity, and mission. What the church decides about penultimate issues has deep and profound implications for human life. Decisions made about the penultimate have many ramifications for the shape of the church's mission. But finally these penultimate concerns must never supplant the justification of the sinner by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone as God's final word.

Article 5 of the Augsburg Confession articulates the means through which faith arises, through "the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments." Article 7 follows consequentially from the centrality of justification as the article upon which the church stands or falls (AC 4) and the explanation of how justification by faith is mediated (AC 5): "And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere."[16] Article 7 should be interpreted not only to distinguish between what is essential for the unity of the church (that is, the pure teaching of the gospel and right administration of the sacraments) and matters of ritual, but also other cultural and ethical practices which do not need to be uniform everywhere. The true proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the proper administration of the sacraments is the sufficient basis for maintaining church unity, also of the global Lutheran communion.

Within the Lutheran confessional tradition, there is only one provision for elevating a penultimate concern to the core level of confessional subscription which is due to the gospel itself, a declaration of *status confessionis.* There is a single

13. Cf. LWF, "Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality: Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue," 4–5, 7, 14.

14. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 39–41.

15. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Neville Horton Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 83.

16. Ibid., 43.

precedent in the LWF for declaring *status confessionis*, the action taken at Dar es Salaam in 1977 regarding ending apartheid. It would require extensive study of the issue of homosexuality and a widespread consensus before the LWF could deliberate such a proposal. Until such an eventuality, it is prudent that justification remain the central doctrine that binds Lutheran churches together in communion and that the right proclamation of the gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments serve as the sufficient basis for the church's unity.

A full documentation of marriage forms over the centuries of history would disclose an amazing variety of cultural and contextual variations…

Thesis Three: Marriage is a "worldly thing" whose structure is conditioned by history, culture, and context and whose value is to be measured by how it contributes to the common good.[17]

Martin Luther understood marriage as an order of creation, not salvation. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) Luther developed compelling arguments against defining marriage as a sacrament.[18] In 1522, he wrote in *The Estate of Marriage,* "Know therefore that marriage is an outward, bodily thing, like any otherworldly undertaking."[19] This meant for Luther that marriage practices need not conform to any single pattern:

> "So many lands, so many customs," says the common proverb. For this reason, because weddings and the married estate are worldly affairs, it behooves those of us who are "spirituals" or ministers of the church in no way to order or direct anything regarding marriage, but instead to allow every city and land to continue their own customs that are now in use.[20]

By virtue of the standing of *The Small Catechism*, this view is embedded in the Lutheran Confessions.

The range of marriage practices witnessed in the Old Testament is wide: parentally arranged and self-initiated, endogamous and exogamous, monogamous and polygamous, as well as levirate marriage.[21] While the New Testament contains relatively few references to marriage, the views represented range from Jesus' strong prohibition of divorce (Mark 10:11–12) to Paul's advice that it is better to remain "as I myself am" (that is, unmarried)

17. Cf. LWF, "Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality: Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue," 5.

18. James Arne Nestingen, "Luther on Marriage, Vocation, and the Cross," *Word and World* 23 (Winter 2003): 32.

19. Martin Luther, "The Estate of Marriage," in *Luther's Works* 45: 25.

20. "The Small Catechism," in ibid., 367–368.

21. Victor P. Hamilton, "Marriage: Old Testament and Ancient Near East," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4559–4569.

but that "it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (1 Cor 7:8–9). A full documentation of marriage forms over the centuries of history would disclose an amazing variety of cultural and contextual variations, also among Christians in different parts of the world.[22] Still today, a cursory comparison of marriage practices from different continents, or even countries, reveals dramatic contrasts.[23] One complicating factor facing a discussion of marriage practices among churches from the South and North involves the ambiguous history of missionaries to the South who in previous centuries imposed the standard of monogamy upon traditionally polygamous cultures.[24]

The merits and liabilities of any particular structuring of marriage, according to Lutheran understanding, deserves evaluation based on the criterion of how it does or does not contribute to the welfare of human society, not on the basis of biblical or theological arguments alone. How does an innovative form of marriage contribute to the ordering of creation for the common good? Is it possible to allow for different answers to the previous question in the varying contexts of the global Lutheran communion?

The three theses proposed in this article aim to establish a constructive climate for the moral deliberation of homosexuality within the global Lutheran communion. Because this discussion is only in its beginning stages, it is important to establish a framework that can allow for an honest and candid exchange of views without threatening the unity of the faith that binds us together. If the preceding three theses are sound, then it would be possible for the member churches of the global Lutheran communion to disagree, even fiercely, on the topic of homosexuality without allowing the issue to become church/communion dividing. The litmus test is whether the Lutheran conviction about the centrality of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone is sufficient to bind the communion together, even when there are considerable differences of interpretation regarding ethical issues like homosexuality. Is agreement about the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the celebration of the sacraments really sufficient for the unity of the church? How the discussion of homosexuality unfolds in the global Lutheran communion may test this core Lutheran conviction.

A concluding tribute

Karen L. Bloomquist served as professor of ethics at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, from 1997 to 1999. During those years she contributed to the formation and education of many Wartburg graduates who are now serving the ELCA. From that time to the present Dr. Bloomquist has been a valued colleague to the Wartburg faculty, making major contributions to the life of the ecumenical church and to the common good of society. The Wartburg faculty and administration extend our heartfelt gratitude for her years of teaching on the faculties of ELCA seminaries, especially at Wartburg, and for her stellar work leading the Department for Theology and Studies at The Lutheran World Federation, including the hosting at Geneva of January-term immersions for seminary students.

22. See Edward Alexander Westermarck, *The History of Marriage* (London: Macmillan, 1903).

23. Cf. Janice E. Stockard, *Marriage in Culture: Practice and Meaning across Diverse Societies* (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth, 2001).

24. Cf. Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Churches* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1975).

Luther and the Erotic

Elisabeth Gerle
Professor of Ethics, adj. Uppsala University
Church of Sweden, Secretariat for Theology and Ecumenism

In Sweden, the academic discipline of ethics has, for a long time, been influenced by analytical philosophy. Due to this hegemony, gradually the narratives disappeared also within theological ethics. By contrast, my professor, Gustaf Wingren, rarely held a seminar with his graduate students in ethics without telling a story about how Martin Luther had interpreted this special ethical problem. The narratives have long returned with narrative theology, where not only biblical, but all kinds of stories, have been integrated into ethical analysis. Selma Lagerlöf, the world-famous Swedish novelist and Nobel laureate, told intriguing stories permeated with life's ambivalence. As a child, when I was still too young to read, I heard many of her stories, and they gave me a perspective of what I later discovered was referred to as the hiddenness of God.

In an interview, David Tracy says the following about Luther's response to Dionysius:

> Luther rejected Dionysius and started instead with suffering and sin, and utter fragmentation. He had this extraordinary and profound sense of the cross—that we understand God through weakness. But he also had this second sense of the hiddenness, this very strange sense of God beyond the word of the cross. When I think of what that must mean, there is no theoretical solution. You must flee back to the cross. If one wants to see this second type of hiddenness beyond the word, look at the great artists. See an early Ingmar Bergman film—like the one in which the minister screams that God is a spider. If you start with this Lutheran theology of the cross, and this apocalyptic sense of history, then your focus is exactly where it should be: you can't have a totality system; you must focus on the other. As Luther would say, you must focus on the neighbor.[1]

For Martin Luther, the fact that life is tied into a greater web, where desire and letting go vary in an intriguing dance, was a given. As a child, I heard Lagerlöf's stories about Gösta Berling's unsuccessful attempt to escape over the ice with the beautiful Anna Stiernhök, who was engaged to Ferdinand, a man she did not love but whose family and estate she was supposed to save with her fortune. When wolves forced them to return to Anna's in-laws to be, Gösta says, "It was not God's will." Then he continues alone, on his sleigh, crying bitterly. His greatest happiness was lost.

This is a great story about the power of the erotic; strong and compelling, and hence tempting and threatening. This time Eros was not allowed to win. Sintran, who in the book symbolizes evil, appears at the end of Anna's life. She sits in her rocking chair and he asks, "How can you

1. Lois Malcolm, "An Interview with David Tracy," *The Christian Century* February 13–20 (2002): 24–30.

be so convinced that it was God who sent the wolves? Why do you not think that it could have been me?" This is one of the early stories in my life about life's ambivalence: Is it God or the devil?

There is a strong Lutheran undercurrent in Selma Lagerlöf's writings.[2] She lived at a time when the monolithic Lutheran society was challenged and breaking up under pressures from pietistic movements and enlightenment intellectual demands for individual freedom and choice. The revivalist movements condemned Lutheran spirituality as not being spiritual and pietistic enough. In the secular realm, their understanding of the coming kingdom of Christ was a critique of society, contributing to the transformation of a static and feudal order. An egalitarian view of human beings challenged Luther's emphasis on obedience and his focus on the Fourth Commandment. As long as pietism did not lend itself to narrow moralizing, it was a revolutionary force in society. For Lagerlöf, who like Ingmar Bergman belonged to a family of clergy, there was a lot to be defensive about. Hence, she revitalizes some of the best currents in Lutheran ethics, e.g., compassion for everybody within the system, regardless of their status. This is often expressed as a mild melancholy rather like when August Strindberg lets Indra's daughter sigh repeatedly, "Human beings are to be pitied."[3] Life remains existential, and this is perhaps why the narratives as well as the historical personalities are back in ethics.

Eros and Agape

While it used to be only scholars of Latin and medieval German, church historians, and systematic theologians who bothered to try to understand Martin Luther, today journalists, actors, and authors are interested in his persona. His language is evocative and expressive, and it is because of this very spiciness that I have chosen to deal with some of his texts. It is more than form; style and content go together. His drastic, often contradictory, way of expressing himself says something about how he viewed life. This has often been neglected in his followers' attempts to systematize him. He is neither consistent nor coherent, often paradoxical, even repugnant, such as when he writes on the Jews or against the Turks. He contradicts himself and changes his mind. Hence, his theology has been described as dialectic. Form, style, and content are congenial companions, rather like life itself, contradictory, complex, and ambivalent. Life is something to struggle with, reflect upon and to live with joy as well as with sorrow. In the midst of these questions, there is a conviction that the force Luther calls God is more, beyond, yet here.

Luther's influence on the Nordic countries, where after the Reformation the Lutheran faith was the only faith allowed, cannot be overestimated. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an almost symbiotic relationship developed between church and state. The Reformation, as a liberation movement, was turned into nation building and official ideology. Luther's Small Catechism became an ideological tool to control people and to draw the line between those who belonged to the nation and those who did not.[4]

2. Margareta Brandby Cöster, *Att uppfatta allt mänskligt; underströmmar av luthersk livsförståelse i Selma Lagerlöfs författarskap* (To see everything human) (Karlstad: Karlstad University Studies, 2001).

3. From the famous drama "A Dream Play" written by August Strindberg, 1901, first performed 1907. (*Ett drömspel)*

4. See e.g., Elisabeth Gerle, ed., "Nationalism, Reformation and the Other in Denmark and Sweden," *Yearbook Societas*

In this article I will analyze some of Martin Luther's thoughts on sexuality. When Luther speaks about sexuality, he refers to heterosexuality and basically subscribes to the medieval view of women as subordinate, less valuable, and more sinful than men since the Fall. Therefore, I do not think that Martin Luther can give us the right answers to issues pertaining to married or unmarried intimate life. Yet, also in the discussions on manifold loves, I think that there might be some interesting perspectives on sexuality, eroticism, and spirituality that may be important for us to analyze. Figures of thought and metaphors, which since the Reformation have permeated Swedish society—first the monolithic Lutheran society and second in more unconscious secular versions of similar thoughts—need to be studied again. We will need to criticize and abandon some of these thoughts, while others may still be inspiring.

As Luther himself uses expressive language, I have chosen to write in the form of an essay which, according to Theodor Adorno, takes play and joy seriously and does not start with Adam and Eve but rather with what it wants to talk about and stops when it feels ready, not when the subject has been exhausted.[5] For centuries, men have drawn on their experience for developing an ethics of sexuality and marriage. When women entered this field, they often did so on the basis of a justice perspective. The lack of mutuality and sensitivity making women invisible and sometimes leading to open or structural violence has persuaded feminist ethicists to deal with sexuality as an issue of gender justice. There is, however, a danger that, by focusing exclusively on justice, desire and joy disappear in an erotic and sexual relationship. Rita Nakashima Brook changes this perspective. She understands Eros as the moving force of the universe and hence moves beyond the apathetic God to Eros as "the energy of incarnate love."[6] Eros is more than a divine element of, or metaphor for, the universe. Catherine Keller claims that it gives the cosmos priority over ethos so as to avoid anthropocentrism.

> This Eros—divine element or metaphor of the universe—does indeed privilege cosmos over ethos—because otherwise ethics becomes cloyingly anthropocentric, abstracting justice from its planetary flesh and obligation.

She further holds that ethics withers without Eros. Yet, the tension between Eros and ethics cannot be avoided, especially not by those seeking justice in the field of sexuality:

> For Eros severed from ethics will stimulate the ravishing violations that belong to a social structure of dominance and submission, that will soon strangle Eros itself; but an anti-erotic ethos ironically yields the same result: the incapacity to distinguish sexual justice from sexual repression, that will shut down the very energies of social transformation.[7]

An anti-erotic ethos would, however, further undermine the Eros that drives culture, i.e., aesthetics. Herbert Marcuse argued for a "non-repressive culture" akin to Schiller's "aesthetic state." This would be a social order nurturing beauty without

Ethica. (Oxford, 2006).

5. Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie (*Frankfurt am Main: Surkamp Verlag, 1974).

6. Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 49.

7. Catherine Keller, "Afterword: A Theology of Eros, After Tranfiguring Passion," in Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller, *Toward a Theology of Eros: Transforming Passion at the Limits of Discipline.* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 372.

slaves or scapegoats. Regardless of whether this is hopelessly utopian or a real hope, it would mean the transformation of sexuality into Eros. According to Marcuse, the metaphysical insights of the concept of Eros have been driven underground.

> They survived, in eschatological distortion, in many heretic movements, in the hedonistic philosophy. There history has still to be written—as has the history of the transformation of Eros in Agape.[8]

He claims "intriguingly, if rudely" in Keller's reading the gospel's unsublimated agape—as originally identical with Eros—for his hope.[9]

Eros and agape, as competing or complementary forces, have followed Christian thought through history. Within the Lutheran tradition, Anders Nygren created an epoch with his pedagogical presentation of the ground motives agape and Eros, claiming that agape is the only divine love. He claimed that during the Reformation agape reclaimed its proper place.[10] On the other hand, monasteries describe themselves as the proper place of agape. For a study on the transformation of intimacy in late modernity, it would be easy to pursue these well-known paths. Through Martin Luther and the Reformation, self-giving agape once again was honored. Simple, everyday life became a place of spirituality. It is there that my fellow human being needs my care and love, something I am able to give due to the gift of grace, God's self-giving and self-sacrificing love. In my recent writings, I have emphasized the holiness of everyday, ordinary, physical life as an outcome of Reformation thought and its challenges of traditional divisions between the secular and the sacred.[11] In Luther's critique against monasteries and Eros spirituality, he emphasized that ordinary life is just as valuable as that of monks and nuns. However, the dichotomy between Martin Luther and his predecessors may not have been as sharp as we sometimes assume. In her book on Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen has analyzed the thought of this mystic whom we often connect with Martin Luther.[12] Further, as Virginia Burrus intriguingly points out, holiness can be construed as and transformed into erotic art. Holy life may lead to "the extremities of human desire, that (conversely) erotic experience is possibly close to sanctity." Well aware that these are provocative notions, seductive insinuations, even perverse suggestions in traditional reading, she claims that:

> In the stories of saints who steadfastly rejected both the comforts and the confinements of conventional roles and relationships (swapping and discarding "identities" like so many threadbare cloaks), we may discover not only evidence of the historic transformation of desire but also testimony to the transformative power of Eros.[13]

8. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press 1955, 1966).

9. Ibid., pp. 126; 70. Marcuse footnotes without comment Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros,* (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelse, 1930).

10. Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, tr. by Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953)

11. Elisabeth Gerle, (ed.) *Luther som utmaning (Luther as challenge*) (Stockholm: Verbum, 2008).

12. Else Marie Wiberg-Pedersen, *Bernhard af Clairvaux, teolog eller mystiker?* (Copenhagen: Anis, 2008).

13. Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 2.

Hence, not even the well-known Protestant critique of monastic life and Eros spirituality can easily be overtaken. While one may suggest that the ethic of monastic life moved into ordinary life due to the Reformation, what happened to Eros spirituality? Did desire, Eros and intimacy disappear during weekdays or was there still room for Eros spirituality? Agape became an ideal and was cherished by the theology of the cross, where especially women were supposed to nurture life of the other in a self-sacrificing way. However, self-sacrificing love that does not notice power relations takes high risks independent of sex and gender. That the reception and hermeneutics of Lutheran thought and theology have taken place within an anthropomorphic, patriarchal worldview does not make things easier regarding Luther. There are many signs that he himself had a more complex understanding of the erotic and sexuality where desire and joy were essential. In the reflexivity of late modernity that emphasizes the ambivalence of life and interpretation, I am revisiting this field. Like Virginia Burrus I am convinced that there is a strong need

> [to] affirm the holiness of a love that is simultaneously embodied and transcendent, sensual and spiritual, painful and joyous; that may encompass but can by no means be limited to (indeed may at points entail disciplined refusal of) the demands of either biological reproduction or institutionalized marriage; that furthermore resists the modern cult of orgasm.[14]

My methodology tries to honor that our times are radically different from the sixteenth century. Rather, respecting the insight of plurality that not everything can be compared, I want to find the "passages," to use a term Lyotard borrows from Kant.[15] I will try to find passages between different rationalities without claiming general criteria, hoping that historical material may bring other perspectives to contemporary discussions. My aim is to take some of Luther's remarks on the erotic, sexuality and intimacy as my point of departure in pursuing a non-exploitative, mutual intimacy where Eros, sexuality and spirituality, immanence and transcendence are brought together in search for healing our planetary destruction so connected to our inability to see our belonging to the cosmos. This is a way of testing whether Eros theology may break through some traditional dualisms in Lutheran reception history. Luther is not known for ecological awareness or mutuality between women and men. Yet, his strong emphasis on the gift of creation to be received in gratitude and trust made him surprisingly free in thought and deed. He also talked about human beings as co-creators and stewards of God's gifts. His concrete way of thinking may potentially help us discover new relations between Eros, agape, and creation.

In relation to sexuality, I maintain that, as is the case for most of us, Luther's personal experiences influenced his theology and practice. In 1525, Martin Luther married a former nun, Katharina von Bora. She was part of the early Reformation movement and when the group did not find her a good husband, she herself proposed to Dr. Luther.[16] Their marriage seems to have been quite a happy one, and Luther often mentions Katharina, whom

14. **Ibid., 1–2.**

15. Jean-Francois **Lyotard,** *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 1979, 1984).

16. **Birgit Stolt,** *Luther själv, Hjärtats och glädjens teolog* (Luther himself, the theologian of heart and joy) (Skellefteå: Artos, 2004), 184.

he called "Käthe," "Dear Ms. Käthe," or "my Katie" in his letters.[17] She had learned some Latin in the convent and actively participated in the table talks that were held in a mixture of German and Latin. The income from her brewery and renting rooms to students provided an economic basis for her husband, who spent his time doing research; translating; and writing pamphlets, books, hymns, and sermons.[18] Katharina is described as exceptionally talented.[19] James Arne Nestingen writes

> If she took over a traditional role, bearing six children while managing a splaying, multifarious household and looking after a husband prone to *Anfechtung* and increasingly to physical ills, she also established her individuality.[20]

Luther also wanted his wife to be the trustee of their children, arguing that she, as the mother, understood what was best for them just as God does in our case.[21] While everyone's life was important, Luther did not emphasize equality in our terms. Every person had their position in the structure. Further, it was inner rather than outer freedom that was important.

Nestingen holds that after 1525 Luther's theological reflections became more personal. In 1531, in a sermon for a wedding, Luther writes:

> The ancient doctors have rightly preached that marriage is praiseworthy because of children, loyalty and love. But the physical benefit is also a precious thing and justly extolled as the chief virtue of marriage, namely that spouses can rely upon each other and with confidence entrust everything they have on earth to each other, so that it is as safe with one's spouse as with oneself.[22]

Mutuality and trust are stressed here long before the modern emphasis on the inner qualities of sentimental love.

This is not an instrumentalized view of marriage, which is rationalized only through procreation. Luther praises physical love and trust that allow spouses to be at home with one another. Moreover, it is not only the man who in a Levinasian sense receives a home through the woman, but because of their shared confidence, the spouses

17. Jeanette Smith, "C. Katharina von Bora Through Five Centuries: A Historiography," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (1999).

18. Stolt, 186–191.

19. Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1971), 23-44.

20. James Arne Nestingen, "Luther on Marriage, Vocation, and the Cross," *Word & World,* Volume 23, Number 1, Winter (2003): 34.

21. Cecilia Nahnfeldt, *Kallelse och kön: Schabloner i läsningen av Matteusevangeliets berättelser* (Karlstad: Karlstad University Studies 2006), 66; Pernilla Parenmalm, "Arvet efter Luther" in Anne-Lousie Erikssson *Var kan vi finna en nådig Gud? Om könsmaktsordning i kyrka och teologi* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universtity) Working Papers in Theology 2, (2002), 50.

22. *Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 73 vols. In 90 vols. (Weimar: Herman Böhlaus Nachfolger 1883-2009), 60.

are at home with each other. In other words, mutuality and trust are stressed here long before the modern emphasis on the inner qualities of sentimental love. As Nestingen points out, for Luther marriage and the household are "interpreted *coram deo*, in terms of God's work as Creator in and through them." Luther connects this with some of the "given characteristic of creation itself—the existence of females and males, for instance, or the fact that life springs from the relationship between them."[23] Further, it is according to this order that "God as Creator continues to give life to creature and creation, using wives and husbands as his 'hands,' 'channels,' or 'masks' for this purpose." He would claim that the household is more basic than government.[24]

Nevertheless, it is easy to find misogynistic and chauvinistic quotes in Luther.[25] What then is the point of dealing with Luther's reflections if one is striving for an ethics of mutuality, transcending the traditional gulf between ethics and Eros, agape and Eros, which has permeated Lutheran theology? My answer is that there is a passion in Luther's defense of sexuality, indicating that Luther sees sexuality as God's gift. Here, he departs from Augustinian thought, which linked sexuality to inherited sin. For Luther, concrete everyday life does not threaten his relation with God. Rather, he recommends the company of friends, women, and wine as tools to drive the devil away. In the midst of his patriarchal thought pattern, many life affirming sides can be highlighted that may contribute to a panentheistic theology of Eros keeping spirituality and the erotic together. In line with Adorno's understanding of the essay, my attempt is not so much to distill what is eternal from the transitory as to eternalize what is transitory.[26] Eros is one of those forces sustaining and renewing life. Like all of life, it is under threat of being destroyed and/or of being driven by pure self-interest and can therefore not be replaced easily by agape. These two forms of love must live in mutual exchange, continuously challenging and inspiring each other. Catherine Keller suggests that the dualism between Eros and agape may be healed through what she describes as "amatory oscillations."[27]

> Eros irreducibly encodes desire for something more, for an other in excess of the self. Agape just as stubbornly signifies the gift of that excess. Eros may drive either greed or invitation; agape may express either domination or welcome. If, however, they oscillate as complementary flows or gestures of love, the desire grows in generosity, even as the gift becomes even more inviting.[28]

Eros can then grow into generosity and gift and agape become inviting.

23. Nestingen. 35.

24. Oswald Bayer, "Nature and Institution: Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders" tr. by Luis Dreher, *Lutheran Quarterly,* vol. 12 (1998), 125–129.

25. One classic is: "God has created man with a broad chest and shoulders, not broad hips, so that man can understand wisdom. But the place where the filth flows out is small. With women, it's the other way around: That's why they have a lot of filth and little wisdom." Quoted in Merry E. Wiesner, "Luther and women: The death of two Marys," in Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper & Raphael Samuel, eds., *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 295.

26. Adorno. 37.

27. Keller. 373.

28. Ibid.

Critique of monastery life

Martin Luther criticized monasteries for two reasons. The first was that many nuns and monks had been forced to take vows. Hence, it was not their free choice but something that had been laid upon their conscience as a burden. On 6 August 1524, he writes the following in a letter to several nuns from Wittenberg:

> …there are two reasons for which life at the convent and vows may be forsaken: The one is where men's laws and life within the order are being forced, where there is no free choice, where it is put upon the conscience as a burden. In such cases it is time to run away, leaving the convent and all it entails behind. If this is your situation, where you are not freely choosing the cloister, where your conscience is being forced, then call your friends. Let them help you escape and, if the law allows, take care of you or provide for you. If friends and parents are unwilling to help, obtain help from other godly people, regardless of whether your parents become angry, die or recover.[29]

Luther even encourages the nuns to resist their parents should this be necessary.[30] To place daughters in a convent, even against their own will, was common among the upper classes so as not to be liable to provide for them. Luther argues against this and in favor of the free choice of the nuns.

The second reason why nuns had the right to abandon their vows and escape from the convent was what Martin Luther calls "the flesh." The human being was not made to live in chastity. Luther claimed quite the opposite; men and women are created for life in common. Sexuality is created by God, just as are food, drink, sleep, and rest.

> The second reason is the flesh: Though womenfolk are ashamed to admit to this, nevertheless Scripture and experience show that among many thousands there is not a one to whom God has given to remain in pure chastity. A woman has no control over herself. God has made her body to be with man, to bear children and to raise them as the words of Genesis 1:1 clearly state, as is evident by the members of the body ordered by God Himself. Therefore food and drink, sleep and wakefulness have all been created by God. Thus He has also ordered man and woman to be in marital union. Suffice it to say that no one needs to be ashamed over how God has made and created him, not having been given the high, rare mercy to do otherwise.[31]

In my chosen hermeneutics of reflexivity Luther's assertions are not seen as the answer to what is good or evil, right or wrong. It is evident that, in the eyes of our time, Luther here devalues women in spite of having referred to them in the same letter as independent, moral subjects. All of a sudden, women are described as being without control over themselves and their sexuality and to be there for a man and to give birth to children in accordance with Genesis. Luther limits the God-given role of women to being mate and mother. The intellectual and spiritual independence that the convent had offered disappears in his interpretation. As Lyndal Roper has pointed out, Luther's static view

29. Martin Luther, "Letter to several nuns, 6 Aug, Wittenberg." English translation from *Briefe aus dem Jahre 1524,* No. 733–756, *Weimar Ausgabe.* Translated by Erika Bullman Flores. www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/nuns.txt

30. He is otherwise known to preach obedience to parents and to emphasize the Fourth Commandment.

31. Luther.

of different roles in the estates is limiting choices for many women, especially when the connection to the household with husband and children is combined with expectations of subordination to the husband.[32] Luther basically subscribed to the medieval view that women were destroyed by the Fall, but did not consider a man capable of controlling his sexuality either. Neither man nor woman, however, ought to be ashamed of their sexual desire. God has created them thus. Luther emphasizes that God gave desire to both sexes.

Despite our distance to the feudal society of Luther's day, it is nonetheless important not to lose sight of what was evident in the sixteenth century. The household was more than the nuclear family, which in modernity has become the private sphere. It was first and foremost the economic sphere offering some aspects of independence due to economics. One may ponder whether Katie's outspokenness had something to do with the fact that she was the family provider.

While Luther shared the patriarchal and feudal perspectives of his time, treating women as independent and free individuals was more remarkable for his time. One of Luther's contributions to the transformation of intimacy is that he does not pit matter and spirit against each other. The body as well as the soul is God's creation. What for Luther is "natural" is in line with God's intentions with creation and nothing to work against. Contemporary discussions on marriage and sexuality—homo and hetero—show how easily what one understands as natural is also described as God-given. Hence, reason's review of itself has, as the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas points out, a lot more to do. With him, we may agree that we need more reason, not less.[33] Yet, reason is not enough. As Martha Nussbaum points out, we also need feelings, intuition, and passion.[34]

For Luther affirming sexuality and the erotic is related to creation and is, therefore, seen as something natural. There are also many indications that he sees erotic and earthly love as a source of joy and power in everyday life. Ordinary life is also the time and space of vocation. Can this ordinary life, then, be influenced by joy and the erotic, not only by duty? Birgit Stolt, professor of German language, who has translated Luther's Table Talks and written widely on Luther, claims that the light of grace and love transforms the duties of everyday life into something pleasurable. Salvation and the love of Christ also lighten up life and the human condition in creation. I, therefore, want to suggest that there might be more oscillations between Eros and agape in Luther's life and reflections than we usually think. Here we may find bridges to eroticize our spirituality and spiritualize our erotic.

32. Lyndal Roper. *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (New York: Oxford, 1989).

33. Jürgen Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion: Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005). Jürgen Habermas, *Between naturalism and religion: philosophical essays*; tr. by Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008).

34. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Loves' Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

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Karen Bloomquist, Luther, and the Challenge of Climate Justice

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda
Professor of Christian Ethics, School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University

One does not often encounter such a stunning mixture of intellectual acumen and ability to read the signs of the times, pull diverse people into fruitful collaborative work, cross cultural and geographical boundaries with grace and apparent ease, wed social analysis to theological reflection, and do all that with a sense of humanity, humility and humor. Mix it all together and the result is Karen Bloomquist, a woman of the church, at home also in the academy and the world of social justice activism. Her art is applying the best of Christian intellectual, moral and liturgical traditions to bring the gospel to bear on issues of burning moral import in our world today.

What can one write to honor the person and work of Karen Bloomquist? I propose exploring and using her own wisdom to further a purpose to which she dedicates her life: promoting justice in the world through the life of the church. Herein I do so by identifying four defining threads woven throughout Karen's work that are grounded in her heritage as a Lutheran theologian and ethicist, and then applying those threads to the central question that she poses in one of her recent projects for The Lutheran World Federation. It is *God, Creation, and Climate Change,* and the series of gatherings culminating in that volume. Karen poses perhaps the paramount question facing the church of our day in that volume, "How do we participate in the redemption of all creation to which Scripture testifies, and embody hope for the future rather than succumbing to despair?"[1]

Karen is an eminently Lutheran theologian. This statement bears many connotations. Here, I mean that she is profoundly shaped by central aspects of Martin Luther's theological methodology and claims. In this essay, I identify four of them as gifts that a Luther-an take on Lutheran traditions might offer to the quest for answers to the aforementioned question. We consider each of the four in sequence, noting its roots in Luther and its presence in Bloomquist's work, and then—to varying degrees—building constructively on it in response to the question at hand.

Theology arises from the life of the church… Confronts what obscures the gospel[2]

Luther's genius was, in part, his keen ability to hone in on whatever human construct was obscuring the gospel in his time and place. He cut to the quick of what held people in bondage, preventing them from opening their arms to receive

1. Karen Bloomquist, ed., *God, Creation, and Climate Change: Spiritual and Ethical Perspectives* (Lutheran University Press and Lutheran World Federation, 2009), 6.

2. Karen's recent work with the LWF, a four-volume series titled *Theology in the Life of the Church,* exemplifies this commitment.

and trust God's love, and to live in accord with it. If this meant unmasking evil that parades as good, then such was the work of theology. He was convinced that theology worthy of that name "calls a thing what it actually is"[3] even if doing so is dangerous or socially costly. "A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."[4]

Luther was also a master of the dialectic between theological continuity and reform. He claimed ancient Christian truths, holding them up in evangelical defiance against religious beliefs and practices that blocked people's trust in God's love. His God was a living God who did not say the same thing—or call humans to say the same thing—in every context. Listening to the Spirit of this God rendered radical and controversial reform in theology, church practice and ways of life.

Contemporary theology, then, in the mode of Martin Luther, arises from people's struggles to trust the boundless grace of the God revealed in Jesus Christ and to live in accord with it in response to their contextual circumstances. A particular focus of Lutheran theological inquiry will be to identify, disclose, and confront dominant institutions, beliefs, or social forces that obscure the gospel, this being a crucial aspect of proclamation. Where evil wears the guise of good, theology will "call a thing what it actually is," freeing people from deception and distraction that impede their hearing of the word. The tools of that evangelical defiance are traditional faith claims, brought into each new context to assist the church in seeing what God is doing in that context so that the church, "empowered by the Holy Spirit," may fulfill its call to "bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world…to participate in God's mission…."[5] This entails a necessary and fruitful tension between consistency with historical interpretations of doctrines and "re-forming" them in order that their truth may be heard in each new time and place.

However, to claim that theology arises from the life and struggles of the church begs a question, so often ignored until recent decades: which parts of the church and which people within it? The North Atlantic church is slowly realizing that limiting theological interpretation to the lenses of the Global North has diminished our capacity to hear and heed the word of God, and hence to participate in God's work on earth. In this movement, Karen has been a moving force. She has pushed the Lutheran church worldwide to heed especially the voices of people historically overlooked in the shaping of Lutheran theology. In 1998, she called for Lutheran Christian traditions to be interpreted, articulated and shaped by the perspectives of people who traditionally have been "othered" by those at the center of power and privilege in society and in formal theology. She then proceeded to enact that call through her work with the LWF.

Theology and the work of the church, thus understood, entail vast expanses of moral ambiguity. Evil and good are intertwined. With vexing frequency, it is unclear which aspects of "a thing" are good and which are evil.

Karen's work has unfolded along these lines. These tendencies inherited from Luther characterize her contributions as director of the LWF's Department of Theology and Studies and before that as Director of Studies for the Evangelical Lutheran

3. Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," Thesis 21, LW 31, 40.

4. Ibid.

5. *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America®,* 4.01–02.

Church in America. Her work reveals her steadfast commitment to theology arising from the life of the church—as a global communion—in order to serve the church and the world. She draws upon ancient Christian faith claims, holding them up to a double hermeneutic of critique and profound trust in order to bear fruit in the face of vexing current struggles. Persistently, she prioritizes the authority of voices from the Global South. With keen insight, she poses questions that will free people individually and as church from social forces and arrangements that would blind them to the profound power of God's gracious love. And she insists that what it means to embody God's astounding, confronting, healing, and liberating love in contexts of moral ambiguity and complexity is often more a question than a certainty.

Karen's work related to climate change exemplifies these Lutheran proclivities. Global climate change poses an unprecedented and dire threat to the lives and well-being of many people in the Global South. Indicators of that threat are too many to name here. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts 150 million environmental refugees by the year 2050. Rising sea levels will have dire consequences for low-lying islands in the Pacific. Many of Asia's most densely populated areas and productive lands are on or near coastal areas under risk of flooding.

In other words, the millions of environmental refugees will disproportionately be people who are economically impoverished and not white. So, too, the people who starve as climate change diminishes crop yields of "rice, wheat, corn, beans, and potatoes—staples for millions of people and major food crops in Africa…. rice may disappear because of higher temperatures in the tropics."[6] "Water resources [too] are inextricably linked with climate."[7] Drought and its impact on food production "especially in semi-arid and subhumid region" in particular, is life threatening to those already on the margins of power and privilege the world over. [8] In short, people who are colored white and have relative economic wealth stand a greater chance of protection from the impacts of climate change and toxic waste than do many of the earth's people.

> United States society generally accepts as a "good life" patterns of consumption, production and acquisition that threaten the earth's capacity to sustain life as we know it.

The terrible irony for Christians in the United States is that we are primary causes of this deadly disaster, while our "neighbors" in impoverished parts of the

6. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2007: Working Group II: Impacts, Adaption and Vulnerability, 10.2.2.3 (505).

7. Ibid., 10.2.1.1. (495).

8. Ibid.

world will "die first."[9] United States society generally accepts as a "good life" patterns of consumption, production and acquisition that threaten the earth's capacity to sustain life as we know it. In general—but not exclusively—we demonstrate effective allegiance to ways of living that endanger the earth's life-systems, and the lives of global "neighbors" far less responsible for climate change. Tacitly agreeing to continue with life as we know it, we acquiesce to destruction parading as good despite the consequences.

This reality is, I contend, a monumental obstacle to the proclamation and hearing of the gospel today. How do "economically privileged" Christians in the United States speak of God's love to and with people whose lives we are unrepentantly destroying? What does it mean to be in communion with someone whose child we are killing? How do we proclaim the word among ourselves knowing that we are killing and doing little to stop it?

True to form, Karen Bloomquist recognized this situation as a central struggle arising from the life of the church, especially in the Global South. Seeing this reality as contrary to the message of God's love, she called upon voices from the Global South and North to guide the church in responding faithfully to it. Moreover, she insists that climate change and our (the church of the Global North's) responsibility for it must be addressed theologically.

The people of God are to address reality theologically

Climate change presents theological challenges never before encountered. Consider four of them. One pertains to the claim held in common by the monotheistic traditions, that God creates the earth and its bounty. The first great treatise against "heresy" was against the very notion that the earth itself is not created by the God of all that is, the God of Jesus Christ. In the late second century, Irenaeus of Lyons set out to refute the claim, prevalent in some branches of the emerging church, that the God of Jesus Christ, and revealed in Jesus Christ, was not the God who had created the heavens and the earth. Between that creator and the true high God, asserted this "heresy," was a vast, unbridgeable separation. The creator god was a lesser god, a fallen god, a demiurge. "Orthodox" Christianity—theological perspectives and practices considered "true" in relationship to stands deemed incompatible with that truth—emerged in response to this very claim. Irenaeus coined the term *gnostikoi*, those capable of learning, to identify various schools making this claim, some of whom also claimed certain other perspectives, including docetism (Christ appeared to have been human with a human body and to have died on the cross); a tri-fold hierarchical theological anthropology in which humans fell into the classes of pneumatic (spiritual), psychic (ensouled), or hylic (material); and a spiritualized soteriology that denied the resurrection of the body and assured salvation for the pneumatics alone. Groups labeled "gnostic" were far too varied to be lumped together.[10] The common thread it seems was rejecting the creator God of the Hebrew Scriptures as the high god of Jesus Christ and of all creation. This is all to say

9. Christoph Stueckelberger, "Who Dies First? Who Is Sacrificed First? Ethical Aspects of Climate Justice," in Bloomquist, *God, Creation, and Climate Change*, 47–62.

10. Note that neither orthodox Christianity nor the strands labeled gnostic and deemed heretical were univocal…both were diverse and highly varied. Those labeled heresy were in fact "survivals of opinions which, prior to the declaration of heresy, had been fully at home and widely held within the mainstream Christian community." Dennis Minns, *Irenaues of Lyons,* 11.

that, from the earliest times, the church has held that the God revealed in Jesus Christ created and creates the cosmos.

Indeed, God created a planet that spawns and supports life with a complexity and generosity beyond human ken. Fundamental to Christian and Jewish faith is the claim that it is "good" (Gen 1). According to the first creation story in Genesis, "God saw that it was *tob*." The Hebrew *tob*, while often translated as "good," also means "life furthering." It is that very "*tob*," life-generating capacity that we are undoing, uncreating. We—or rather, some of us—have become the "uncreators." Herein lies an unprecedented theological challenge. Never before has humankind played this role.

A second theological dilemma arises from the affirmation, central to Christian faith, that God reveals Godself. Christian traditions hold not only that God created and is creating a life regenerating and good creation, but also that God reveals Godself in that creation; it is the "first book of revelation." Humankind is destroying central features of the "first book of revelation." If to do and be as God would have us, we must receive God's self-revelation, then God's self-revelation is necessary for the life of faith. What do we make of destroying its first source?

Thirdly, Christians claim that human beings are the creatures created "in the image of God." However, as Catholic moral theologian, Dan Maguire, asserts, climate change if unchecked renders us "an endangered species." How do we make sense of a human trajectory now aimed at destroying the creatures crafted "in the image of God"?

These three unprecedented theological challenges are accompanied by a fourth that is far more familiar. Two millennia of Christians and the Hebrew people before them claimed that God calls God's people to receive God's love, and then "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut 6:5); and "to love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19:18). This is our lifework, to be empowered by God to receive God's love, and to live that justice making mysterious and marvelous love into the world. Life was breathed into us for a purpose. We are here to let God work through us, in us, and among us to bring healing from all forms of sin and brokenness that would thwart God's gift of abundant life for all. We are to participate in what God is doing on earth. This, according to one widespread understanding of the Christian story, is the human vocation. In a particular way, it is the vocation of the community of communities spanning centuries, continents and cultures that understands itself to be Christ's body on earth.[11]

Christian academic and ecclesial circles, for the most part, affirm that "love" is, from a biblical perspective, the primary moral norm for human life.[12] Loving "neighbour" as self—or loving neighbor as

11. This theological moral anthropology is contestable, as are all theological claims. Here is not the place to argue it. Suffice it to say that this understanding of human moral being and vocation has been held by many throughout the two millennia of Christian history, has been expressed in multiple ways, and is widely accepted today.

12. The norm, of course, is derived (in large part, but not exclusively) from the statement attributed to Jesus by the authors of Matthew and Mark, and drawn by Jesus from Torah: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:40; Mark 12:31). According to the author of Matthew, Jesus goes on to declare that "everything in the law and the prophets hangs on" this commandment and the commandment to love God (Matt 22:40). Mark's record of Jesus words is similar: "There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31). According to Paul, "the whole law is summed up in love" (Rom 13:10).

God loves—along with loving God, commonly is seen as the essence of morality. "It is the biblical view that being moral is loving well."[13] "In fact, the whole thrust of biblical religion is toward the recovery of the broken human capacity to love."[14]

With this claim, all consensus and certainty cease; what "love" implies for contemporary life is a matter of debate. The moral weight of neighbor-love depends on what is meant by the term.[15]

Countless volumes have explored that question. Here we note just two characteristics of love as a biblical norm. Love implies active commitment to the well-being of who or what is loved. And, where systemic injustice causes unnecessary suffering, seeking the well-being or good of who or what is loved inherently entails seeking to undo injustice. That is, the norm of neighbor-love includes the norm of justice. Because doing justice necessarily means active engagement in challenging social structures that enable injustice, neighbor-love implies that engagement. Where systemic injustice exists, neighbor-love entails seeing that injustice for what it is; unmasking it; resisting it; envisioning alternatives more resonant with faith; and living toward them.[16]

The implication is shaking: If Christians fail to repent of the climate injustice that we are committing against neighbour, are we not defying the call to love? Can we claim to be serving the well-being of people in need by contributing to relief and development efforts both here and abroad, if we continue to live in ways that will flood some of those people out of their homelands or destroy their water, fish, or grain supplies? Multitudes of people will die as a result of climate change. Can we claim to be one in Christ with the people we are killing?

Karen Bloomquist, reflecting her roots in Martin Luther, urges the church to address reality theologically. Here we have considered four theological challenges posed for people of the Global North by the contemporary reality of climate change. They are the problems of becoming "uncreators," destroying central features of God's "first book of revelation," endangering the species that claims to be the image of God, and transgressing the call to love. These are manifestations of structural sin.

Hope and moral authority lie in God's promises

Karen Bloomquist prods the church

13. Daniel Maguire, *The Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity: Reclaiming the Revolution* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 211.

14. Ibid., 208.

15. Volumes could be written about the different and conflicting construals of neighbor-love and its moral implications throughout the histories of Christian and Jewish traditions.

16. These four dimensions of seeking justice cohere with Walter Brueggemann's articulation of "doing justice" according to the Hebrew Scriptures. See Walter Brueggemann, "Voices of the Night—Against Justice," chap. in Walter Brueggemann, Thomas H. Groome, and Sharon Parks, *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986). He writes: Doing justice implies "relentless critique of injustice" (7); "envisions a changed social system" (10); and works toward "nothing less than the dismantling of the presently known world for the sake of an alternative world not yet embodied" (11). More specifically, Brueggemann argues, doing justice, biblically understood, includes "sorting out what belongs to whom and returning it to them. Such an understanding implies that there is a right distribution of goods and access to the sources of life. There are certain entitlements that cannot be mocked"(5).

and its theologies to face and take seriously realities that—if honestly faced—defy hope. Hope and a sense of moral agency are likely casualties if one were to take seriously climate change and its probable consequences, especially if one simultaneously faces squarely the power of contemporary empire and the forces lined up against those who challenge it. In theological terms, it is a matter of facing up not only to the pernicious presence of sin—which seems rather easy for Lutherans—but to the pervasive presence and demonic power of "structural sin."

In part because our hope and moral agency might be dashed, we evade admitting in the depths of our beings the kinds of ecological and human brutality that our lives have helped to cause. Needed, if we are to do so, are a sense of hope and a will to act that can withstand the awful message of the earth's distress and countless people who have died and will die as a consequence of the ways of life we assume to be normal. Herein lies, I believe, an incredible gift of Lutheran theology that is consistently offered by Karen in her work. Our hope and power to act, she insists, rest neither in logical likelihood of success nor in our own ability always to act justly; hope rests in "what God has done, is doing, and promises to bring about."[17] This theological claim—also a faith claim—quietly pervades her work. "Our hope is in the justice that God will bring about."[18]

The Latin root of the English word, "authority" (*auctor*), means inventor, creator, or that which authorizes, grants power, brings something about, makes something happen. That which brings something about or makes it happen—our fundamental moral authority— is that which grants hope and a sense of moral power.

The church is called to confess in word and deed who God is, what God has done and is doing, and what God promises to bring about. The church is called to discern where God is active in the world, working to fulfill the promise of abundant life for all of creation, and to participate in that work. This is what constitutes the moral life of the church. In her writing, Karen Bloomquist consistently reminds that our source of hope and power to heed our call—that is, our moral authority—is indeed "what God has done, is doing, and promises to bring about."[19]

The church is called to discern where God is active in the world, working to fulfill the promise of abundant life for all of creation, and to participate in that work.

Some warn that utter trust in God to fulfill God's promise grants freedom to desist from human efforts toward justice,

17. Karen Bloomquist, *Communion, Responsibility, Accountability: Responding As a Lutheran Communion to Neoliberal Globalization*, Documentation No. 50, 11.

18. Karen Bloomquist and John Stumme, eds., *Promise of Lutheran Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 8.

19. Karen Bloomquist, *Communion, Responsibility, and Accountability,* 11.

including climate justice. To the contrary, this trust grants quite the opposite: freedom to engage fully in those efforts. God, as understood by Luther and also by Karen Bloomquist, works through human beings to fulfill God's promise.

God's abiding power and presence working through human relationships and all of creation

I was confronted recently by a dear friend who heard me responding to a question of whether or not I had hope for humankind given the realities of ecological devastation we now face. I asserted hope in knowing that "the end of the story" (whatever it might look like) was in "God's hands." "But, Cynthia," responded this friend, "you must emphasize not only that God's promise is trustworthy but also that God is at work in the world to fulfill those ends." Therein too lies our hope and moral power.

Martin Luther, Lutherans readily assert, was an incarnational theologian. The implications are manifold. One is that God is at work in the world, using fallible and finite earthlings to bring about God's purposes. We are, Luther asserts, God's hands and feet. In sermon after sermon, he proclaims the power of the Holy Spirit, working in the lives of believers, enabling us to serve the common good, despite our inevitable shortcomings in doing so. At times, Luther emphasizes, God is working not only in human creatures but also in other creatures and elements.

Karen Bloomquist is an incarnational theologian in much the same way. God's power and presence working through the communion of believers and all of creation is an abiding theme in her work. It is explicit in her writing and implicit in her unwavering commitment to bring the call to "love neighbor as self" and the Spirit's presence to bear on the "defining realities and struggles or our time."[20]

In closing

In her recent work, Karen Bloomquist has called the church to face theologically and practically an unprecedented moral challenge confronting humankind, and in particular the Global North. We have constructed ways of living that threaten the earth's capacity to be what God created: a life-furthering world. We are "uncreating." In this context, Bloomquist asks, How is the church to "participate in the redemption of all creation to which Scripture testifies, and embody hope for the future rather than succumbing to despair"?[21] The question warrants the church's full attention. Valid responses will emerge through the "communal" work of the *communio*, its many parts informing, challenging, and nurturing each other. As one small contribution to that multivalent and multivocal effort, here we have considered four defining aspects of Martin Luther's theological method and claims that also are central in Karen Bloomquist's work. Together, these four shed light on what the church may offer to the "great work" of humankind today: to forge sustainable earth-human relations that are marked by compassion and justice within and among human societies. May the church be thankful that God called and equipped Karen Bloomquist to help the it participate in God's work on this splendid and suffering planetary home. May we be thankful, too, that she has heeded that call.

20. Ibid.

21. Bloomquist, *God, Creation, and Climate Change*, 5, 6.

Empowerment and Discernment in Diaspora Situations—Thoughts on Theology and the Resilience of Christians in Indonesia[1]

Simone Sinn
University of Münster, Germany

In today's globalized world, major world religions are paid public attention only when they trigger off global dynamics. Local faith communities—Christian, Muslim or otherwise—and the meaningful ways in which they live out their faith remain largely unnoticed. Nevertheless, from a theological perspective, the ethos of local faith communities that live in relation to a specific time and place is of vital importance.

In this article, I shall explore the situation of Christians in contemporary Indonesia. I shall argue that substantial theological reflection is needed in order to respond to the current challenges emerging not only out of the vibrant religious diversity in the archipelago, but involving controversial government policies with regard to religious affairs and related to the significant changes in society over recent years.

1. In tribute to Karen L. Bloomquist for whom I worked from September 2006 to April 2009 as theological assistant in the Department for Theology and Studies of The Lutheran World Federation. This article is written in the context of my PhD research on Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia.

The following explorations address the key role of two basic functions of theology: to empower and to discern. These constitute an important resource for faith communities, especially those where Christians live in diaspora situations. Theology is meaningful and relevant as it strengthens people's agency and their capacity to discern complex situations from faith-based perspectives. With regard to people's existential realities, theology does not remain at a safe distance, confining itself to explaining the world, but gets in touch with deep concerns and thus contributes to the resilience of individuals and communities.

Karen L. Bloomquist is one of the theologians in the global Lutheran communion who has tirelessly and substantially contributed to such theological reflection by highlighting the importance of local faith communities and of doing theology in relation to specific contexts. She has encouraged theologians in many parts of the world to do imaginative and critical theological reflection out of their specific context and in dialogue with other contexts.

One important focus of Bloomquist's

work is the public witness of churches.[2] Out of their daily struggles at the local level, churches are called to engage in public discourse on justice and peace. At the numerous consultations Bloomquist organized as director of the Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), she addressed this issue and challenged theologians and church leaders to respond. At a 2008 seminar at Hong Kong she remarked that:

> [c]ongregations in Asia and elsewhere serve the needs of their members, their immediate communities, or ethnic groups in many ways—especially through diaconal work in education and health. But how does the church as an institution engage with the social, economic and political realities that affect all people in a society? How does the church exercise its public calling in society—engaging with and challenging wider policies affecting justice, peace and the welfare of all?[3]

All churches, whether they are large or small, must engage in public witness. Public witness is not primarily an issue of numbers, but of the church's ethos and mindset. Accordingly, Bloomquist's theological work continuously points churches to Paul's call, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

In light of the dramatic shifts in Indonesia's sociopolitical landscape since 1998, this call has become highly relevant for Christians in Indonesia. Andreas A. Yewangoe, the current chair of the Indonesian Council of Churches, repeatedly refers to this verse. His theological reflections resonate with Bloomquist's concerns as he encourages the churches to engage with civil society and thus bear meaningful public witness.[4] He consciously reflects on the diaspora situation of Christianity in Indonesia, without letting his theology be determined by that situation. He empowers the faithful and identifies contemporary spiritual and societal challenges.

In this essay, I shall briefly outline the Indonesian context, introduce Yewangoe's perspectives and finally show how these perspectives contribute to the perseverance and stability, i.e., the resilience of Christians in Indonesia.

Increasing diaspora consciousness among Christians in Indonesia

Indonesia's capacity to embrace wide religious and ethnic plurality is well-known.

2. See e.g., Karen L. Bloomquist, ed., *Communion, Responsibility, Accountability: Responding as a Lutheran Communion to Neoliberal Globalization,* LWF Documentation 50 (Geneva: LWF, 2004); Karen L. Bloomquist, ed., *Lutheran Ethics at the Intersections of God's One World,* LWF Studies (Geneva: LWF, 2005); Karen L. Bloomquist, ed., *Being the Church in the Midst of Empire: Trinitarian Reflections,* Theology in the Life of the Church series, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: LUP, 2007).

3. Karen L. Bloomquist, "Toward a More Public Witness of Churches," in, *Identity, Survival, Witness: Reconfiguring Theological Agendas*, Karen L. Bloomquist, ed., Theology in the Life of the Church series, vol. 3 (Geneva: LWF, 2008), 125.

4. Andreas A. Yewangoe comes from Sumba, an island in the Eastern part of Indonesia. He was director of the theological seminary in Kupang in the 1990s and was elected chair of the Indonesian Council of Churches in 2004, and reelected in 2009 for another five years.

Despite the strong Asian sense of peace and harmony and the country's constant affirmation of unity in diversity, the conflictive potential of such diversity is obvious. Conflicts exist, sometimes deeply hidden, other times simmering just below the surface, and eventually breaking out in violent communal clashes.

Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, acknowledged that the nation required a solid constitutional framework that gives space for religious plurality. Together with the majority in the committee preparing for independence in the 1940s, he rejected the demand of some Muslims for an Islamic state. Although over 85 percent of the population were Muslim, Indonesia was not to become an Islamic state. At the time the constitution was drafted, primal and several world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, had been practised in the archipelago for centuries. Although the numbers differed widely depending on the region, these religions were all "at home" in Indonesia. During the struggle for independence, Indonesians from different religions had been united in fighting the colonial powers and thus should also be united in a free Indonesia.

In 1945, Sukarno proposed five basic principles, *Pancasila*, as the state philosophy for Indonesia. These were subsequently included in the preamble of the constitution: 1) belief in one supreme God; 2) just and civilized humanism; 3) the unity of Indonesia; 4) representative democracy; and 5) social justice. The first principle refrains from referring to any specific religion, but aims at leaving space for religious plurality. In this sense, it is reaffirmed in the main body of the constitution. Article 29 declares: "(1) The state shall be based upon the belief in the One and Only God. (2) The state guarantees all persons the freedom of worship, each according to their own religion or belief."[5]

It needs to be mentioned here that the Indonesian government imposed a number of restrictions on religious freedom through further regulations. Nonetheless, the basic idea that people, regardless of their religious affiliation, should be treated on an equal footing was always underlined. The aim was to uphold "religious harmony" in the country. Since the mid 1960s, especially during Suharto's autocratic rule, religious communities have had to operate within the boundaries set by the state.

> All churches, whether they are large or small, must engage in public witness.

After Suharto's fall in 1998, Indonesia not only experienced considerable political and economic upheaval, but also increasing religious vitality in the public sphere. Religious symbols have come to the fore in many cultural spheres. Whether traditional rural, modern urban, or popular youth culture they all increasingly "quote" religious symbolic language to express and interpret their realities. In recent years, global trends have had a significant impact on this process—in Christianity as well as Islam—and have influenced theological priorities.

5. Indonesia's Constitution accessible at: www.indonesia.go.id/id/files/UUD45/satunaskah.pdf

With regard to Christianity, "at the turn of the century evangelical and charismatic concerns have become mainstream."[6] Considerable energy is being invested into positioning oneself on the religious marketplace and into promoting expansive evangelism.

There has been a resurgence of political Islam through the political parties as well as the radical Islamic groups. At the same time, a network of liberal Islam has been formed among Muslim intellectuals. Political discourse is loaded with religious sentiment and "identity politics" has become a key concept in interpreting power relations in Indonesia.

In such an atmosphere, numbers matter and a new majority/minority discourse emerges. The traditionally strong Christian influence on education seems to be decreasing; religious education is newly regulated; many new Muslim schools are being established. The introduction of Sharia-related regulations in some regions has heightened sensitivities. Cases of churches being attacked and the prohibition to construct new churches have given rise to concern among Christians. Their self-perception is increasingly marked by a strong sense of being a minority which is dominated by a sometimes tolerant, sometimes threatening majority. In that situation, Andreas A. Yewangoe warns against a new "inferiority complex" emerging among Christians which he likens to an "illness."[7] Since the minority/majority discourse is not just talk about numbers, but a complex discourse on power and influence, I shall speak in more theological terms of a new "diaspora consciousness"[8] in the Christian community in Indonesia.

The ways in which Christians perceive being in diaspora vary considerably. In my view, there are four different strategies in Indonesia: some seek self-confidence and security by partnering with strong Christian allies in other parts of the world and emphasize Christianity's dominant influence globally. Others seek refuge in more or less homogenous Christian neighborhoods and try only to associate with Christians in matters of education, business, and politics. A third group works for strategic access to the center of political power to secure space and influence, while a fourth group aims at joining with other groups in civil society to establish common ground against the pervasive dynamics of exclusion.

According to Zakariah J. Ngelow, the third strategy is employed especially by leaders of Protestant mainline churches in Indonesia. "They are more deeply concerned with the power games among the political elites for access to the powerful center rather than with the struggle for people's concerns at the grass roots."[9] Ngelow skillfully critiques such

6. John M. Prior and Alle Hoekema, "Theological Thinking by Indonesian Christians 1850–2000," *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, Karel Steenbrink and Jan S. Aritonang, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 812.

7. Andreas A. Yewangoe, "Umat Kristen dalam Masyarakat Majemuk Indonesia" [The Christian Community in the Plural Indonesian Society], in Andreas A. Yewangoe, *Tidak ada Penumpang Gelap. Warga Gereja, Warga Bangsa [There is no Stowaway. Member of the Church, Member of the Nation]* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia 2009), 8.

8. "Diaspora" is a biblical term; in the New Testament it features prominently in the opening of the epistle in 1 Peter. Karel Steenbrink uses it in a recent article on the situation of Christians in Asia, see: Karel Steenbrink, "Realistic Perspectives for the Christian Diaspora of Asia," *Global Christianity: Contested Claims*, Frans Wijsen and Robert Schreiter, eds. (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2007), 133–146.

9. Zakariah J. Ngelow, "Indonesian

power orientation: "This tendency can be named the 'Joseph or Daniel type' of political participation. Many Christian leaders dream to take on high political positions like the two 'dreamers' in the Bible, Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in the Babylonian and Persian courts. Churches are proud to have persons in high political positions."[10]

Ngelow believes this to be one of the main reasons why churches are unable to adapt to the social changes that have recently taken place in Indonesia. Ngelow strongly opts for the fourth strategy which, in his view, is the only meaningful way forward for Christians in Indonesia. One of the few church leaders who resonate with Ngelow's analysis and have produced substantial theological reflection is Andreas Yewangoe. His perspectives and their potential for empowerment and discernment are outlined in the following section.

Yewangoe's theological perspectives: Public witness in Indonesia

Andreas Yewangoe's most recent publication is titled, *Tidak ada Ghetto. Gereja di dalam Dunia* (There is no Ghetto. Church in the World.) [11] This is a programmatic title for a book which calls for the Indonesian churches to understand themselves as active agents within civil society. The plea to partner with other groups in civil society is not as self-evident as it might seem. In Indonesia, the concept and reality of a civil society emerged only after 1998, when the people and the newly formed NGOs claimed public space after decades of autocratic political rule. For many churches civil society is an unknown territory; if political participation was pursued at all it was mostly in the above mentioned way of relating to the government. This also applies to other religious communities in Indonesia.

Against this background, Yewangoe asks the open-ended question, "Do religions in Indonesia promote and support the realization of a civil society, or do they rather inhibit it?"[12] His own position and understanding are clear. For him civil society is:

> a prerequisite needed in the process of democratization, as a domain of social life which is organized sufficiently independent and strong as a counterpart to the state, being self-sustaining and with innate energy, yet acting according to the norms and values of the law and without preventing the state from performing its role.[13]

Yewangoe warns against retreating into a ghetto and excluding oneself from societal processes. According to him, this is not only an illusory strategy of protecting oneself but, more profoundly, it is not what the church is called to be. He affirms Bonhoeffer's concept of the church as a church for others and calls the church to be present in the world for the world.

In Yewangoe's ecclesiological reflections, "presence" is an important concept. He is convinced that the conscious presence of Christians in society makes a real difference and has transformative potential. Consequently, solidarity with

Protestantism toward the 21st Century," *Reshaping Protestantism in a Global Context*, Volker Küster, ed. (Münster: Lit, 2009), 80.

10. Ibid., 81.

11. Andreas A. Yewangoe, *Tidak ada Ghetto. Gereja di dalam Dunia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2009).

12. Andreas A. Yewangoe, *Civil Society di Tengah Agama-agama* (Jakarta: PGI, 2009), xi. (Author's own translation here and in the following).

13. Ibid., 43.

the world does not imply being absorbed by the world; rather it leads to the church playing a prophetic role and thereby being church for others. "In order to be able to realize that, the church truly needs to become church. It must not become a political party or private organization in society."[14]

For Yewangoe, Christ's kenotic existence as affirmed in Philippians 2 is the crucial theological reference point. As the body of Christ, the church cannot be an *ecclesia triumphans,* but is to conceive of itself as an *ecclesia servans.* In serving others, the church realizes its identity. Consequently, living out this ethos does not weaken but strengthens the church.

In the context of violent intercommunal conflicts, which had started in 1999 in some parts of Indonesia and were marked by confrontational Christian-Muslim dynamics, Yewangoe takes up his earlier reflections on the cross and on suffering.[15] He wrote his doctoral dissertation on "*Theologia crucis* in Asia. Asian Christian views on suffering in the face of overwhelming poverty and multifaceted religiosity in Asia"[16] in the 1980s. Yewangoe reminds his audience that in the history of Christianity, the cross has become a sign of humbleness as well as a sign of haughtiness. He underlines that the memory of the Christian colonizers who carried the cross as a sign of triumph still influences non-Christians' perceptions of Christianity. Therefore, he emphasizes that it is vital that the church communicate the meaning of the cross in word and deed.

Yewangoe identifies the relation between God's suffering and human suffering as a crucial theological issue. He warns against dissociating the suffering of persecuted Christians from that of others. The cross calls Christians to radical solidarity with others. Thus, the cross is a sign that distinguishes but must not dissociate Christians from others. It calls them into deeper relationships.

With regard to the engagement in civil society activities, Yewangoe affirms *Pancasila* as an important common ground for Indonesians. He deplores the fact that *Pancasila* has been increasingly sidelined in public discourse and education, and is being replaced by a rather sectarian religiousity. According to Yewangoe, in order to counteract this dangerous dynamic, two aspects need to be strengthened: legal protection of religious freedom and a sociocultural ethos of religious harmony, which implies mutual acceptance. The area which he most worries about is education:

> Education that tends towards separating according to religious affiliation (as it is eagerly practiced today) is not helpful at all to realize civil society in Indonesia. If this continues a religious-based apartheid system will be established which is worse than the race-based historical one in South Africa was.[17]

Authentic encounters between people of different faiths and interaction in everyday life are important resources for mutual acceptance according to Yewangoe. Institutional structures and mental mindsets that hinder such encounter are to be overcome. Christians need to work together with other groups in civil society that share these

14. Yewangoe, *Ghetto*, viii.

15. Andreas A. Yewangoe, "Theologi salib di Indonesia hari ini" [Theology of the Cross in Indonesia today], Yewangoe, *Agama dan Kerukunan* [Religion and Harmony] (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 222–238.

16. Andreas A. Yewangoe, *Theologia crucis in Asia. Asian Christian views on suffering in the face of overwhelming poverty and multifaceted religiosity in Asia* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987).

17. Yewangoe, *Civil Society*, 49.

concerns. In numerous papers, Yewangoe refers to the theme of the 2004 General Assembly of the Christian Council of Churches, "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds" (Rom 12:2).

Christians need to respond to the dramatic political, economic and social shifts that have taken place since 1998. They need to find new ways of locating themselves within this new situation, which implies rethinking how they relate to the government, to civil society movements, and to people of other faiths. They need to focus their work not only on their own self-protection, but also on addressing issues of injustice, poverty, and violence in the country. Together with others in civil society, they need to advocate for just and participatory structures and to strengthen an ethos that accepts diversity in order to counter reified identity politics. It is important that Christians in Indonesia do not withdraw into closed universes of meaning, but are able to share values with people of other faiths so that a shared matrix of meaning emerges.

Theology and resilience of Christians in Indonesia

At the 2008 Hong Kong DTS seminar one of the small groups discussed strategies for Christians under threat. Indonesians as well as others from Asia shared experiences and feelings of being threatened and described how they had dealt with such situations. In her report, Kajsa Ahlstrand identified five different strategies with which Christians respond to threat: martyrdom, avoiding contact, nonviolent resistance, legitimate self-defense, measured attack.[18] This group discussion showed that for many vulnerable and threatened communities resistance is the key question. What means should they choose to resist adversity?

We have seen that Christians not only need to ask the question, "How do we act vis-à-vis the ones that threaten us?" but also, "How do we stay a healthy community in this context?" Thus, attention is not only directed toward adverse outward relations, but also to internal relations and to the community's ethos and mentality. This leads to a focus on resilience.[19] As Yewangoe has demonstrated, theological reflection is an important element in such a situation: it is needed as a tool of empowerment and means of discernment in Christian communities. It helps churches to be resilient communities and supports their members in being resilient faithful.

Paul's call to "[b]e transformed by the renewing of your minds" encourages Christians in Indonesia today to respond to the changing political, economic, and social situation by networking with others in civil society. From this perspective, outward relations are not adversarial per se, but cooperative partnerships with others and public witness emerge as critical

18. See Kajsa Ahlstrand, "Strategies for Christians under Threat," Karen L. Bloomquist (ed.), *Identity, Survival, Witness: Reconfiguring Theological Agendas*, Theology in the Life of the Church series, vol. 3 (Geneva: LWF 2008), 103–108.

19. Resilience research originates in the area of development psychology but has been expanded to research on resilient communities; see Alex J. Zautra, John Stuart Hall, Kate E. Murray, eds. "Resilience. A New Definition of Health for People and Communities," *A Handbook of Adult Resilience* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010). I follow their basic definition that resilience is "an outcome of successful adaptation to adversity" (4). There are two foci in resilience research: "First is *recovery,* or how well people bounce back and recover fully from challenge…Second, and equally important, is *sustainability,* or the capacity to continue forward in the face of adversity" (Ibid.).

possibilities. Such partnerships empower vulnerable communities and lead toward greater vitality and stability in diaspora situations.

In 1993, the Sri Lankan theologian Aloysius Pieris wrote a paper on the question, "Does Christ Have a Place in Asia?"[20] As the Indonesian theologian Emanuel Gerrit Singgih has recently shown, for Asians, this question is still a critical one.[21] Singgih takes as the starting point for his reflection the observation that while over the last hundred years Christianity has enormously increased in Africa, over the same period, there has only been a slow and small growth of Christianity in Asia. Moreover, this situation is not expected to change in the near future.[22] This prospect has led to significant introspection among Asian theologians. Singgih outlines the perspectives that evolve from this introspection as follows:

> If Asia is outside the next Christendom, then what should the Christians in Asia do? Pieris closes his descriptions above with a plea to Christians to proclaim 'the Asian Christ,' i.e., Christ as the one who has no place in Asia. It means to participate in a prophetic and healing ministry rather than to continue church-planting and church-growth missionary policy. I would like to add the ministry of reconciliation, to heal the wounds of religious wars in Asia. In other words, to become a servant church, which many other Asian theologians stated in this decade.[23]

I believe reflections such as Yewangoe's and Singgih's to be an unmistakable sign of Christianity's resilience in Indonesia. Living in diaspora, churches in Indonesia ask how to minister meaningfully to their members and society at large. In view of the volatile religious situation and the ethnic diversity in Indonesia, the ministry of reconciliation needs to be highlighted. Adverse situations need to be addressed, transformative processes initiated, and new partnerships with others in civil society forged. Through this ministry, the church stays closely connected with people's lived realities. The churches' presence becomes a public witness within the wider society and a prophetic witness to government institutions. Through this ministry the church shares empowerment and discernment with others in society.

20. Aloysius Pieris, "Does Christ Have a Place in Asia? A Panoramic View," *Any Room for Christ in Asia? Concilium* 1993/2, Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, eds. (London: SCM 1993), 33–48.

21. Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, "Any Room for Christ in Asia?: Statistics and the Location of the Next Christendom," *Exchange* 38 (2009): 134–146.

22. Philip Jenkins who announced the future of "the next Christendom" to be in the global South acknowledged in his revised version of his book that, except for the Philippines, Asia cannot really be part of the next Christendom, Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity,* Revised and Expanded Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xii–xiii.

23. Singgih, "Any Room," 143.

Why Luke's Gospel? Daily Bread and "Recognition" of Christ in Food-Sharing

Barbara Rossing
Professor of New Testament, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Food is one of the most striking themes of Luke's Gospel. [1] Jesus in Luke's Gospel is a Jesus who loves to eat. One scholar notes that "Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal…[T]he aroma of food issues forth from each and every chapter of Luke's [G]ospel."[2] The way Jesus eats even leads to his death.

Food and food security issues pose urgent concern for our world today, as Karen Bloomquist and others have noted.[3] Churches in Asia call attention to connections between hunger, climate change, and human trafficking, while churches in Africa point to land-acquisitions as a new form of colonialism that imperils daily bread for millions. Food issues also relate to gender, as women in churches around the world remind us. [4] In the United States, the growth of industrial farming, over-use of antibiotics and fossil-fuel based fertilizers, depleted aquifers, lack of access to fresh produce among inner-city dwellers, and rising incidence of obesity, are among the many interrelated symptoms of a food crisis.

The choice of the theme of "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread" for the 11th Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation to be held this summer—an assembly whose theological voice Karen Bloomquist has helped to shape, as she also shaped the 10th Assembly in Winnipeg in 2003—gives occasion to examine themes of daily bread, food security, and sustainability in relation to Luke's Gospel.

I will make three points about the Gospel of Luke and the theme of food:

1. This article is based on a Bible study presented at The Lutheran World Federation North American Region Pre-Assembly in Kitchener, Ontario, January 2010.

2. Robert J. Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian: Luke's Passion Account as Literature* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987; re-print Wipf and Stock, 2009) 47. See also Karris' *Eating Your Way Through Luke's Gospel;* Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist According to Luke* (Liturgy Training Publications, 1994).

3. See for example, Karen Bloomquist, (ed.), *Communion, Responsibility, Accountability: Responding as a Lutheran Communion to Neoliberal Globalization*, LWF Documentation 50 (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004); "The High Cost of Food: Familiar Refrains in a New Crisis," (Thinking it Over Issue #19; May 2008).

4. See The Lutheran World Federation Pre-Assembly messages from Asia (December 9, 2009, Bangkok, Thailand) and Africa (March 28, Abuja, Nigeria), and the Women's Pre-Assembly (October 2009), available at www.lwf-assembly.org under "Journey."

1) *Luke writes this gospel in order to open our eyes to "recognize" Jesus in daily bread and meal-sharing.*

There are at least ten meals in the Gospel of Luke. Beginning with the call of Levi in chapter 5, Luke frequently adds food and eating to scenes that were not set at a meal in Mark. Meals become the setting for important teaching, most notably the three meals Jesus shares with Pharisees that are unique to Luke (Luke 7:36–50; 11:37–52; 14:1–24). Jesus' teaching about servanthood, for example, gets moved from the third passion prediction on the road (Mark 10:35–45) into the last supper with the disciples (Luke 22:24–27). Luke's most famous and beloved meal scene is the Emmaus story, in which the risen Jesus makes himself known in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24).

As he breaks bread, suddenly their eyes are opened to "recognize" him.

Why such attention to food and meals? Luke acknowledges from the outset that many have already undertaken to write a narrative about Jesus (Luke 1:1). We can assume that Mark's Gospel was already available to Luke and his community. So why would Luke write another gospel? To the list of many excellent reasons scholars have noted for the writing of Luke's Gospel I would add one more reason: Luke writes in order to open the community's eyes to recognize the risen Christ in their midst through meals and food-sharing.

I base this argument for the role of food in Luke's purpose on the use of the Greek word *epiginōskō* ("recognize")—the "Aha" kind of deep knowing or seeing that recognizes the presence of Christ. While the verb *epiginōskō* appears only three times in the Gospel of Luke, these three occurrences serve as bookends at key moments. Unfortunately, most English translations do not consistently translate the word, so we miss the crucial connection between chapter 1 and chapter 24.

Luke first uses the term *epiginōskō* in 1:4, when he describes the purpose of his Gospel. The word in Luke's preface is usually translated as "know" (NRSV: "so that you may know the truth") but a better translation would be "recognize." Luke tells Theophilus that he writes in order to help people "recognize" the truth of the teachings into which they have been catechized, to help them recognize Jesus.

Luke's use of the verb *epiginōskō* again twice in the Emmaus story of Luke 24 brings to fulfillment the purpose statement from chapter 1. Initially, the disciples' eyes are kept from "recognizing" (*mē epignōnai*, Luke 24:16) the risen Jesus as the stranger who joins them on the road. Their journey toward recognition unfolds gradually, as Jesus accompanies them and interprets their experience in light of the scriptures. The breakthrough moment comes when Jesus eats with them. As he breaks bread, suddenly their eyes are opened to "recognize" him (*epegnōsan*, Luke 24:31). Now they can look back with burning hearts and recognize that it was Jesus who was walking with them all along, who had interpreted their shattered hopes in light of the scriptures.

Luke wants the community to recognize the risen Jesus in their midst every time they share meals. Breaking bread together leads to recognition of Christ.

2) *Food in Luke teaches a radical economy of abundance and sufficiency for all—the opposite of greed and hoarding*.

If bread-breaking and food-sharing lead to recognition of Christ, Luke makes clear that the opposite of sharing—excessive greed and hoarding—imperils salvation.

Luke's theme of food is rooted in the Old Testament, particularly the Exodus gift of manna in the wilderness. In his wonderful *Manna and Mercy,* Daniel Erlander pictures the Israelites sitting at little desks at "Wilderness School," learning from Moses who uses a chalkboard and pointer to rehearse these lessons of God's economy of manna:

—God gives.
—Enough for all.
—No surplus to be hoarded. Hoarding stinks and causes rot.
—Human work is to help God distribute manna for all.
—The sabbath gives rest. [5]

Luke's Gospel continues these manna lessons about food, sufficiency, and the perils of hoarding. The great reversals of Mary's Magnificat (the hungry are filled while the rich are sent away empty, Luke 1:53) underscore the manna gift of food for hungry poor people. At Bethsaida, the feeding of the five thousand teaches the manna promise of "abundance" (*to perisseusan,* Luke 9:17), with twelve baskets of bread fragments after everyone is fed. There is enough for all when food is shared.

Two of Jesus' most vivid parables, unique to Luke, warn of the urgent peril of hoarding and other violations of God's manna economy. Both parables are appointed for preachers in the upcoming Year C lectionary.

The Peril of the Man Whose Possessions Possess Him: Luke 12:13–21 (Pentecost 10, Revised Common Lectionary)

The parable of the man who builds bigger barns to hoard his crops in Luke 12 affords preachers an opportunity to address the spiritual dimensions of global food security today. The word "abundance" (the verb *perisseuein*) which was used so favorably of the leftover shared bread in the story of the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:17), becomes negative when applied to private possessions: "Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

My Greek students love to translate the fascinating conversation between the man and his soul (*psyche*), addressing himself in the second person. "Eat, drink and be merry (*euphrainou*)" he counsels himself. But the more striking verse is verse 20, a verse that is incorrectly translated in the passive voice in English translations ("This very night your soul is required of you," NRSV, RSV). The correct translation is active: "This very night *they* require (*apaitousin*) your life from you."

The question in verse 20 is this: To whom does the third person "they" refer? Who is it who is requiring the man's life from him? Some commentators have claimed that the third person plural refers to implicit angels or heavenly beings, while others invoke a sort of "divine passive," albeit plural. But the closest third person plural antecedent is the man's possessions, his own "good things" that he has carefully laid up for himself in verse 19. It is the man's own possessions that are demanding his life of him this very night.[6] His possessions have possessed him.

As we consider issues of sustainability and daily bread today, this parable offers

5. See Daniel Erlander, *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe* (Order of St. Martin and Theresa, 1992).

6. See R. Alan Culpepper, "Luke," *New Interpreter's Bible* vol. 9 (Abingdon, 1995) 256.

important counsel. Food security is not just a concern for poor nations. Food hoarding and unsustainable agricultural practices imperil our very soul. Our surplus, our unsustainable excess, is demanding our very soul (*psyche*).

Lazarus's Five Brothers and An Apocalyptic Warning: Luke 16:19–31 (Pentecost 18)

Unique to Luke is a second urgent parable about greed and food injustice, the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man's sumptuous feasting ("making merry," *euphrainōmenos*) echoes the rich man's barn-building program in 12:19. With its exaggerated imagery of contrast and its vivid journey to the afterlife, this parable fits the form of an apocalypse. During his life the rich man did not even see the poor man who was at his gate each day. Now, a chasm has been fixed between the rich man and Lazarus after their deaths, and there is no way to cross over the chasm. The apocalyptic contrast between the lavish meals of the rich man's table in life and his thirst after death functions as an urgent warning.

Food is a deeply spiritual issue, as well as an urgent economic and ecological issue.

Where does Luke intend the audience to see itself in this parable? The image of vindication in Abraham's bosom is a wonderful one, offering comfort for those in Luke's audience and in the world today who are as poor as Lazarus. But the parable is probably not told primarily for the poor in the audience, whether in Luke's time or our own.

Apocalypses often have a hortatory function. Apocalypses offer a wake-up call, a warning, like the dream sequences of Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. If this parable is an apocalypse, then Luke is situating readers in the role of the five brothers who are still alive, who still have time to change before the chasm between them and the hungry people at their gates becomes permanent. "Send Lazarus to them, that he might warn them, so that they do not come to this place of torment," cries the rich man. When Abraham points out that they have the scriptures, the rich man follows up with a second plea to Abraham on behalf his five living brothers. We have been warned, the parable makes clear: we have Moses and the prophets; we have the manna lessons of God's economy. We even have someone who has risen from the dead. The question is: Will we, the five brothers, heed the warning and repent before it's too late?

A host of recent food books warn of the peril that unsustainable agricultural practices pose to the world and to our own lives and health.[7] Food is a deeply spiritual issue, as well as an urgent economic and ecological issue. Climate change, obesity, world hunger, and the survival of our local communities are all related concerns. The world cannot continue on this current trajectory of consuming fossil-fuel fertilizers, antibiotics, water, and other resources. We are trapped in an economic system that, as

7. See Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (HarperCollins; 2007); Michael Pollen, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (Penguin, 2007).

Raj Patel describes (quoting Oscar Wilde), knows the "price of everything and the value of nothing."[8] We must find a different path before it is too late.

The church can speak to this crisis. Luke's Gospel offers churches an occasion to focus on daily bread and all of its economic and spiritual manifestations in our local and global community. The daily study books for The Lutheran World Federation assembly, examining food and justice issues through the lens of a staple food of a different region of the world, are excellent resources for parish study of food and justice issues (see www.lwf-assembly.org).

3) *Food is boundary-crossing in Luke-Acts.*

In Luke's Gospel Jesus is labeled early as a "glutton and a drunkard" (7:34). Luke's Jesus also eats with Pharisees and rich people, crossing boundaries to break bread with diverse individuals and groups. The scandalous way that Jesus eats with sinners and tax-collectors provokes great opposition from the authorities. It is for this reason that Robert Karris makes the stunning claim that "In Luke's Gospel Jesus got himself crucified by the way He ate."

Food was the most divisive issue within the early church. Early Christian communities grappled with how to interpret scriptural prohibitions regarding ethnic and purity boundaries and how to welcome Gentiles into full table fellowship. The scandal provoked by boundary-crossing eating is portrayed most vividly in the Peter and Cornelius story in Acts, but it is reflected also in almost every book of the New Testament. According to Paul in Galatians, even Cephas could not withstand pressure to draw back from eating with Gentiles. It is likely that Paul lost his dearest colleague Barnabas over food issues.

Food can offer boundary-crossing opportunities for the church's ministry today on many issues. The great struggle in our churches over how we deal with sex and gender diversity in light of scripture may be somewhat analogous to early church conflicts over food, as a number of scholars suggest. Karen Bloomquist's work on neoliberal globalization and the food crisis, as well as her work on other issues in The Lutheran World Federation, opens up other important connections.

The aroma of food issues forth from each chapter of Luke's Gospel. When we explore the theme of "Give us this day our daily bread" over shared meals, over the banquet of the Eucharistic table, and over boundary-crossing fellowship with outsiders, our eyes are opened to recognize the presence of Christ. The risen Christ is in our midst, the Gospel of Luke promises. And we can meet him every time we share our bread.

8. Raj Patel, *The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy* (New York: Picador, 2010), quoting Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Beyond Service: What Justice Requires

Martha E. Stortz

Professor of Historical Theology and Ethics,
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary/The Graduate Theological Union

Lutherans write much on the subject of justification, but they have less to say about justice. Karen Bloomquist's work, as a writer, a theologian, and an administrator, speaks into that silence. Bloomquist's commitment to justice began early in her calling. She let her experience as a pastor shape her graduate work at Union Theological Seminary. Her first book, *The Dream Betrayed*, examined how the realities of race and gender, class and ethnicity altered "the American dream."[1] Pastoring a low-income congregation prompted Karen to interrogate the structures that created class.

Later, as Karen joined the Division for Church in Society in the merged Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988, she worked to create structures that would foster moral discernment. Under her leadership and with her collaboration, the first document produced by that unit offered a structure for congregational moral deliberation. [2]Though subsequent statements treating the social issues of that time would all begin with the obligatory understanding of context, behind them all was a structure for deliberation. In front of them was an invitation to change.

Finally, in her leadership as director of studies at The Lutheran World Federation, Karen has consciously worked to raise up voices of global Lutheranism, creating structures for them to be heard and venues in which they might speak and be heard, write and be read. Her tenure in Geneva saw publication of studies that once again bridge the academy and the far-flung congregations of Lutheranism.

In Geneva, Bloomquist pursued her interest in economics into globalization. She spearheaded studies of trends in worldwide patterns of development; she wrote supplementary material on globalization and the distribution of wealth.[3] Hers has been a signal contribution. Behind it is the conviction that theology that is worth its salt transforms not only the churches—but the world.

Bloomquist has consistently pushed beyond the classical Lutheran commitment to service into justice. She has pursued a Lutheran commitment to the

1. Karen L. Bloomquist, *The Dream Betrayed: Religious Challenge of the Working Class* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

2. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," adopted 1991.
www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Church-in-Society.aspx

3. E.g., "A Call to Participate in Transformation Economic Globalization: Communion, Responsibility, Accountability," Lutheran World Federation, Winnipeg, Canada, July 21-23, 2003; Karen L. Bloomquist, "Engaging Economic Globalization as Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 53:4 (October 2001).

needs of the neighbor beyond context into analysis of the structures that created the need in the first place. She advocates for the neighbor, even as she probes the root causes of oppression in the neighborhood. In this, Bloomquist has leaned on feminist and liberation theologians like Johann Baptist Metz, Rebecca Chopp, Pablo Richard, James Cone, and Jose Miranda to fill in gaps in her own tradition.

Where are those gaps? And why might they exist? Those questions drive this paper forward, and I engage them in characteristic Bloomquist fashion: ecumenically. No single tradition has a corner on divine mystery; each brings something to the table, without which the meal would not satisfy. I propose to examine a Lutheran emphasis on service against the horizon of another tradition that finds justice at its heart, the Ignatian tradition.[4] Principally, I will focus on founders, two men who were contemporaries of one another. Martin Luther (1483–1546) was born in Saxony and trained by the reform-minded Brethren of the Common Life. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) came from the Basque region in present-day Spain, a nation orienting its identity around Roman Catholicism.[5] Both count as reformers, Luther as one of the leaders in the Protestant Reformation and Ignatius as founding father of a religious order dedicated to mission and committed to "contemplation in action."[6]

A focus on Christ: The incarnate God or the historical Jesus?

Theologically, these two reformers had much in common. Both focused on Christ, though in very different ways. Luther rivets his attention on Christ, the revealed face *(deus revelatus)* of a God often hidden from human view (*deus absconditus*). Luther plays out the dialectical drama best in his Christmas hymns:

> God's Son to whom the heavens bow,
> Cradled by a virgin now,
> We listen for your infant voice
> While angels in you heav'n rejoice.
> Hallelujah![7]

> O Lord, you have created all!
> How did you come to be so small
> to sweetly sleep in manger-bed
> where lowing cattle lately fed.[8]

4. Lilly Collaborative Research Grant, received with Professor Lisa A. Fullam at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University in 2009–2010. Focused on immersion as a post-modern version of the ancient practice of pilgrimage, the grant proposed a course in comparative spiritualities, Lutheran and Ignatian, as one of its products. That course informs these reflections.

5. After the conquest of Granada 1492 and the final expulsion of Jews and Moors from the regions under their control (much of present-day Spain), Ferdinand and Isabella were given the title *Los Reyes Catolicos* by Pope Alexander VI around 1494.

6. The phrase comes from one of Ignatius' chief associates, Jeronomino Nadal who describes his friend as "a contemplative person even while he was in action" (*simul in actione contemplativus*). Cited in his *Epistolae et Monumenta Patris H. Nadal* V:162 [15] in the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu* (Rome: 1934-1948).

7. Hymn 48, "All Praise to You, Eternal Lord," in *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis/Philadelphia: Augsburg Publishing House/Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, 1978).

8. Hymn 268, "From Heaven Above," in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

Present-day believers cannot find their way to the manger: where are they to encounter the *deus revelatus* today? As I shall elaborate below, Christ is really present in the sacraments, and as Christians eat of his body and blood, they literally become what they eat. Christ indwells in the believer, enabling them to be "Christ to the neighbor."[9] We bear the face of Christ to the neighbor. Less acknowledged, but also present in Luther, is the reciprocal dimension: the neighbor bears the face of Christ to us: "…each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all…"[10] Christians go into the world both to witness to Christ—and to be witnessed to, in ways known only by the surprising providence of God. Luther's notion of the "indwelling Christ" undergirds his notion of service to the neighbor, but adds to the task of service the gift of surprise: the neighbor may bear for her the face of Christ.

Ignatius has a similar emphasis on Christ, but focuses more on the birth and public ministry, passion, and resurrection of Jesus.[11] Of the four weeks intended for Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, the second week examines Jesus' public ministry; the third, his passion and death; the fourth, the events of resurrection. One of the colloquies invites the retreatant into conversation with the dying Jesus, speaking to him "in the way one friend speaks to another" and considering the questions: "What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?"[12] The ensuing relationship is personal, even mutual, and with relationship comes responsibility. The believer acts in all things *for* Christ.

Comparing Christology in these two reformers registers in terms of both intimacy and agency. Luther regards Christ as the incarnate God, a mediator who bridges the gap between creature and creator. Christ resides in the believer, enabling her to "be Christ" to the neighbor. For Luther the significance of Christ is *that* God became human, rather than *how* God became human, and he spends less time than Ignatius on the life of Jesus in between his birth and death. Without the indwelling presence of Christ, the believer has no hope of imitating Jesus' public ministry; rather, the task is simply to let the indwelling Christ prompt acts of service to the neighbor. Put in Ignatian terms, the orienting question for disciple-

9. Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in Timothy F. Lull (ed.), *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, hereafter Lull, *MLBTW.* The "Finnish school" of Luther interpretation has made much of Luther's reference to the "indwelling Christ." Cf., Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds.), *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).

10. Lull, *MLBTW*, 619–620.

11. Ignatius first learned Latin when he was thirty-three years of age, so his primary acquaintance of the life of Jesus came not from scripture but from images, sermons, and the *Life of Christ (Vita Jesu Christi*) by another Saxon monk, the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony. The book in manuscript form circulated widely between 1360–1377, but the printing press made its availability widespread, and translations quickly become available in French, Italian, Dutch, German, Bohemian, Catalan, and Spanish. This was Ignatius' primary source for his information on the life of Jesus—and it is clear at times that the information was charming, rather than biblically accurate. (e.g., in the *Exercises*, he has the resurrected Christ appearing to his mother immediately after the resurrection, though he acknowledges "this is not stated in Scripture." *Exx.* 299).

12. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 54, in Ganss, *Exx.,* 138.

ship is: what is Christ doing *in* me?

Ignatius approaches Jesus as a friend, a *compañero* with whom one soldiers on in mission. Expressed actively in mission, the life of Jesus becomes a pattern for the believer's own. Ignatius' question—what am I doing *for* Christ?—is the polestar for discipleship.

"The world is charged with the grandeur of all things": Traces of the divine in ordinary life

Both Luther and Ignatius believe that "the world is charged with the grandeur God," as the thoroughly Ignatian Jesuit and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins put it.[13] Luther's conclusion that the "finite was capable of bearing the infinite" (*finitum capax infiniti*) grew out of controversy with Zwingli and the Swiss reformers, who denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Luther rejected the scholastic notion of transubstantiation, which proposed that bread and wine were changed substantively into the body and blood of Christ. In his mind, it eliminated the actual physical presence of the elements of bread and wine. Luther also critiqued the Swiss reformers for eliminating the physical presence of Christ's body and blood. He argued that the finite elements of bread and wine were capable of bearing the body and blood of Christ: *finitum capax infiniti*.

Luther does not limit himself to discussion of the sacraments. Christ's presence in the Eucharist testifies to God's presence in the whole of creation. "Therefore, indeed, he himself must be present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being, on all sides, through and through, below and above, before and behind, so that nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God himself with his power."[14] Such presence may at times be masked *(larvae dei*) or appear under its opposite (*sub contrario*), but Luther makes it part of a thoroughly incarnational theology.[15]

Similarly, Ignatian spirituality challenges believers to "find God in all things." Ignatius elaborates in the *Exercises: "*I will consider how God dwells in creatures: in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence; and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself, giving me existence, life, sensation, and intelligence…" (*Exx.* 235). The conviction gave the early Company of Jesus, as they called themselves, powerful missional impetus. By the time Ignatius died in 1556 there were more than 1000 *compañeros* in a rapidly expanding apostolate that stretched across Europe, eastward into India, and westward into Brazil. These Jesuit missions answered the challenge to "find God in all things" in their relative openness to the cultures they encountered, learning and transcribing the indigenous languages, incorporating local aesthetic practices into Christian worship, and generally "inculturating" a faith in diverse contexts more than exporting Basque values around the world.[16]

13. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," in Walford Davies (ed.,) *Poetry and Prose: Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Everyman, 1998), 44–45.

14. Luther, "That These Words of Christ, 'This is my Body,' etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics," in Robert H. Fischer (ed.), *Luther's Works, Vol. 37* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 58.

15. Kurt K. Hendel, "*Finitum capax infiniti:* Luther's Radical Incarnational Perspective," in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35:6 (December 2008): 420–433.

16. See James Bretzke's discussion of inculturation in his article, "Cultural Particularity & Globalization of Ethics in the

While both reformers grasped the ongoing and active presence of God in the world, they differ in its impact on moral agency. For Luther *finitum capax infiniti* is a statement about the sacraments and, by extension, the sacramentality of the whole of life. The believer receives this, and it enables her to do what the commandments require. For Ignatius, "finding God in all things" fuels an apostolate, and the believer acts in the world *for* Christ.

Vocation: place or path?

Finally, both reformers tether discipleship to vocation. For Luther, God's calling is to a *place*, whether a particular office (*Amt*) or role (*Stand*). Medieval piety distinguished between "higher" and "lower" callings, elevating those called to celibacy above those called to marry, ranking those in religious life or the clergy above the laity. Luther levels vocation, arguing that it must embrace all "states" in life, brewer and baker, husband and wife, child and servant. Vocation means doing the work of one's calling, whether brewing beer or hanging diapers (a task to which even fathers are called!). Regarding Paul's comment to the Corinthians that "Everyone should remain in the state to which he is called," (1 Cor 7:20), Luther replies: "How is it possible that you are not called? You have always been in some state or station; you have always been a husband or wife, boy or girl, or servant. Picture the humblest estate. Are you a husband, and you think you have not enough to do in that sphere to govern your wife, children, domestics and property so that all may be obedient to God and you do no one any harm?"[17] Indeed, these various offices serve as masks of God's work to order and sustain the creation.

Yet vocation stretches beyond mere occupation to include multiple roles one inhabits in the course of a day and over the span of a lifetime: mother and daughter, wife, volunteer, teacher, etc. In all of these roles, the believer is freed to serve the neighbor, bearing Christ to the neighbor and finding Christ in the neighbor.[18] Here the neighbor's "need" shapes the believer's response, and determining the neighbor's need implies a kind of contextual analysis that leads to appropriate action. Luther assumes rather than unpacks this analysis, although there is no better example of it than in his analysis of the Decalogue in *The Small Catechism*.[19] In medieval piety, the positive commandments ("thou shalt" commandments) and the beatitudes constituted "counsels of perfection" which were binding on those in the "higher" callings (i.e., those in religious life and the clergy). Only the negative "thou-shalt-not" commandments applied to those in "lower" callings. In his explanation of a catechism to be used in households and families, Luther turns each of the negative commandments into positive commandments— and applies all of them equally to every Christian, regardless of her calling. Witness his explanation to the Eighth Commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Luther elaborates what is prohibited: lying, betrayal, slander and defamation, all actions that fall under the proscription, "thou shalt not." But then he supplies a position injunction, "thou shalt," which pushes the

Light of Inculturation," *Pacifica* 9 (1996): 69–86.

17. John Lenker, ed., *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther, Vol. 10* (Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands Co., 1905), 242.

18. Cf. Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in Lull, *MLBTW*, 616–623.

19. Luther, "The Small Catechism," in Theodore G. Tappert (ed.), *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 342–344.

believer into contextual analysis: "…but [she] should apologize for him, speak well of him, and interpret charitably all that he does." Similarly, not stealing from the neighbor does not suffice for discipleship; rather, the believer should "help him to improve and protect his income and property."[20] The neighbor too has a certain situatedness, and the Christian's calling is to enhance it. That calls for contextual analysis.

Finally, vocations themselves comprise the "kingdom of earth" or "the kingdom of the left hand," where God governs through law and civil authorities. Volumes have been written on Luther's doctrine of the "two kingdoms," but they serve as the theological geography for other doctrines. Their terrain shifts depending on topic. The two kingdoms can be the antagonistic realms of God and Satan or the more complementary realms of heaven and earth. Whatever the terrain, though, it is clear that "kingdom" for Luther is a place, a realm (*Reich*, as in *Zweireichslehre*) rather than a reign or rule (*Regierung*). The referent is spatial, not temporal. For Luther, vocation, like real estate, is all about location, location, location.

In contrast to his contemporary's emphasis on place, Ignatius develops his notion of vocation as path. He regarded himself as "the pilgrim," and *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* states that it is written "to aid us to proceed better…along the path of divine service…."[21] Drawing the analogy to physical exercise, the whole of the *Spiritual Exercises* is itself a journey, beginning with the structures of creation and then moving to accompany Jesus along the paths of his public ministry. The meditations of The Second Week invite retreatants to "see with the eyes of the imagination the synagogues, villages, and castles through which Christ our Lord passed as he preached." (*Exx.*, 91)[22] Jesus, too, is a pilgrim.

As Ignatius explores "The Mysteries of the Life of Christ our Lord," he selects snapshots from Jesus' infancy, public life, passion, and risen life. Clearly, movement caught Ignatius' imagination, and most of the events he selects mark transitions: "The Flight into Egypt," "How the Apostles were Sent to Preach," along with a wonderfully kinetic sequence in Christ's passion: "From the House of Annas to the House of Caiaphas," "From the House of Caiaphas to that of Pilate, Inclusively," "From the House of Pilate to that of Herod," "From the House of Herod to that of Pilate," and finally, "From the House of Pilate to the Cross, Inclusively." This whole section ends with the biggest transition of all, the Ascension where Jesus departs into the heavens. Place is important to Ignatius, but the movement between places interests him even more.

> For Luther, vocation, like real estate, is all about location, location, location.

The Ignatian pilgrim covers some ground, ground similar to the terrain of Jesus' public ministry. Accordingly, mission

20. Ibid., 343.

21. "Preamble to the Constitutions," *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Declarations* [134] l, in Ganss, *Exx.,* 288.

22. Ganss, *Exx.,* 146.

plays a central role in Ignatian spirituality, and Jesuits considered themselves an apostolate, sent like the earliest disciples, to spread the gospel. They traveled light, poised to take on the next project; they cultivated "indifference," emotionally available to move.[23]

What does the Ignatian pilgrim notice along the way? *The Spiritual Exercises* begin with creation, reflecting on sin disrupts its order, harmony, and balance. Ignatius chooses a structural starting point, and creation serves as the standard for what the pilgrim passes through. This engenders a critical structural awareness of not only "disordered" affections in the pilgrim's heart, but also "disordered" social structures and policies that act against creation's intent.

Discernment serves as a GPS for the spiritual life, and the *Exercises* train people to distinguish between the voice of God's Spirit, which leads to a feeling of consolation, and voices from random other spirits, which lead to a feeling of desolation. Ignatius offers the compass as analogy in describing the ideal state as one where "I find myself in the middle, like the pointer of a balance, in order to be ready to follow that which I perceive to be more to the glory and praise of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul (*Exx.*, 179)."[24] Following leads to service, expressed in Ignatian terms as "contemplation in action" and directed to the world. Latter-day Ignatian Monika Hellwig elaborates:

> The meditations are very clear in their implication that the task that Jesus received from God is not to save souls out of the world, but to save the world, to refocus and reintegrate all creation by drawing the human race back into its proper relationship with God—and therefore proper relationships within the human race and all the created universe.[25]

What for Luther was service *to the neighbor* here becomes service *in and for* the world—or simply, a commitment to service. The face of the neighbor blurs as the pilgrim moves out in mission.

"I find myself in the middle, like the pointer of a balance, in order to be ready to follow that which I perceive to be more to the glory and praise of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul (*Exx.*, 179)."

23. Ignatius describes this in the "Principle and Foundation" of the *Exercises:* "Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of this to save our souls. …To do this, I must make myself indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to my freedom of will and is not forbidden."(23) Ganss, *Exx.*, 130.

24. Ganss, *Exx.,* 163.

25. Monika K. Hellwig, "Finding God in All Things: A Spirituality for Today," in George W. Traub, SJ, *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 57.

Conclusion

Examining Luther's understandings of Christ, creation, and vocation alongside the writing of a contemporary Roman Catholic reformer prompts some reflections on the difference between service and justice. Let me conclude with two provisional comments.

First, Luther's attention to place prompts reflection on context. After all, if you find yourself inhabiting a particular space, you have time to look around. Contextual analysis is crucial. Ignatius' attention to path, pilgrimage, and mission allows for a bigger picture. Indeed, his emphasis on creation in the *Exercises* illumines the systems and structures in which particular places are located, analysis of which is both important and natural from that angle of vision.

Indeed, we need both contextual and structural analysis, i.e., a thick description of where we find ourselves, as well as critical examination of the structures that got us there. Bloomquist's work does both: for contextual analysis, she draws easily on the resources in her own tradition for understanding the neighbor's needs. For structural analysis, however, she has depended on the work of others, in particular, liberation theologians and social scientists.

Second, a Lutheran understanding of service always has the neighbor as its focus. For Luther, all the world is a neighbor, and the Christian is charged with bearing the face of Christ to the neighbor, while scrutinizing the neighbor for the presence of Christ. The moral encounter is dyadic, dialogical, and deeply personal. The Ignatian push for justice, because of its ability to engage in structural analysis, is more encompassing, but also less personal. People fall into groups distinguished by broadly cultural characteristics. Again, Bloomquist's administrative work manages both with equal ease. As director of studies in The Lutheran World Federation, she has encouraged and offered opportunities to scholars all over the world, and she knows each of them personally, their stories and their passions. She has also been an advocate for lifting up their gifts in the arena of global Lutheranism and Christianity around the world.

Thistle Flowers: Theology from the Wayside

Mary Philip (Joy)
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Have you seen a thistle flower?
Have you even heard of thistle flowers?
If you have, would you dare to touch the thistle flower?

The thistle flower is often referred to as a symbol of austerity, but I would like to present it as the symbol of fortitude, persistence, and hope. In Norse mythology, the thistle is known as the lightning plant; it is said that those who wore the thistle flower were protected by Thor, the god of thunder.

While the thistle flower has many similarities to the dandelion, especially in its ubiquity and pugnacity, unlike the dandelion, which grows to a height of only a few inches from the ground, members of the thistle family are shrubs. Thistles belong to the largest of all plant families, the *Compositae* or *Asteraceae* whose flowers are composed entirely of tubular disk florets. The florets exhibit an array of colors ranging from a beautiful purple to white, pink, or yellow. Thistles grow either in colonies or as individual plants. They can be found in a variety of habitats such as dry, rocky areas; forested meadows; clearings; or prairies. They are wild flowers that grow on roadsides and riverbanks; hence they are thought of as wayside flowers.

There are various types of thistle flowers and the names given to them are interesting: star thistle, blessed thistle, milk thistle, field thistle, holy thistle, Syrian thistle, golden thistle, Canada thistle, to name but a few. In the days of Pliny, thistle flowers were considered to be under the influence of the stars and therefore, thought to have qualities that affect human behavior. Although I am talking about thistle flowers in general, the Canada thistle, also known as the way thistle, is the best example of what I want to convey. The Canada or way thistle, while

native to Asia and Africa, is regarded as an invasive plant in North America.

The plant's surface, including the leaves and the stem, are covered in sharp spines or thorns, an adaptive/protective mechanism against being eaten. With the many spines that cover its body, it is hardly thought of as a flower. It is the spines that gave this plant the name "thistle," a word that has its origin in the Sanskrit word, *tejate*, "it is sharp." The thistle flowers can be quite sharp. It is befitting that the scientific name of the way thistle comes from the Greek word, *kirsion* which has its roots in *kirsos* meaning "swollen veins." It is believed that thistle flowers were used to treat varicose veins.

Though not classified as a weed, thistles are often seen as weeds that need to be destroyed. Like dandelions, their seeds spread over all terrains, including farmlands where crops are cultivated. Thus, they become the farmers' foe. However, there is another side to it. As the saying goes, a weed is a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered. In the case of the thistle even that is not the case. Its virtues have been known since ancient times, but acknowledging this provokes some allergies in those who do not want them seen. What makes them hated most is their persistence, not to say pugnacity. They fight for their place in the soil; hither and thither, their colonies spring up and they will not be rooted out. They cannot simply be pulled out like a weed; if you want to get rid of them you need to annihilate them.

Every flower is composed of tiny florets that are connected at their base, and each floret, regardless of how tiny, contains its own tiny drop of nectar, its own stamens, its own pistil connected with the embryonic seed below. These florets with their nectar attract bees and butterflies. The insects not only feast on their nectar but also use them as places of rest; the flowers not only quench their thirst, but provide them a space to gather their thoughts, so to speak. Interestingly, some of the most beautiful butterflies are attracted to this menace of a flower and not to the sweet and gracious lilies. Moreover, as individuals and as a species they have become the most numerous in the world.

Unlike most of the other thistles, the Canada or way thistle is a perennial. The plant is heterozygous with separate male and female plants. Nevertheless, it is a prodigious seed-producer thanks to the pollination by insects that are attracted to the nectaries, and this in turn accounts for its ubiquity. Each thistle flower can produce over 600 seeds that mature in five to seven days. Aided by the pappus (the bristled plume that is an outgrowth of each seed) they are dispersed far and wide by the wind. The seeds remain viable for up to twenty years, capable of weathering a wide array of climatic changes. On germination their tap root system digs deep into the soil so as to absorb water even from the lowest of water tables. Studies have shown that the original plant sends out a complex anastomotizing system of roots horizontally spreading up to three feet underground. The root system is nodulated at regular intervals from which shoots rise, creating dense strands of erect stems. Even if cut, the plant can regenerate from a root fragment as small as an inch in length, making it almost impossible to eradicate the plant once it has taken root. A single plant can multiply to cover over half an acre in just three years.[1] Consequently, it

1. Some of the facts have been taken from an online article called "The Hiker's Notebook" put together by William Needham on and about things that are commonly seen on the trails in the southern Appalachian Mountain region including wildflow-

will take quite an effort to eradicate these thistle flowers.

The thistle flower is Scotland's national emblem. Popular legend has it that the army of King Haakon of Norway landed on the coast of Largs to launch a surprise attack on the Scots. The plan was to mount a sort of stealth attack on foot. Little did they know that they were about to cross a field of thistles. The prickly thistles defended their space eminently. The prickles pierced into the feet of the soldiers who let out cries of anguish that alerted the Scottish army, who then defended their territory. The thistle became the national emblem when King James V established the Order of the Thistle in 1540 with the motto *nemo me impune lacessit* or "touch me who dares."[2] In "The Fear of Flowers," the poet John Clare puts it thus:

> The nodding oxeye bends before the wind,
> The woodbine quakes lest boys their flowers should find,
> And prickly dogrose spite of its array
> Can't dare the blossom-seeking hand away,
> While thistles wear their heavy knobs of bloom
> Proud as a warhorse wears its haughty plume,
> And by the roadside danger's self defy;
> On commons where pined sheep and oxen lie
> In ruddy pomp and ever thronging mood
> It stands and spreads like danger in a wood,
> And in the village street where meanest weeds
> Can't stand untouched to fill their husks with seeds,
> The haughty thistle oer all danger towers,
> In every place the very wasp of flowers.[3]

Yes, these "wasp of flowers" are to be feared but would you dare to touch them?

Why am I talking about thorny thistle flowers in an issue dedicated to Karen Bloomquist? Could I not talk of the gentle lily instead? I would like to use the imagery of the thistle flower to give expression to those theologians and theologies from the so-called wayside of the theological arena. Thistle flowers are originally from the eastern and southern hemispheres. This is precisely where those theologies and theologians come from! For me, the thistle flower is the perfect metaphor for those theologies and theologians from the wayside of hegemonic academia! In the words of Renita Weems,

> What makes metaphorical speech especially effective as a form of social rhetoric is precisely its ability to reorganize our way of thinking about—and reacting to—the subsidiary subject in new and different ways, drawing connections between the two subjects where connections had not been seen before, calling attention to some attributes and not others, and deliberately rousing certain kinds of emotional responses in an audience. In short, metaphors play upon cultural stereotypes; they stress some attributes while deliberately ignoring others.[4]

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ers, trees, ferns, plants, fungi, animals, and berries. I have used the information with permission by the author. Needham's Web site is www.sierrapotomac.org/W_Needham/CanadaThistle_070625.htm

2. The literal translation is: "No one provokes me with impunity."

3. John Clare, "The Fear of Flowers," in *Flower Poems*, Simone Kövesi, ed. (Bangkok: M&S Services, 2001), 74.

4. Renita J. Weems, "How Metaphors Work," in *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex and*

The way or Canada thistle is often ignored and pathways are normally covered with its flowers. People walk over them, crushing them under their feet. Rare are the gardens where a thistle plant finds a home. For farmers it is a menace. They are spoken of with undertones of messiness and neglect and as having ill repute. Yet, truth be told, it has great virtue, and its leaves and roots have great medicinal value. Almost all parts of the plant can be used for food. Thistles are very useful when it comes to living and surviving in the wilderness. Sadly, it is also said that "it is impossible for man or beast to touch the flower without great hurt and danger."

Although thistle flowers are widely seen in tropical areas, the "flowers" are found on all terrains and abound in every aspect of life, be it in the political, religious, or economic realm. In the religious realm, those who do not comply with the normal acceptance code, be it because they do not talk the trendy talk or walk the catwalk of the theological headliners, are abandoned or left on their own on the wayside. They are pushed to the sidelines. Little do the headliners know that if it were not for the sideliners there would be nothing to read about.

What I would like to table are some of the characteristics of thistle flowers that can very well be applied to those "thistle flowers" in the theological arena.

Battered but not victims

Thistle flowers are hated by farmers and garden lovers, not to mention homeowners with lawns. The flowers may be brightly colored and present a beautiful sight but when they make their appearance they are destroyed with a vengeance. They are burned in some areas with the hope that they will not crop up again. But these plants are quite resilient, and the more they are cut or pulled out, the more resolute they become. As mentioned, they have great regenerative power and can grow out of a broken root as tiny as three quarters of an inch. They refuse to play victim but stand their ground and make themselves seen. Lying on the wayside, thistle flowers are either trampled on or kicked away. They are battered and seen as outlaws, but they cannot easily be ousted. Their situation may be hopeless, they may be sidelined, and they may not have the right accent or speak the language; they are different. Instead of crying, "Why are you pulling us out," the more the thistle flowers/theologians are pulled out, the more they take root. It is as though they were saying: you can try to destroy us all you want, but the more you try, the stronger we become. We may be battered but we are not victims.

Muted but not voiceless

Thistle flowers are what we call the untouchables or the subalterns where there is a dominant group or a master who subjugates and renders the untouchables faceless and voiceless. As we have seen, these thistle flowers grow and flourish in spaces where they are not welcome. So, they are made invisible and their voices muted, for seeing them brings about a blurring in the otherwise clear vision and hearing them produces a jarring note in the harmony one is comfortable with. What does it really mean to have a voice or for that matter a gathered will? Isn't that a prerequisite for survival? And when I say survival I am not talking about "mere life," but a life that is fully alive. "Survival is not an academic skill but it is taking our differences and making them into strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat them at their own game but they will never enable

Love in Hebrew Prophets (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 23.

us to bring about a genuine change."[5] So, what do we do? Often we are faced with the humiliation of having to falsify our own reality, our voice. But we cannot say it. We try and try to unsay it, for if we don't, the master will not fail to fill in the blanks on our behalf and we will be said.[6] Again, what then is our option? In the words of Trinh T. Minh-ha, "It all depends on how sharply we hone ourselves on the edge of reality…Silence as a refusal to partake in the story does provide us with a means to gain a hearing. It is voice, a mode of uttering, and a response in its own right."[7]

Thistle/theologians may not be able to "speak," but they can prophesy. What do prophets do? They have visions and open the blinded eyes of the world. When the world's vision is occluded with idols and lies, God speaks through prophets to open their eyes.[8] They are those prophets with voices that can clear visions with the power to rouse people from their slumber and to goad them into action.

Cursed but curers

"Damn these flowers," is often the refrain of people who walk along the roadsides because they step on these thorny flowers causing them to wince in pain. They are sharp and sting but these wayside flowers are also life savers. The extracts of the milk thistle are used as "liver tonics" and believed to improve the functioning of the liver. It is typically used to treat liver cirrhosis, chronic hepatitis, and toxin-induced liver damage. It not only purifies the blood but also improves its circulation. In earlier days, it was made into a paste with other herbs to increase the production of milk in nursing mothers (if I am not mistaken I was given that particular concoction when my children were born). In the Middle Ages, ayurvedic practitioners prescribed blessed thistle as a cure for smallpox. Today, it is used in herbal medicine as a contraceptive and to treat infections or fever. Tea made from old, withered leaves is used as an emetic in the treatment of food poisoning. The stem of the thistle is juicy and sweet and serves as a thirst quencher. There are places where thistle flowers are used to make fragrances.

Way thistles/theologians may be on the wayside, and often are a pain in the neck, but they can be and have been life savers. Remember this guy named Jesus? He was a way thistle and a thorn in the flesh of the powers that be; he was not only cursed but crucified. But he was and still is the one who cures all ills and fills us with life anew. Unwelcome as they are, non-Western, or rather non-hegemonic theologies—be they Latin American, Minjung, Black, African, Dalit, Womanist, Liberation, Queer—have made a world of difference. They have not only opened the eyes of Western theologies to a different perspective but have also provoked them to think outside the box. In other words, they have cured the myopic vision of the Western hegemonic world.

Different but with a difference

I love this quote from Zora Neale Hurston's *How it Feels to be Colored Me*, "It is thrilling to think—to know that for any act of

5. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981), 99.

6. Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 80

7. Ibid., 83.

8. See "Spirit of Gentleness" in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, #396 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006).

mine, I shall get twice as much praise or twice as much blame. It is quite exciting to hold the center of the national stage, with the spectators not knowing whether to laugh or weep." The way thistles/the wayside theologians often have the same experience. Thistle flowers are often left on the roadside, but when they make it to mainstream, it is to adorn a bouquet for people to say, "Wow! That looks so different and gives it a unique touch." They are the inmates of a zoo, to be gazed upon, talked about, and laughed about. They are different and so they make for good decoration. But that is not what being different entails. For many, difference is about division, but that is not the case here. Neither is it a tool of self-defense or conquest. You do not make a difference either by being preemptive or by conquering that which is denied to you. In the words of Cheg-tao-ke,

> You cannot take hold of it,
>
> But you cannot lose it.
>
> In not being able to get it, you get it.
>
> When you are silent, it speaks;
>
> When you speak, it is silent.[9]

Being different is not something that is definable in the sense of its being unique or special unless it makes a difference. As the Zen poet says, you get it because it made a difference. And that is the point. It is not simply about being different but about making a difference, be it bringing about a cure, or justice. The way thistle and the wayside theologian are different is that they bring about a difference that is life-giving. They are those who know and know better. They know what is to be feared and what is to be daring. They dare to be different to make a difference!

9. Zen poetry cited in Alan W. Watts, *Nature, Man and Woman* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 121.

Messy and yet messianic

Thistle flower theologians are messy but they are also messianic; they are a hopeless case but they are hopelessly hopeful. They are the ones who hope against hope. And it is because of them that we have hope. They may be forgotten, but they are not forlorn.

Thistle flowers are believed to have in them special substances that serve as stimulators of memory. It stimulates the cerebral cortex, which is the seat of memory and makes possible the act of remembrance. In other words, these forgotten flowers on the wayside have the power to awaken even that which is dead. They bring to memory that which was forgotten. They may be ignored and forgotten by the wayside but will they not let you forget. They evoke memories of that which has been kept away and hidden. And remembrance or "rememory" has in it what Walter Benjamin calls "weak messianic power." But why is it called "weak" messianic power? Recalling the Apostle Paul, "power fulfills itself in weakness." The way thistle, the wayside theologian, may not have the trendy talk or walk, may appear weak and messy but in and through them strength bursts forth. Lying on the wayside, they become collectors, storytellers, photographers of things and events. In short, they become storehouses or reservoirs of memories, which they alone are capable of translating and transmitting to others. In their transmission and translation, they create a moment of rupture calling to mind the injustices of the past that the world would rather forget in its race toward progress. Through the act of remembrance, they connect the past and the present and instill an awareness out of which arises a demand for justice for those victims of the past that have been forgotten. It is about acknowledging the fact that we are here because of the generation that came before us, i.e., there is today because there

was a yesterday. In line with Benjamin, Helmut Peukert says "we owe everything, our liberation, to those of the past who were oppressed, downtrodden and victims and the least we can do is make use of this power for making known or describing those incidents/moments that have been wiped out."[10] The weak messianic power that Benjamin talks about is this memory through which the messiah comes and through which hope enters. It is through remembrance that the past converses with the present, looking at the past with an agitated gaze and a questioning tone, so much so that in the discourse that follows the present awakens from its stupor. When the power of remembrance fails, history repeats itself; we are condemned to a cycle of reproduction of mere life and survival where there is no possibility of redemption, only a pile of debris. It is only memory that can fan the spark of hope of redemption. It puts us in place a of reckoning and displaces us from places of acquiescence. Therefore, it is because of the messy, hopeless wayside thistles/theologians that we have hope. Their stories, memories, and experiences have the weak messianic power that can awaken even the dead and transform desperate situations into songs of hope and joy. Or, to use Benjamin's words, "it is because of the hopeless [the thistle flowers/ the wayside theologians] that we have been given hope."[11]

So, why did I write about a "thistle-ian" theology? Who cares about thistle flowers? Do you? I would like to end this homage to Karen Bloomquist with a poem *Thistles* by the Native American poet, Louise Erdrich.

> Under ledge, under tar, under fill
> under curved blue stone of doorsteps,
> under the aggregate of lakebed rock,
> under loss and under hard words,
> under steamrollers
> under your heart,
> it doesn't matter. They can live forever.
> The seeds of thistles
> push from nowhere, forming a rose
> of spikes
> that spreads all summer until it
> stands in a glory of
> needles, blossoms, blazing
> purple clubs and fists.[12]

Kneeling by the ledge and then settling herself on the doorstep, Bloomquist saw the defiant little heads coming out of the earth. With care, she removed the stones that were hindering their growth and touched the budding thistles. Tenacious, abrasive, dangerous—and not to mention thorny—all of these attributes and many more apply to the thistle. You, Karen, took the risk. Thank you for not only daring to touch them, but for caring for and embracing the thistle flowers, among them, this little Indian thistle flower, named Joy.

10. Helmut Peukert, *Science, Action and Fundamental Theology: Toward a Theology of Communicative Action* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1984), 207.

11. Cited by Hanna Arendt, "Introduction," in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Hanna Arendt, ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 17.

12. Louise Erdrich, "Thistles," in *Original Fire: Selected and New Poems* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

Karen—a Lincolnesque Leader

Iris J. Benesch

Department of Theologies and Studies, The Lutheran World Federation

Do not condemn the judgment of another because it differs from your own. You may both be wrong.

Dandamis, sage (4th century B.C.E.)

In her eleven years as the director of the Department for Theology and Studies of The Lutheran World Federation, Karen proved herself a leader confident enough to be humble, not to feel the need to bluster or to dominate, but sufficiently sure of her own judgment and self-worth to listen and not be threatened by contrary advice. Gently, but firmly, she led by example, commanding her colleagues' admiration and respect. She challenged and motivated her staff to push their own limits, while being sensitive toward, and not too demanding of, them. Thanks to Karen's energy and commitment, vision and foresight, the department managed to produce a remarkable number of publications and organize numerous workshops, seminars and conferences, despite only a skeleton staff in Geneva. Being creative and innovative, Karen involved numerous theologians, well beyond the Federation, in the work of the department, thus bringing rich and varied perspectives to its work.

Karen—the mensch

If people are good only because they fear punishment, and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed.

Albert Einstein, physicist, Nobel laureate (1879–1955)

Karen is a person of integrity and honor. She is a good person and has the qualities one would hope for in a dear friend or trusted colleague. She is someone to admire and emulate, someone of noble character—she has character, rectitude, dignity as well as a sense of what is right; she is responsible and decorous. She has a sense of humor, and never takes herself too seriously. Karen helps people without expecting a return. She does the right thing the right way. She realizes that she is blessed and that these blessings come with the obligation to pay back society.

Karen—the theologian

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.

Maya Angelou, poet (b. 1928)

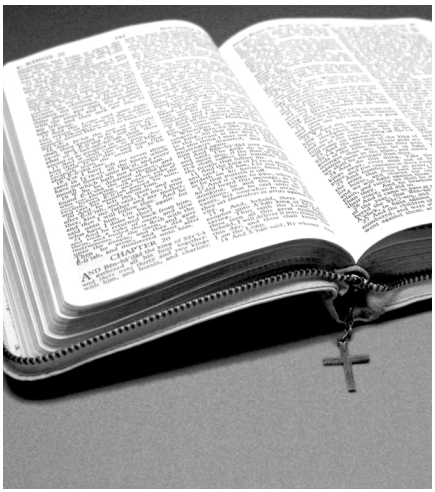
Firmly rooted in Western academia, Karen has opened the door to many a theologian from the global South. Attempting to show how theology speaks to contemporary questions, she has challenged her more conservative Northern colleagues to revisit traditional theology in light of more contextual approaches. She has given a voice to those who are often excluded from theological discourse and championed the cause of contextual and trans-contextual theology.

Karen—the mentor

I have lived in this world just long enough to look carefully the second time into things that I am most certain of the first time.

Josh Billings, columnist and humorist (1818–1885)

Over the years, Karen has patiently mentored several interns and theological assistants, helping them to discover a world until then beyond their reach. Working in such areas as economic globalization, worship, Christian-Muslim dialogue and climate change, she has provided an opportunity for young theologians actively to participate in and contribute to theological discourse at the global level. Moreover, she instituted and hosted the annual "J-term," which brought together North American students and students from the global South for a highly successful, three-week intensive immersion course in ecumenical theology. The courses not only exposed students to ecumenical theology, but through close interaction, they also discovered how theology is being done in different parts of the world.



Karen—the rebel with a cause

All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, and each one of us is responsible for the misdeeds of all the others. I cannot detach myself from the wickedest soul.

Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948)

Karen is at heart a social activist and social ethicist questioning and contesting the prevailing, pervasive unjust social, economic and gender structures. Over the last eleven years, rather than demonstrating in the street, she has worked with others towards developing theological rationales for social action around such issues as economic globalization, the obligation of the churches to hold governments accountable, climate change, and opposing all forms of discrimination.

Karen—minister of finance

Pedantry and mastery are opposite attitudes toward rules. To apply a rule to the letter, rigidly, unquestioningly, in cases where it fits and in cases where it does not fit, is pedantry. To apply a rule with natural ease, with judgment, noticing the cases where it fits, and without ever letting the words of the rule obscure the purpose of the action or the opportunities of the situation, is mastery.

George Pólya, professor of mathematics (1887-1985)

Karen's innovativeness is not limited to doing theology. With her usual panache, she is the mistress of creative financing, which at times has made the hairs of the more conservative minded stand on end. She has stretched every penny to the utmost, thus ensuring that the department's shoestring budget could cover numerous

theological conferences around the world, support theological consultants in different parts of the world and, by dipping into this and that pot, she financed a salmagundi of programs.

Karen—the feminist

I have met brave women who are exploring the outer edge of human possibility, with no history to guide them, and with a courage to make themselves vulnerable that I find moving beyond words.

Gloria Steinem (b. 1934)

Karen was the fourth woman to be ordained in the American Lutheran Church (ALC) in 1974. Throughout her career, she has bravely championed the cause of women, confident that the combination of good theology and the good experience of churches that ordained women would help to persuade those who had not yet made this decision. She has taken up the cause of many young female theologians, especially from the global South, supporting them in word and deed, which has earned her considerable respect throughout the communion.

Farewell, Karen

Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Some people come into our lives and leave footprints on our hearts and we are never ever the same.

Flavia Weedn, author and illustrator

Karen has been exemplary—a class act—difficult to follow. She has left her mark not only through the many publications she edited and contributed to, but through her personal engagement which has touched so many of us. We wish Karen well as she transits past her present calling, never forgetting the footprints left behind, the lives touched, and the path ahead. Farewell… until we meet again.

A Week of Renewal at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

June 28 – July 2, 2010

You are invited to a week of renewal of classes, worship, stimulating conversation and restorative time in the company of old and new colleagues in the wonderful setting between the Bay and Tilden Park. The Week of Renewal at PLTS offers stimulating classes in the morning and more, including:

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- Continental breakfast
- Opportunity for spiritual direction
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For more information about classes offered, costs and to register, please visit **www.plts.edu/summer_session_2010.html**.

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Book Reviews

Gospel Blazes in the Dark: A Festival of Writing Sparked in Honor of Edward H. Schroeder. Edited by Steven C. Kuhl, B. Sherman Lee, and Robin J. Morgan. Chesterfield, Mo.: Crossings Community Incorporated, 2005. 229 pages. Paper. $20.00.

Eighteen contributors, influenced theologically by Edward Schroeder, contribute to this Festschrift at his 75th birthday. Schroeder spent his entire professional life as a teacher of theology, first at Valparaiso Univeristy, then at Concordia Seminary and Christ-Seminary–Seminex (both in St. Louis), and since 1983 as founder-leader of Crossings, an educational program centered in St. Louis. Throughout his career Schroeder stressed the distinction between law and promise as the central, key theological category to understand, interpret, and proclaim the Scriptures and the theological heritage of the church.

The contributions are a varied collection. The first three are a poem, a hymn, and a brief appreciation of four pieces of Christian art. The next two are a brief appreciation of Edward Schroeder and a longer article by Robert C. Schultz on the contemporary significance of the Law Gospel distinction, which dominated the religion curriculum revision at Valparaiso University in 1958–1960.

The third section, titled "Gospel Blazes in the Church," consists of eight briefer contributions; many of them stress the need for simple language in proclamation. The one I like most is Gary Simpson's deepening of Schroeder's critique of Karl Barth through the lens of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's writings. In the final section, titled "Gospel Blazes in the World," five writers discuss contemporary issues, such as same sex relations, war and peace, and some issues of ecology, using Schroeder's methodological categories. These articles are stimulating, even for those who might find a different integrating theological principle in the Lutheran tradition.

Edgar Krentz

Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage. Edited by Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. v and 345 pages. $28.00.

The essays contained in this fine volume originated in a three-year collaborative research program sponsored by the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey. "The Identity of Jesus Project" follows a prior study by CTI on "The Scripture." The heart of this collection is a series of essays written by scholars well-known for their work on a selected portion of the New Testament. Dale Allison wrote on Matthew; Joel Marcus on Mark; Beverly Gaventa on Luke-Acts; Marianne Thompson on John; Richard Hays on Paul; and A. Katherine Grieb on Hebrews. Each writer details the marks of Jesus' identity found in their specific section. The format used, particularly by the Gospel scholars, was not that of a catalog, but a thorough descriptive list of identity marks. The list will be very useful for teaching, preaching and personal study. To be sure, not every New Testament section could be so easily analyzed. According to Thompson, John's Gospel stretches from the creation (1:1) to the promised return of Christ (21:22–23). The identity of Jesus must be seen along these coordinates. The identity of Jesus in Paul offers considerable intricacy, since Paul did not know Jesus and seldom mentioned him. Hays asserts that Paul's identity of Jesus can be ascertained as we live out the story of the crucifixion and resurrection. Grieb sees in Hebrews a remarkable effort to place full deity and entire humanity side by side; the identity of Jesus calls us to care for the oppressed by following him "outside the camp" (p. 214).

Three essays describe the identity of Jesus in light of Judaism and the Hebrew Scrip-

tures. Markus Bockmuehl writes on Jesus as the Son of David; Gary Anderson compares the impassibility of Jesus in Gethsemane with that of Moses and Jonah. R.W.L. Moberly shows the impact of Isaiah on our understanding of Jesus.

In post-New Testament marks of identity, Brian E. Daley looks at Jesus in four patristic writers, analyzing the presence of the two natures in each. David Steinmetz describes the presence of Jesus in the Eucharistic theology of the early Reformers (Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin) in contrast to medieval Catholicism. Katherine Sonderegger believes Christians personally assimilate the identity of Jesus, our Redeemer, by means of the church's liturgy, the service of the Word (pp. 292-297).

The editors, Gaventa and Hays, provide an introduction to these essays and to the work of the CTI. In other introductory essays, William Placher discusses the nature of a gospel—fiction, myth, or witness to the truth. Robin Jensen exegetes the Gospel material involving "truly God—the Son—and truly man" (p. 53): then how does the reader understand Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane? Allison and Francis Watson each write on the relationship of the historical Jesus to the later Christ in the canon and the church. The concluding essay by Sarah Coakley reviews the problem of identifying the historical Jesus with the risen Christ. Remarkably, she reverses the issue. We do not discover the identity of Jesus, but the Spirit finds the identity of Jesus in us (1 Corinthians 12:3, p. 313). That discovery comes as we know Jesus in the oppressed and the poor.

Graydon F. Snyder
Chicago, Ill.

Grace All Around Us: Embracing God's Promise in Tragedy and Loss. By Stephen Paul Bouman. Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2007. 127 pages. Paper. $13.99

This book was born out of the author's experiences as Bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) during and after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. But don't assume that its message is dated!

Bouman interweaves powerful stories and memories of ministry at Ground Zero with a broader awareness of the suffering and loss that characterize broken human existence. Convinced that "what we experienced and learned in the crucible of 9/11 is relevant to every tragedy" (11), he depicts everything from hospital calls to visiting a Palestinian refugee camp as opportunities for embodied witness to the promise and hope of resurrection.

His personal and pastoral experience allows Bouman to use "Ground Zero" as a profound religious metaphor without trivializing it. The events of 9/11, though devastating, are put into perspective by the events of Good Friday and Easter. Bouman asserts, "The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the Ground Zero of human history and cosmic existence" (123). This experience of re-creation empowers Christians to minister within "the daily Ground Zeros" (125) "of every community and every human life." (66)

Bouman identifies concrete steps for ministry through the stages of grief and recovery, including listening to the lamentations of those who suffer, re-enchantment, working together actively as repairers of the breach, and visitation. The goal is not a "new normal" but "cruciform rising," for the individual and for the church.

Bouman describes the story of Moses and the burning bush as an example of "biography meeting vocation." (72) The same can be said of Bouman himself. This book reveals a pastor's heart and a deep, lived appreciation of the Gospel's power to bring healing and hope. Bouman is currently ELCA Executive Director for Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission. This book invites and equips us to join him in that work.

Kathryn Kleinhans
Wartburg College

When God Speaks through Worship. By Craig A. Satterlee. Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2009. xxi and 137 pages. Paper. $17.00.

Craig Satterlee's *When God Speaks through Worship: Stories Congregations Live By*, calls to mind the psalmist's description of a river whose streams make glad the city of God. The book's thesis, that God acts in worship to transform church and world, is sustained by the metaphor of worship as a mighty river where God carries out God's mission. "Like a river flowing to the sea, God's work of reconciliation, recorded in Scripture and accomplished in Christ, continues in the church's worship and through worship overflows into the world" (5). The book itself, like a river, flows organically between story and theology, always directed at illuminating the saving action of God that calls and transforms us.

Part stories, part sermon, and always buoyed by the author's Lutheran theological commitments, this book will be useful to pastors who hope to articulate the theological significance of worship practices. It will be useful to worship committees who wonder what God does and what humans do each week in the gathering, the word, the sacrament, and the sending. It will be useful to Christians who struggle to understand how the finite can hold the infinite.

It is no accident that the chapter titles are all in the imperative mood. Light candles; pick hymns; welcome kids; remember baptism; preach Christ. These are actions which the author commands us to do, and for good theological reason. Lighting candles expresses the communion of saints, alongside whom God feeds us in the sacrament. Anointing with oil reminds us that God, through the cross of Christ, is closer to us than we are to ourselves. God is always the actor in worship, but it is in our doing and our receiving that God's reconciling relationship to the world through Christ is manifest in worship.

Satterlee is a storyteller and a preacher at heart. Yet, *When God Speaks through Worship* is far more than the sum of the individual stories it tells. It is a theology of worship; a guide to preaching; and a testimony to faith in the God who brings life out of death and salvation out of sin.

The Rev. Elizabeth Musselman
Augustana Lutheran Church of Hyde Park
Chicago, Ill.

Resurrection. By Alister McGrath. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008. vii and 87 pages. Cloth. $15.00.

Resurrection is a volume in the "Truth and the Christian Imagination" series, books authored by noted British theologian (and scientist) Alister McGrath. The series covers traditional theological loci, such as creation, incarnation, and redemption, but does so by interweaving an interpretation of these doctrines in light of Western art and poetry. This particular volume is beautiful and thoughtful, overall a delight to read.

As many know, McGrath as a young man was an atheist and was converted to the Christian faith through his own personal study and reflection. Naturally, his interpretation of the meaning of Christ's resurrection from the dead has an apologetic edge to it. It also has a deeply pastoral edge. Both novice and seasoned Christians will find new insights here.

The paintings that McGrath interprets in light of the Easter story in this book include: Maurice Denis' "Holy Women Near the Tomb," Fra Angelico's "Noli me tangere," Guercino's "The Incredulity of St. Thomas," Raphael's "Sistine Chapel," Peter Paul Rubens' "The Conversion of Paul," and Matthias Grünewald's "Isenheim Altarpiece." The images are thoughtfully reproduced and close-ups from each are strikingly repeated in the respective chapters in which they are discussed. Likewise, poems are interpreted in order to expand upon the significance of the resurrection. These include: T. S. Eliot's "Waste Land," John Donne's "Divine Meditation," Christina Rossetti's "Better Resurrection," and verse from the medieval theologians, Bernard of Cluny and Anselm.

McGrath notes that the resurrection was an unexpected event for the disciples since the Jews anticipated either no resurrection or a general resurrection at the end of time. No one

predicted a resurrection of an individual in the here and now. In light of modern criticism of miracles, McGrath thinks that to exclude the possibility of a resurrection on a priori grounds is simply out of touch with the fact that all worldviews, including those that preclude miracles on the basis of the conviction that the world is governed by natural laws, rest on faith.

Touching (but not immersed in) what Lutherans call a "theology of the cross," McGrath notes that the resurrection of Jesus was the resurrection of a failure. "Many of us have found ourselves in similar dark places. Our eyes need to be opened to our weaknesses and flaws. Why do so many find that a spectacular failure is often the gateway to personal transformation and renewal? One answer might be that it forces us to be honest about ourselves, destroying our comforting illusions about our nobility and integrity" (42). There is much here that could substantiate the "fracture" of the cross, which destroys our attempts at any seamless thread of ontological, moral, or psychological continuity to the world, a tear that the resurrection does not trump. But that is not McGrath's overarching thrust in his interpretation. Nevertheless, his insight that the resurrection cannot be used as a defense to avoid pain, which in faith is an "alien work" of God seeking to remake us, akin to Christ's own experience, to be people of faith.

All in all, this little volume is a delight to the eyes and has much wisdom to help both young and mature Christians. It is highly recommended for either the classroom or congregational use.

Mark C. Mattes
Grand View College
Des Moines, Iowa

Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John. By Lance Byron Richey. The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 43. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2007. xii and 228 pp. Paper. $13.00.

This study began as a doctoral dissertation at Marquette University. Richey's unique groundbreaking analysis of the Gospel of John makes a straightforward proposal: the Gospel of John undercuts the Roman Imperial cult and Augustan Ideology. Richey supports his thesis by examining John's language that presents Jesus as the true ruler of the world. More than other writers in the New Testament, John uses vocabulary that counters Imperial language: *exousia* ("power"), *ho soter tou kosmou* ("the savior of the world"), and *ho huios tou theou* ("the son of God"). Richey compares the divine power of Jesus with the human political authority of the emperors. In speaking of Jesus as *soter* John challenges the Roman appellations of savior and benefactor used for emperors. John used *ho huios tou theou* as the primary christological title for Jesus to redefine a term used broadly in the imperial cult. The net effect of using these terms for Jesus was two fold. They served to redefine the Roman terms for Gentile believers who had been raised in the Roman ideology. Second, these particular terms for Jesus served as a powerful confrontation with a political system that persecuted the Johannine community.

Having established John's linguistic encounter with the Imperial cult, Richey then does a close reading of two important passages: the Prologue and the Passion narrative. In the Prologue he analyzes the four apparent sections: cosmology (vv. 1–5); prophecy (vv. 6–8); rejection (vv. 9–13); and doxology (vv. 14–18). They take a position counter to the imperial ideology. In contrast to Roman rulers, Jesus the Word is preexistent. The presence of the Word is announced by a historical person, John the Baptist, not a mythic narrator. Nevertheless, the world (*ta idia*) rejects the Word. Despite the rejection, the Johannine community sees in Jesus the glory of the "only begotten of God" (not multiple rulers).

Richey writes more selectively about the Passion narrative. He avoids the difficult anti-Semitic passages. Instead he works on counter traps set by Pilate and the Jews regarding Jesus as king. Pilate asks the Jews if they really want him to crucify their king (if not, he would need to deny his loyalty to the Emperor). The Jews are forced then to deny that Jesus is a king, for they must have no king but Caesar. Caught in this political trap they then deny the Jewish expectation of a Messiah.

Richey's thesis will prove quite signifi-

cant in the study of John. Strictly theological, or christological, readings of the Gospels have been significantly altered by recent socio-historical studies. Most readers are now aware that the New Testament Gospels must be understood, in part, by the social context in which they were written and the social issues they addressed. Richey goes one step further. The Gospel of John, with its high emphasis on titles for Jesus, must be understood in terms of the Roman political world. Richey's work will surely encourage similar studies. Indeed, a parallel work on Romans by Neil Elliott (*The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of the Empire*) has already been published. Important as this new direction may be, it is not so simple. Every early reader of the New Testament lived in a definable social context. Not every reader was aware of the political or imperial structure. If the Gospel of John was written in Ephesus, for example, how many readers would have recognized a Roman political counterpart for the christological titles. A few statues and inscriptions may not have been sufficient to establish for them a Johannine counter-ideology. But Richey has taken an important step forward.

Graydon F. Snyder
Chicago, Ill.

Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. By John Reumann. The Yale Anchor Bible 33B. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. xxiv and 805 pages. Hardcover. $65.00.

Welcome what should be *the* commentary on Philippians for the next generation. To make my own biases clear, I was a good friend of John Reumann and read some of this commentary in manuscript. In a brief Introduction, John Reumann provides the basic information to understand his commentary. He interprets the letter from within, so to speak, not using Acts as a major basis for interpreting Paul. Philippians is a composite letter, formed from three letters to Philippi, all written from Ephesus: Letter A, 4:10–20 expresses thanks for the Philippians concern for him; there is no indication of imprisonment (A. D. 54). Letter B, 1:1–3:1, parts of 4:1–9, 21–23. Paul is in prison in Ephesus (late 54 or early 55). Letter C, 3:2–21, perhaps parts of 4:1–9 (A. D. 55) has no evidence Paul is still in jail; it is highly polemical. These letters were combined between A. D. 90–100. The commentary proper gives the textual evidence for this partition. (I disagree with his view that the letters were written from Ephesus; Reumann rejects Rome because of the distance from Philippi. When one sees that a businessman in Hierapolis, modern Pasmmukale, traveled to Rome over seventy times, the distance seems less of a problem.) Reumann pays special attention to the contribution the Philippian house church makes to Paul's own work of mission.

The commentary itself is highly detailed and engages vast scholarly literature at every point. For each section of the text Reumann provides his own translation and then detailed notes on the text. Next comes a section titled Comment. Here he deals with literary and/or rhetorical form and with topics that arise in the Notes. He ends with a section titled "Meaning and Interpretation." He adds a bibliography related specifically to issues in that section. Two Excurses discuss the meaning of Paul's phrase "In Christ" and the history of interpretation of Phil 2:6–11.

Take Phil 1:27–30 as an example. After the translation and notes the Commentary treats A, Forms, Sources, and Traditions: Structure, rhetorical influence, the opponents, the political, military and ecclesial tone and suffering. In B, Meaning and Interpretation, he discusses the message to the Philippians, "Be Citizens in Philippi and in Christ"; "Grounds for this Stance in the Contest the Philippians and Paul Face." Finally he describes how these verses function in the redacted, canonical form of the letter and adds the specialized bibliography. Here and elsewhere Reumann makes clear how Roman ruler cult lies behind much of Paul's language. Paul clarifies how one might be a citizen of Rome and an adherent of Christ.

John Reumann spent 35 years in preparation of this commentary—and it shows. It is an incredibly rich commentary that gives access to the scholarship of the last two centuries. He combines classical, historical, and critical ap-

proaches with rhetorical criticism, analysis of the social world, and massive attention to the analysis of the Greek vocabulary. The General Bibliography covers pages 23–50, with books in Italian, Latin, Swedish, Danish, French, German, and English. The Index of [modern] Authors covers pages 751–64, two columns to the page. The Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Texts, pages 765–805 shows extensive use of biblical, Jewish, Greek, and Latin authors and epigraphic texts. In short, Reumann has left no scholarly stone unturned. In fact, he had cut his manuscript from 2800 pages to 1250; he also excised 1200 pages on Acts. Were I to teach Philippians soon, I would make Reumann required reading; students, pastors, and scholars will all benefit from this work.

John Reumann was Ministerium of Pennsylvania Professor of New Testament and Greek, emeritus, at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, where he taught for some fifty years.

Edgar Krentz

Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship. By Magnus Zetterholm. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. xv and 270 pages. Paper. $18.00.

Magnus Zetterholm, associate professor of New Testament Studies at Lund University, Sweden, has written a historical and biblical overview of various developments in the area of Pauline studies. He writes: "The aim of this book is to attempt to explain how Paul's relation to Judaism can be understood in two very different ways and to explore which approach is likely to produce the most historically plausible picture of Paul and the development of the early Jesus movement." (10)

The subtitle of this work should be omitted as this deftly articulated and sophisticated look at Pauline studies can be appreciated by scholars and pastors as well as seminarians. In thorough fashion, Zetterholm begins with early Pauline history and then moves to foundational interpreters of Paul in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including theologians in the Tübingen School, Bultmann and his students.

Most provocative are the next chapters which look at the "New Perspectives on Paul" school (its main authors are J. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright) and also those who move beyond this perspective to take into account Paul and such topics as covenant, self-control, ethnicity, and empire. Other approaches less familiar and newer—some from atheist philosophers—include postcolonial ideas, feminist and multi-cultural approaches, and philosophical interpretations of Paul.

One issue that Zetterholm highlights in his analysis is reflected in this statement: "A common trait among the radical new perspective scholars is the ambition not to let contemporary Christian normative theology influence their interpretation" (162). For Lutherans, in particular, this stance brings forth many insights, which run counter to the assumed stance that the Lutheran version of Paul is the only logical interpretation.

This work is well-organized, thoroughly researched, and well argued. Once the reader is able to acknowledge the tragic consequences of much of Luther's interpretation of Paul (see 60—63), it is fascinating to see how the so-called "Lutheran Paul" continues to be argued yet today.

Heady reading and highly recommended by this reviewer who is now reappraising her use of Paul in the homiletics classroom.

Susan K. Hedahl
Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary

Briefly Noted

John: Stories of the Word and Faith. By Robert J. Karris. (New City Press, $15.95) Karris gives a brief, but perceptive introduction to the Gospel and then provides compressed comments on specific texts that will help proclamation and teaching. Karris himself says he writes "to nourish and deepen faith." He achieves his goal.

Edgar Krentz

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Preaching Helps

Lectionary 18 – Lectionary 26

"Turning the Tables"

"How direct are you when preaching about money?" Perhaps it's because I am writing a book on preaching stewardship. Perhaps it's the economic times in which we live. Nevertheless, I am asked this question more and more. I have learned to preach the lectionary and to let God do the talking. The readings for September 26, 2010 (Lectionary 26)—Amos 6:1a, 4–7; 1 Timothy 6:6–19; Luke 16:19–31—illustrate the point.

Do we want to sit with rich, powerful, beautiful people? The prophet Amos tells us that those who are at ease and feel secure, those who lie on beds of ivory and lounge on couches, those who eat well and sing idle songs, those will be the first to go into… exile! In Luke the rich man ends up in agony, thirsty and tormented, while hungry Lazarus is carried by angels to be with Abraham. The tables have been turned!

"Turning the tables" is a theme often repeated in Luke's Gospel. Drastic change, complete reversal is coming, Luke says, but reversal doesn't change relationships. We'll spend eternity in the company of the people that surround us today. The question is: Where will we spend eternity? On what side of the table or, better yet, the chasm will we be seated? Reversal is coming! **"God is turning the tables!"**

Together Amos and Luke tell us that the answer as to where we'll be sitting is to be found in wealth. Wealth and poverty are two states, two sets of conditions, two sides of the table. The people on each side of the table are set apart and opposed to each other. They sit on different sides of a table that is canyon-like. At death—in the end—the table remains but the sides are reversed. The relationship is not changed but turned around. Lazarus and company get the best seats.

The consequences of God's **"turning the tables"** are far-reaching. The company we keep in this life is the company we keep forever. And because the rich man wasn't with Lazarus in life he cannot be with Abraham in the life to come.

So is wealth bad? Does being blessed in this life automatically prevent us from being blessed in the life to come? First Timothy answers, "No." It's not what we have but the company that we keep that counts.

Rather than emphasizing actual material conditions, 1 Timothy talks about the condition of the heart and the direction of the will. First Timothy talks about how our lives are oriented. Wealth in and of itself is not the problem. Rather, the desire for wealth is what gets us into trouble.

In 1 Timothy we read that those who want to be wealthy fall into temptation, trap, and many senseless and harmful desires. These temptations, traps, and desires plunge people into ruin and destruction. It is true that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and that the desire for money has led many to wander away from the faith.

To desire wealth is to incline our lives toward money. To be drawn to wealth is to make decisions based on money. Is it profitable? Is it cost effective? What will be the return on my investment? The problem with questions such as these, the problem with being drawn toward wealth, is that one wanders away from faith. One wanders away from God.

Imagine if our heavenly Father had asked, "Is it profitable for me to save humanity?" What if Jesus had asked, "Is it cost effective for me to die on the cross?" And what if, when we bring someone to the baptismal font, the Holy Spirit asks, "What will be the return on my investment?" Could anyone be saved? Fortunately for us, God's "bottom line" is unconditional love, not money.

Wealth and faith are alternative orientations. We can't point our lives in both directions. Jesus says it: "You can't serve God and mammon." And so 1 Timothy urges us to shun wealth and love of silver and to pursue godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

In 1 Timothy, wealth is opposed to faith as an object of desire, as a focus or orientation for our lives. "For we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these." Despite the world's setting us in unequal and even opposing relations, freedom from wealth makes us capable of mutuality. In faith, we are oriented toward the full realization of that mutuality rather than toward the "temptations, traps, and senseless and harmful desires" which, rather than making us wealthy, plunge us into ruin and destruction.

God is **"turning the tables!"** Where we'll end up sitting in the tomorrow of tomorrows depends to a large extent on where we point our lives today. God is **"turning the tables!"** Decide now with whom you want to sit!

Patrick H. Shebeck, who serves Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Chicago Heights, Ill, turns the table on the readings for August and September. Addressing topics like fear and freedom, hospitality and honor, consequences and persistence, owing and earning, forgiving and being in debt, these readings certainly speak to our lives. Yet, Patrick helps us look between the lines and see how these readings are also—and more importantly—about God.

Pastor Shebeck is originally from the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul where he "grew up a cradle Lutheran in the land where butter is a spice and gravy is a beverage." He graduated from St. Olaf College with degrees in Liturgics and History, and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, doing additional work at the undergraduate level at the University of Cambridge. Patrick is currently working on the D.Min in Liturgical Studies at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Pastor Shebeck completed his vicarage year in San Bernardino California, working and teaching in one of America's poorest and most violent cities; he completed his Clinical Pastoral Education at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis, working specifically in the areas of pastoral care to those suffering with mental illness. Before being ordained, he served as a professional church musician in Episcopal, Lutheran and Roman Catholic parishes; he maintains active interest in the world of church music.

God is certainly turning the tables. I pray that, before we turn the tables on our congregations, we grapple with the grace that comes from discovering the ways God is turning the tables on us.

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

Lectionary 18
August 1, 2010

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12–14; 2:18–23
Psalm 49:1–12
Colossians 3:1–11
Luke 12:13–21

My father likes to remind both my sister and me that, "…whatever they're talkin' about, they're talkin' about money." And, it would seem that for the next several weeks, the readings assigned in the lectionary—to varying degrees, of course—have to do with the concept of possessions; whatever Jesus is talkin' about, he's talkin' about money.

Our entrée into this discussion is laid out by the writer of Ecclesiastes (known in the Hebrew simply by his title, "Qohelet," or, "the Preacher") who some would say is a cynic, and whom cynics would label a realist. Designed to answer back theological questions about the nature of expenditure and reward (laid out, for example, in the book of Proverbs: if you do a, then b will follow), the "wisdom" of Ecclesiastes seems suspicious about everyone and everything. It appears that everyone has a motive, everyone an angle, everyone a hidden agenda. Answer? Don't try and figure things out; just "eat, drink and be glad" (8:15).

Preachers will be wise to reference this reading in their preaching for this week, simply because we only hear from the writer of Ecclesiastes twice in the entire three-year lectionary (today and on the Feast of the Name of Jesus, January 1). In this age of "too big to fail" banks and a society obsessed with the accumulation of "things," "the Preacher" reminds us that such things are, at the end of the day, ultimately worthless; they are the "vanities" of which they speak.

This notion is extraordinarily difficult for contemporary Americans to stomach. The notion that hard work may not, in fact, be the supreme reward is anathema to the national myth of manifest destiny and the deep-rooted notion in American history that individuals are the masters of their own fate, for good or ill. Indeed, so pervasive is this notion that it has spilled over with a tidal wave into the history of American Protestantism, making the preaching of grace markedly more difficult. Work, in the larger scheme of soteriology, does *not* equal reward.

Preachers will do well to be honest about this tension: that often, secularized myths of "success" rub up against the notion of such things as "vanities," or as we shall see in our Gospel reading, are completely foolish in the face of God's grace. Careful reference to our second reading from Colossians will aid this effort, paying special attention to the mention of greed (verse 5), versus the notion of freedom (verse 11). Particularly in the current economic climate (and the situations that got us here), the vice lists of our second reading read like a newspaper article detailing the latest banking collapse. Wise preachers will address this duality and remind their hearers that fulfillment is not in the things we have (the vanities), or the things we achieve. Rather, fulfillment rests in hope that "Christ is all in all," a hope that will eclipse our own human accomplishments or attempts at security.

These themes find their culmination in our reading from Luke, in which Our Lord reminds the young man who questions him about things (vanities) that God is not particularly interested in them. This is both true and not true; on the one hand, Jesus clearly shuns greed in this story and other stories that reference such concerns. At the same time, Jesus

is intimately concerned with notions of economic justice; namely, that the poor have enough, and that the Christian faith calls its adherents to be generous of heart (and of pocketbook). Distinction between *greed* and *justice* will be helpful, and the preacher might explore the benefits and dangers of such notions in the sermon.

The real concern of Jesus today is that the young man who questions him is seeking security in something *other* than God. Again, given the current economic realities of non-profit organizations (including churches), preachers might gently (or overtly) ask their parishes what percentage of their income they give to the larger church, if such giving has gone down ("…because of the economic situation…"), and if such stewardship reflects either a complete trust in God's grace (the "freedom" of which Colossians speaks), or instead is driven by a modus operandi of fear, necessitating the storage of crops in a specially constructed barn (a parish church, perhaps?). It is tempting, but not unusual, for parishes to do this and to fail to recognize that through it all that they have become the "vanity of vanities" of a cynical and scarcity-informed worldview.

These readings, to be truthful, seem to contain much more scolding—or at least advice—than they do "good news." So, what *is* the gospel for this day? The good news is that God frees us to step away from the vanities, away from the "stored-up-ness" of our lives and intentionally opens us to the "freedom" that our baptism into the Paschal mystery bestows. There is no freedom beyond this, and preachers need to expose other promises of freedom for what they are: myths. There is only freedom in Christ. There is only freedom in grace,. So be sure that your mouth, as the psalmist says on this day, is speaking the truth of that wisdom. PHS

Lectionary 19
August 8, 2010

Genesis 15:1–6
Psalm 33:12–22
Hebrews 11:1–3, 8–16
Luke 12:32–40

Some theologians have posited that every one of the world's great disappointments and sins stems from the font of fear. Fear, it seems, informs so many of the evils that wander unhindered through a world that wishes, so it seems, that it could be rid of "fear" as a concept. Fear governs a great many of our actions, stemming from an instinctual need to protect oneself from danger. This "instinct" to fear, which is part of who we are as human beings, is built into the very fabric of our nature.

Our readings today open with God speaking to Abram, saying clearly that he is "not to fear," a task that is easier said than done, given the human instinct to be wary of difference, and most especially wary of not knowing what is coming next. Throughout their exchange, it is clear that *what* Abram is afraid of is the possibility of having no descendants, a prospect that seems to increase with each passing day as he increases in age. Abram shares the view of the ancient world that without offspring there is no *future,* no ability to control even remotely "what comes next." While some might like to focus on Abram's reproductive ability, preachers and teachers must not get bogged down in this. What Abram is afraid of is an uncertain and undefined *future.*

For each parish and each preacher, there are people who are hearing these words who are afraid of their future, whatever that may be. In this regard, we are no different than Abram or, for that matter, anyone else. Our fear of the future

manifests itself in many ways, sometimes exhibiting itself as prejudice, sometimes a romanticization of the past, or sometimes the inability to envision things beyond "how they have always been." But if anything, it is clear from our readings today that God is not a God who lives in human fears, since fears, at their most base level, are an outgrowth of the fear of death (as our most primitive instincts show). Fear is not the place in which God lives; God lives in the places of life. While Abram (and we) may be afraid of our future, these readings alert us to the relativity that God is transforming such fears into a future that is marked by blessing. God is constantly and intentionally shaping the future beyond what we can see or "hope for" (as our writer says in Hebrews). It is clear from the biblical story that God was in command of the "then," but pastors who are sensitive need to remind their congregations—and remind them often—that God is also in charge of the "now" and the "next."

Like God's speech to Abram, the lectionary continues Luke's twelfth chapter with Jesus' words, "Do not be afraid." He goes on to assure his listeners of the outcome of all things: that God will give them the kingdom. Indeed, in Jesus himself God has *already* given them the kingdom. This is the good news for this day: God has already determined the future, and the People of God, even with their earthly fears, are part of that future. Confidence in this fact prepares the faithful to meet the Lord Jesus at the altar table, in the renewed promises in baptism that reach backwards *and* forwards through our lives to determine the future, and in the word itself that consistently reminds us that the future is God's future, not ours.

Today's readings offer a significant opportunity to preach freedom from fear to those whose lives are defined by fear. Fear takes a lot of work; it must constantly seek out new enemies or specters to vilify when the paper tigers it has constructed for itself turn out, in the end, to be nothing but shadows. Harder and more real are the fears that live inside of us, particularly the fear of death and the fear of our own dying. Every pastor knows that perhaps the greatest fear is the fear, exhibited by so many, of being left alone. These fears must be taken seriously, and woe to the preacher who dismisses them out of hand from the pulpit! Instead, reassurance of God's presence, of God's promises, and of God's persistent and stubborn will to transform us from the inside out will be helpful as we name our fears, acknowledge them as real, and declare thar God's grace is yet *more* real and *more* full of strength. These are the "promises" of which the writer of Hebrews speaks (v. 13) that are only seen "from a distance." These are also the very real promises that are, literally, placed in the hand of the faithful as they meet Jesus face to face in the *mysterium tremendum* that encompasses both the reality of their situation (whatever that may be), and the greater reality of God's willingness ("…God is not ashamed to be called their God") to identify with them in their fears.

Our Gospel text today continues last week's theme about greed and "things;" namely, that if the reality is that all futures are determined by God, then we do not set the course for tomorrow, and such "treasures" are irrelevant. Instead of a focus on fears as they relate to pastorally sensitive situations, preachers could also continue last week's themes of greed/abundance by adding a further footnote: that such a trust in things means one is, in fact, *not* prepared to meet the Lord when he comes. Likewise, Eucharistic themes are clearly present in the text (v. 37), and however the preacher chooses to preach

these texts and weave them together, the final tapestry must point to Jesus himself who is willing to a) eat with us, and b) serve us (v. 37); this verse is the pinnacle of all these readings. It is difficult to be afraid when there is a marvelous dinner party going on, and the preacher must not fail to remind the assembly that the Eucharist itself is the "thing seen," a promise of God beyond our fears and through our fears, a promise to bring our fears to an end and call us home. All of this is served up by a host who has determined how the party—how all our futures, and our fears—will end. PHS

Lectionary 20
August 15, 2010

Jeremiah 23:23–29
Psalm 82
Hebrews 11:29—12:2
Luke 12:49–56

Today's readings are, to be truthful, rather scary, and the preacher should be forewarned that finding "the good news" is going to require careful thought and preparation, with careful attention to what the text says *between* the lines. Each of our readings today contains both warning and consequences for choices made.

Lutheran preachers need to be extraordinarily careful that the texts for today are not preached as a "decision to follow Jesus" that contains punishment for making the wrong choice, or not making the choice *well enough.* Rather, these texts stand as a warning, a "red flag," if you will, that allows the Christian to live more fully into the life of baptism, and to make changes that need changing. This might just be the grace—or at least part of the grace—that we are reading between the lines. Namely, that God gives us a chance to re-order things in order to "run with perseverance the race that is set before us" in faithfulness and hope.

The readings from Jeremiah and from Hebrews should be read through the lens of the Gospel reading from Luke. Every Christian needs to be willing to be crucified, and today might be a valuable opportunity to speak about the inevitable cost of Christian discipleship, and the invariable reaction that will come from a world that is, by nature, hostile to its apple-cart being upset by Christians or anyone else. Never getting crucified usually means that one is "not rocking the boat." In a world where the status quo is challenged by Jesus on multiple levels, such docile lives also mean that one is not living out their baptismal vocation with adequate challenge to the prevailing "empire," whatever that may be (and it can, sometimes, be the church itself).

Rather, faithful discipleship is naturally going to result in division, because the announcement of God's kingdom will require choices about how Christians, as a result of their baptism, function in the world and the things on which they place priority. This is the division of which Jesus speaks in our Gospel reading; namely, that the reign of God's kingdom is "rising in the west," and lives that reflect that reality need to be lived, not just talked about.

Crucifixion is, to be sure, often lonely business. But the writer of Hebrews today offers perhaps what is the good news, reflecting Jeremiah's opening lines: we are not alone in our Christian vocation to live "lives of service and worth." Rather, we are "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses," who will cheer us on; and they, in turn, are a sign for us of the God who is "not far off" (to use Jeremiah's language). Yes, we may often be looking for a thunder clap or a burning bush as a sign of God's

presence in difficult discipleship, but perhaps the good news on this day is that in the division that ultimately will be caused by announcing God's kingdom, God is present with us chiefly through Jesus (who did the same), and also in the community of the church (the saints).

There are multiple images of fire used in today's readings (Jer 23:29; Luke 12:49), and the preacher may wish to focus on this as an image for God's work. Fire, to be certain, can destroy. It is also used for heat, warmth, and a host of other useful purposes without which people would not be able to function. What if we heard Jesus' words that he has "come to bring fire to the earth!" as, "I have come to bring the Holy Spirit to the earth"? Indeed, in the baptismal promises, the Holy Spirit is conveyed in ways that might make such an understanding of Jesus' words possible, or at least theologically suggested. The fire of the Holy Spirit that pervades the church at Pentecost is a refining fire, not a fire of consumption. This fire also requires a new way of living and a new way of being in the world, a reaction (indeed, is there any other reaction?) to the animating and creative power of the Spirit and the gospel in the world.

Last, the good news is that the signs that Jesus announces are already happening, announced *first* in his own person, and *then* in the teachings he conveys. Preachers need to remember this incarnational foundation: the first sign is Jesus, period. Subsequent signs are, though important, not as important as Christ himself who is the beginning, middle, and end of what God is doing. The combination of these signs is the "appearance of the earth and sky," that invites us into "interpreting the present time" through the Gospel lens, namely, through Jesus. So, how do you read such signs, and what do they mean for how you live in the world? Is God forming the future *now*, or is such an eschatological exclamation saved for a later time? The church confesses that it is both. God is both working now and will be working, "not far off" from us in the future, stoking the fire that rouses us to live more fully into the grace of God who is with us, even when crucifixions, divisions, and strife mark the life of faith. PHS

Lectionary 21
August 22, 2010

Isaiah 58:9b–14
Psalm 103:1-8
Hebrews 12:18–29
Luke 13:10–17

While last Sunday's readings focused on *warnings*, today's readings are centered around the natural outgrowth of living the Gospel: namely, that the "breach will be repaired," and those who are healed will "rejoice at the wonderful things that he [is] doing."

There is a clear connection in the pericopes for today between the first reading from Isaiah and the Gospel, both concerning what is proper behavior on the Sabbath. Isaiah advises that all are to "…refrain from perusing [their] own interests" (v. 13), and Jesus – very clearly – demonstrates that he has no time for those who elevate the Sabbath over people.

Concerning this seeming contradiction, the question must be raised in regards to Jesus' healing of the woman in our reading from Luke: whose interests was Jesus pursuing? Was he pursuing his own on the Sabbath, in violation of Isaiah's words? Was he pursuing the woman's? Or, might it be possible, that

he was pursuing God's?

This scene from Luke's Gospel is presented as the first of a pair, the second being another Sabbath healing that occurs to a man with dropsy (Luke 14:1–6). Both chapters thirteen and fourteen of Luke's Gospel are structured similarly: someone is healed on the Sabbath (in violation of laws governing its observance), objection arises (in chapter fourteen signaled by the Pharisee's silent indignation), and Jesus then goes on to lecture them about pride and humbleness. Each chapter ends with a warning regarding what will happen if these same "hypocrites" do not re-prioritize correctly, placing people and their needs before legal religious obligations.

The preacher today may wish to focus on the duality of "legal" versus "virtuous;" namely, that what is legal is not always what is good, and what is good is not always legal. Recent discourse in the United States regarding the treatment of prisoners of war, immigrants, and health care, etc. might be a fitting entrée into this conversation. What is often "legal" in these situations is frequently not what is "Christian," and the warnings given to the Pharisees ring just as loudly for us in the present day's public square: make sure you recognize what matters and that you live in that public forum in a way that reflects Jesus. In the readings for today, the Lord confronts the Pharisees with their obvious mis-prioritization: they would rescue their donkeys, but not take care of people. The same can be pointed out with obvious parallels in the modern world of secular consumption. Often people of means and power will break the laws to protect their own purposes (their donkeys), while at the same time denying tolerance for even minimal transgression by those of lower social rank.

Jesus affirms the dignity of the woman in today's story with stunning strength. She is a "daughter of Abraham," and thus is entitled to being treated with respect and care that transcends her physical limitations. Jesus not only affirms her as being descended from Abraham, but also as a "daughter," a word that implies not only respect for her ethnicity but also respect for her gender. The preacher may wish to include some discussion at this point about how persons with disabilities function and exist in our parishes; are they treated with the same dignity and respect with which Jesus treats this woman? Are the spaces in which we celebrate our common life and liturgy accessible to them? What about our liturgies? What do the answers to these questions mean for how we unintentionally create hierarchy in our physical spaces? This is particularly pertinent as it relates to the liturgy. If liturgy is "the work of the people," then it is the work of *all* the people, *all* of whose gifts are needed.

However one frames it, the point here is that dignity exists because God bestows it, not because people earn it by their own doing (keeping Sabbath laws or any other laws, for that matter). Some discussion might be helpful here about groups who frequently find themselves on the receiving end of self-righteous legal posturing; for example: undocumented immigrants. Their dignity exists because God has created them, not because they carry the correct passport.

Such a dialogue hearkens back to our first reading from Isaiah, and the summary themes for this day. Care not to speak evil of one's fellow, generous giving to the poor, and care for those who are in distress naturally have as their outgrowth an increased awareness of God's activity in the world. Attention to these matters not only changes the life of the one on the receiving end, but also—and perhaps more importantly—the one who gives

such care. Both Isaiah and Jesus are telling us to be people who are *generous* of heart, to the point of extravagance, to the point of risking the neat legal categories we create in our minds that are (or so we think) the proper boundaries for our Christian faith. The faith of the community of Jesus is always bigger, always more expansive, and always less legalistic than such civil legal categories.

Such admonitions also carry with them grace, evidenced by the life of the woman who was healed. Luke tells us that she had been crippled for eighteen years, and Jesus' willingness to break—or keep?—the Sabbath laws so that he could "…pursue God's interest" (healing) results in her being made "free." Freedom will be key to understanding not only the woman's physical state, but also the larger narrative of how the Christian is to view the laws of the Sabbath. The issue here is not that Sabbath laws are not important; they are! The issue is that God's liberating grace is more important, and that as a natural outgrowth of generous lives, we are *free* to heal, free to "stand up straight," and free to "rejoice at all the wonderful things God is doing." Luther's *Freedom of a Christian* echoes this notion when he writes: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." The Lord Jesus clearly typifies this summary: free to heal, and in turn, free to be the God who is willing to serve enough to affirm the dignity of each person, even if that means breaking the law to do it.

Today's readings carry with them a great many issues of social justice; namely, the dignity of God's people that transcends "law," whatever that may be in a given context or a given time. Preachers will do well to capitalize on this opportunity, as these texts are rich with the imagery that point to the grace of God that is willing to (gasp!) break laws in order to remind us that we are loved. In an American religious landscape that is so saturated with legalism, grace must be preached all the more; this opportunity is not to be missed! PHS

Lectionary 22
August 29, 2010

Proverbs 25:6–7 *or* Sirach 10:12–18
Psalm 112
Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16
Luke 14:1, 7–14

Today's first reading is so short, that one might wish to consider hearing from the Apocryphal book of Sirach for three reasons: first, the alternate reading is longer than the assigned two-verse reading from Proverbs. Second, Lutherans need to be aware that the Apocrypha is, indeed, part of their tradition (the Lutheran "canon" of scripture is specified nowhere within the confessional documents, a point worth remembering); today is a good opportunity to teach this lesson by using this option in the lectionary. Don't let it pass! Third, and most important, the reading from Sirach fits much better with the issues of hospitality and honor that are present in the other readings.

All of the readings today are about honor codes and hospitality. The preacher should be careful to give some background information about such honor codes in the ancient world, but not too much; this is not an archeological dig, it is a sermon. Rather, one might wish to consider asking how hospitality and pride are intertwined by cultures in *general*, including our own. Usually, codes of hospitality are constructed to, in some way, order pride within human societies. Nowhere is this

more evident than in the honor codes surrounding *food* and *eating*. How we eat, what we eat, who is invited, and who must stay away are all parts of how every society orders its eating habits. And all such codes, spoken or unspoken, are to safeguard pride. Very often, such pride is either the hindrance or the impetus for hospitality. One can be proud of their ability to welcome; one can also be proud of their ability to exclude.

The writer of Sirach lays the foundation today for this discussion, and the verses assigned in the second half of that reading sound strikingly like Luther's *Small Catechism*. "Whose offspring are worthy of honor?" comes the question, and on cue, the answer comes back, "Human offspring. This is most certainly true." The point is that the beginning of pride is rejection of the Lord (v. 12), and that it is not natural to the human state (v. 18). Instead, what determines honor is God, and sadly, our pericope ends before this is stated clearly (v. 22). The preacher may wish to seriously consider extending this reading through that verse, since this is "plot material" for the later reading from Luke. The divine origins of "honor" serve to underline the gracious initiative of God, who alone is capable of bestowing such a position.

For the writer of Hebrews, hospitality includes welcoming strangers (sometimes difficult for Lutherans), visiting those in prison (who are routinely ignored for having deserved their punishment), and those who are being tortured. The writer of Hebrews, and Jesus in Luke, reminds us between the lines that such people do not gain our hospitality because they deserve it. They gain it because they are the image of God, and Christians treat everyone with the knowledge that each person, deserving or not, carries with them the *imago Christe*. This image honors them, and we have no choice but to honor it as well.

All the readings this Sunday fit together extraordinarily well, and the preacher will be wise to weave them together in such a way that they point to the parable of the Wedding Banquet from Luke. It is interesting to note that as Luke's reading begins, Jesus is going to have dinner with a Pharisee. It seems Jesus is often at odds with Pharisees, but on this occasion, he has been invited to dinner. Perhaps out of curiosity or to defend himself (Luke is not clear), Jesus shows honor to one who is part of a group to which he is normally opposed. Substantive discussion on the part of the preacher about breaking bread with one's enemies may be in order here, with the obvious Eucharistic overtones that such "eating with the enemy" entails. We do not, in fact, get along with everyone who comes to the Eucharistic table, just as Jesus and the Pharisees most often did not see eye to eye. Jesus comes among us anyway, without regard to their, or our, Pharisaic status.

The preacher this week can easily lay the foundations for the cultural expectations of hospitality. Nowhere is honor/shame/pride more evident than at a wedding ("…did you see how much they *spent* on the food?"), and every pastor will be replete with stories about families who make their weddings into an expensive circus; to do so is a matter of pride and societal honor, even in the present day. Weddings, perhaps more than any social custom, are an opportunity to show lavish hospitality—perhaps too much so. Cast in the best light, the lavishness of these celebrations may reflect the "wedding banquet" of God to which we are called each week in the sharing of the Lord's body and blood. If this is indeed the "coming near" of the living God, then our liturgies *should* be lavish with beauty,

and even more lavish in the extravagant welcome they provide to all.

In a larger understanding, *we* are the ones who have been told to "move up" to a seat of higher honor. Jesus makes us into the honored guests at the banquet, replacing artificial human pride with dignity that is bestowed by God alone, as Sirach reminds us. The cost of doing business in this newly re-ordered scheme of honor/shame/pride is simple: it is free. We are the ones who cannot "repay"; the grace, and herein lies the "good news" for this Sunday, is: God moves us up, not because we deserve it, but because we are made into the honored guest with whom God chooses to eat. Indeed, the Eucharist itself is the "wedding banquet," and just as the host is hospitable, so we are to be hospitable in ways that are more than "polite." We are to be welcoming in a reflective way that matches the new status that we have received *and* the new status that *others* receive (even those we don't particularly like). This may require a lifetime of practice, since hospitality is not a suggestion of the Gospel—it is a command. That can be difficult, but with God's grace it is not impossible. Through the greater realization of God's hospitality, we are further transformed into a people who are capable of inviting everyone in, and then "moving them up," since they, as well as we ourselves, are the honored guests of the Lord. PHS

Lectionary 23
September 5, 2010

Deuteronomy 30:15–20
Psalm 1
Philemon 1:1–21
Luke 14:25–33

The concept of "consequences" is a long and venerated belief as a thought pattern in the Western tradition; it is a belief that is part and parcel of the way that we raise our children, and the way that we expect people to behave in a civil society. Consequences, while often understood in a negative light, can also be positive. The consequence of increased compassion is an openness to the graces of God. The consequence of remaining open to God's in- breaking is a deeper understanding of the divine. The consequences of crucifixion and resurrection are new life in God.

All three of our readings lay out, in some form, a discussion of consequences, both positive and negative. The preacher will be careful to handle this concept delicately, since the grace of God is not in any way tied to consequences, and we need to be very careful that we are not hinting that the "consequence" of our "goodness" or "sinfulness" is either God's favor or displeasure. Indeed, the overarching theme throughout all of these pericopes is found in our reading from Philemon: that the grace of God extends beyond consequences, be they good *or* bad.

Our first reading from Deuteronomy occurs immediately after the renewal of the convenential relationship at Moab. The condition (A) is that the people will "obey God with all your heart and all your soul" (Deut 30:2); this combines with God's promise to reward the effort (B), which results in the consequence of A + B: that God will bring them into the land (C). This is fairly straight forward, and any junior high mathematician can produce the result: A + B = C. Our pericope today assumes this equation, with one very important distinction. That A + B = C, and "C" is not only possession of the land, but *life*. To choose between

following God's laws and not following them is more than a simple equation; it is, in fact, life in God.

This is an understanding of the law that many—especially Lutherans—have struggled with. Because our theology is so historically influenced by the distinction between law and gospel (itself perhaps a mis-read of Pauline theology), with one being "bad" and the other "good," we very rarely assume that the law brings life.

How the preacher navigates this will be tricky, but it can be done. The emphasis here is *life*, and even more than that, that God *desires* life for God's people. What does the desire for life say about the goodness of God? *How* we get there (even if, in the case of Deuteronomy, it is the law) is a matter of less importance than the final result: life.

This understanding is taken up again in our second reading from Philemon, in which Paul intercedes on behalf of the run-away slave, Onesimus. Appealing to his master (Philemon), Paul uses all the devices of the ancient rhetorical letter to push the levers of influence. The preacher will do well to read the entire letter (it is short), and to recognize that there are a whole *host* of consequences that Paul is asking Philemon (and us) to ignore. First, the consequence of a run-away slave is return to its master. Please ignore this consequence. Second, the consequence of Philemon's esteem for Paul is that he will do as Paul asks. This is a consequence we want to observe. Third, the consequence of God's goodness is that Onesimus is no longer a slave, but a "beloved brother" (v. 16). The point is this: how is God asking us to reprioritize the consequences we think we know, in favor of ones that are more gracious and more reflective of God's grace?

This discussion of consequences comes to a head in our reading from Luke, in which the "good news" is perhaps between the lines. This reading is full of consequences: the result of being a disciple means leaving one's past (family); the result of a tower's collapse is insufficient calculation of its plans; the result of a won war is proper assessment of troops; the result of being a disciple is giving up possessions.

While this might seem at first like a passage about "things," it is not. The good news here is the possibility of being a disciple; that God is concerned so much for our *life* that God gives us the grace to leave these former things behind in order to be transformed. It is God who is doing the transforming of such consequences (as in Philemon), not us. The preacher needs to be careful *not* to preach: "If you leave all these things, then you will be a good disciple." Rather, ask and challenge your congregation to identify where, in the leaving of these things, of these consequences, God is acting graciously? How is God turning our expectations of "A+B=C" upside down? How do such equations of parity matter—or not matter—in a world that is pervaded by a God who would call us to be disciples? Is there grace in this singular act: that Jesus himself uses the word "disciple" to refer to the crowds?

A christocentric focus will be integral to today's preaching, a focus that moves beyond "God is good" to "God's goodness is revealed in Jesus." For this reason, the gospel is between the lines, and the desire of God that there be life for disciples echoes the opening verses of John's Gospel, wherein Jesus *is* the life of all. It is always worth mentioning that it is Jesus himself who identifies us as inheritors of life, not just in some hereafter, but also in the "land into which we are going." So, the consequence of God's love in Jesus: life. That is a very different consequence than a simple equation, no matter how

we might like to try and fit God into its neat and defined boundaries. PHS

Lectionary 24
September 12, 2010

Exodus 32:7–14
Psalm 51:1-10
1 Timothy 1:12–17
Luke 15:1–10

While last week's readings were about consequences, this week's seem to be about *persistence.* All three readings—in some form or another—exhibit a story where someone is persistent (usually God) to get what they want (usually us). The good news for this week is fairly simple, and blessedly profound: God is persistent to find us and to bring us into the kingdom.

Our first reading from Exodus, though fitting into this theme of persistence, is about the persistence not of God, but of Moses. A number of theological issues are at play here that, if not to be preached on, should at least be considered. First, it seems that Moses' nagging of God produces a result: God's mind is changed. This begs the question as to if God can be negotiated with, or if an omnipotent God can have a change of mind? These are all questions to consider, and if the preacher does some sort of lectionary Bible study, these questions may be worth exploring with parishioners. Who exactly is the persistent one in this reading? Answers to these questions are not necessarily essential to the sermon, but they should be in the background theological thinking of the preacher. Likewise, it is also worth remembering that God indeed is the persistent one, who goes after a rag-tag bunch of nomads (v. 13), to be their God and to make them into God's people.

The second reading from 1 Timothy is of dubious Pauline authorship. Regardless of this, the persistence of God was present in the Apostle's life if the letter is his or not, and the pericope that we have today—*attributed* to St. Paul—still can be woven into the sermon to teach us valuable lessons about God's persistence. Indeed, Paul was an unlikely disciple, engaging in all sorts of activities to persecute the church (v. 13). Even so, God's persistence was greater, and in the end, the mercy of God (v. 16) wins. The preacher may wish to enter into some discussion in today's sermon about how the persistence of God transforms and reshapes the individual into conformity with Jesus, a task that begins at baptism and is brought to perfection when we die. Paul (if it is Paul?) is clear to state that *because* of his sinfulness God's mercy picked him, to display that not even the worse transgressions are beyond the reach of God's grace. How often (and it is more often than we would think) some think that their sinfulness is *unforgiveable*, that whatever they have done, they are not welcome in the household of the church. 1 Timothy reminds us that this is not the case, and that our sin—however that is defined—is no match for God's persistent grace.

Our Gospel text for today is part of a triptych that is not fully included in the appointed verses. The triptych goes from large to small: lots of sheep, a few coins, a prodigal son. Because this final parable is not included, the preacher may wish to consider reminding congregations of this tri-story persistence of God.

Wise preachers will note the "grumbling" on the part of the Pharisees that come to listen to Jesus. Why their anxiety? Can we imagine how upset they might have been at the suggestion of a persistent

God? Are there such people in our own midst, for whom the persistent and wide grace of God signals loss for them? Again, because God's grace is given to others does not mean that we get less.

Today, the preacher may wish to use the feminine imagery of God that is presented in the "parable of the lost coin." Emphasis on the "rejoicing" of the woman and her friends can, and should, turn into a metaphor for the Eucharistic feast in which God rejoices in the lost ones who are now found. This rejoicing is echoed in the parable of the lost sheep, and again in the third part of our triptych that is not included, again with increasing strength. As the triptych moves from general to more specific (sheep to coins to son), the party gets bigger and bigger (one rejoices, a few rejoice, many rejoice). In this way, the preacher may wish to explore the graces of Eucharistic rejoicing in communities that are in the "in between" of one person rejoicing and the final rejoicing (eschatological rejoicing). Our communities are, in fact, a "few" who are rejoicing (the middle category), not the totality of the heavenly banquet. Even so, the church rejoices; rejoices that God is persistent enough to come and find us when we thought we were lost.

It is endearing that all of heaven is mobilized in this rejoicing "over one sinner who repents." Normally, when we think of heaven, we would imagine that this "grand central station" of the universe is too busy to be bothered with such mundane accomplishments. Not so, says the writer of Luke, intimating that God is deeply concerned with the life of the ones that are loved (us).

There are a great many sub-themes of grace going on today, but the preacher will want to avoid getting fixated on them at the expense of the larger "good news." The good news is that God loves us so much that God comes to find us wherever and whoever we are—even Paul—regardless of our pasts. Once done, heaven rejoices over us. So, let your rejoicing be loud, and beautiful, and reciprocal, as we celebrate not only our "found-ness," but also God's willingness to be the "finder." PHS

Lectionary 25
September 19, 2010

Amos 8:4–7
Psalm 113
1 Timothy 2:1–7
Luke 16:1–13

The lectionary continues its progression through Luke with the parable of the "unjust manager," a story that appears only in Luke's Gospel. The story is within Jesus' progression from Galilee to Jerusalem, and is an anomaly amongst the parables, in that it seems to reward dishonesty. The machinations of the manager seem to endear him to people for whom it matters: those who owe debts.

The parable lays out two potential groups of people, the "children of this generation," and the "children of light." Perhaps because God is a realist, and admonishes us elsewhere in the Gospels to be as "shrewd as serpents, as gentle as doves," the writer of Luke is under no pretense that often, those who act more shrewdly (or, in the Greek, *wickedly*) are more clever than the church, which is characterized as being filled with Pollyanna-ish notions of how the world functions. The unjust manager is, presumably, a member of the children of "this generation" who, in turn, acts shrewdly. This still does not answer the question: why is this parable an example for us, and where is the good news in it?

This parable, to be sure, hinges on dishonesty. The employer of the manager is owed a specific sum that will now not be garnered because the manager is currying favor with those in debt rather than attending to his duties. His plan to essentially cheat his boss out of what is justly his may be his revenge (employer sabotage), or it may be realistic: when he is expelled from the estate, he will need somewhere to go, and that concern trumps his obligations to his employer. The place he is going is among those whose debts he has forgiven—and this may be the "shrewdness" he exhibits: he makes plans for his future well-being.

This reading of owing/forgiving, earnings/debts and the commercial enterprise could, if the preacher is shrewd (not wicked!) speak to a great many of the events going on in the current economic climate, and the expenditures of dignity of which Amos speaks. Amos, perhaps the most crabby of all the prophets, calls us to task for "trampling on the needy," and "practicing deceit with false balances" (v. 5). One does not have to look very far to see the "false balances" in the likes of banking houses, sub-prime mortgages, and enormous credit-card interest rates, all designed to "trample" on those who cannot afford it. The preacher may be wise—and it is not a very far stretch—to work in the events of our own economies into the larger discussion of economy/work/reward that are present both in the parable, and implied by Amos' words.

All of the parables are polyvalent, meaning that it *may* be that the unjust manager is Jesus (who forgives our debts), or *not*. It is sometimes helpful for preachers to figure out when reading a parable who they think represents God, and who represents us, and then to turn that assignment in reverse. It will be up to the preacher to explain who is who in this parable, but wise preachers will always do that with a caveat: I could be wrong and it could be the other way around.

But, if Jesus is in fact the "unjust manager," then it means that he has been dismissed from the service of God (the employer). Trying to draw exact parallels here will be fruitless; parables exist to prove a point, not to be an exact analogy. So, if the point is that our debts are forgiven, is that the good news?

Yes, that is good news. This good news can also be expanded to the implication of where the dismissed manager is going: to be with us, to be "welcomed into our homes" (v. 4). What does it say about God that not only are sins forgiven, but the one to whom such debts are owed comes, literally, into our homes? Is it possible that this incarnational reality of the Christ present with us (taking up Matthian themes) is a greater grace than the forgiveness of sins? Again, the preacher will need to determine which angle is going to work in their particular community and which grace people need to hear. The skillful preacher will weave both of them together!

Finally, this parable is about *faithfulness*, namely, that God is faithful to us. The ending of the parable (vv. 10–13) must not be seen as an admonition to hit people over the head with: "Be faithful!" Certainly we are called to that, but the greatest grace of all is that Jesus is faithful to sinners (us), and thus is faithful in much (the humankind of which the writer of 1 Timothy refers today in v. 5 of the second reading). Yes, debts are forgiven. Yes, the Christ comes into our lives. Yes, God is faithful—and that faithfulness comes to both the "children of this generation," and "the children of light." PHS

Lectionary 26
September 26, 2010

Amos 6:1a, 4–7
Psalm 146
1 Timothy 6:6–19
Luke 16:19–31

Our readings today continue with the voice of the prophet Isaiah who, always concerned with issues of economic injustice, pillories the wealthy who "lay on beds of ivory and lounge on their couches" (v. 1). Their situation is announced by one word that, if they were paying attention, would signal their doom: "Alas!" Amos' words speak to the disaster that will befall them. Essentially, greed will kill them, and the advantage that they take of others will bring about their own deaths. Their destruction is brought about by their creation of an idol: their wealth. Nothing replaces God, no matter how comfortable the couches may seem!

This reading is a prelude to our second reading and the Gospel, both of which have to do with themes of greed and compassion. The Lukan parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is one of the most vivid—and also one of the most terrifying—in all the gospels. The Lukan account seems to lay out a very clear distinction about reward and punishment that extends into eternity. There seems to be no comfort for the rich man who has, as is evident by the parable, spent his life laying on his bed of ivory.

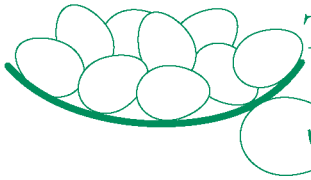
Preachers do well to remind their congregation that God is the God of grace and mercy and forgiveness, and at the same time, that we do not fully understand the economy of how such grace and forgiveness work. God's sovereignty over these issues has been a hallmark of Calvinist theology, but is sometimes ignored by Lutherans, who tend to demand that, "God must be gracious!" Yes, God is gracious; God is also free to do as God chooses.

So, rather than get into a discussion about what God must do, or is able to do, the preacher will do better to focus on the *warning*. It seems that the *warning* is the grace, and that there is still time to get up off our ivory couches and get moving to make the changes that we need to make so that Lazarus can live a life of dignity and worth. This change, a "work," is not the grace and is not the center of the Gospel or this day, though it is certainly an outgrowth of *hearing* the Gospel. Rather, the grace is that the kingdom is heralded by "Moses and the Prophets," and is heard in its fullness in the person of Jesus. We hear the good news of God's love for all, and we do something about it.

The parish that I serve houses a homeless shelter five nights a week during the summer and twice a week during the winter months. We have had to learn as a community to open our doors to those who are (literally) lying outside our gates, in order that we may more fully live into the announcement that we have heard. And when we learned to do this—it is still an ongoing process—we also learned that the needy whom we served had names. They had names like "Lazarus," and "Dave," and "Joy W." …just 'W.' It is no accident in this parable that Lazarus is given a name by God, and that the rich man is not. What might this say about the way that God views the dignity of each person? What might this say about the comforts of wealth that apparently, according to this parable, do not even gain you a name in heaven?

Sometimes it is hard to listen to "Moses and the prophets." It is especially difficult when Amos is pointing his steely

gaze right at you. But the prophets announce the grace of God too: there is time to turn around, time to turn back, time to get up off the couches and to be grieved over "the ruin of Joseph." Such ruins often are the lives of those who live in poverty who cry out to those with more power for justice. And in granting the dignity that God bestows upon them by their name—their *baptismal* name—we not only heed the words of the prophets, but are changed ourselves, being transformed into those who "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12), which is the eternal life of dignity to which we are called. The writer of 1 Timothy reminds us that such lives of compassion and service—"faith active in love"—are a "foundation for the future" (v. 19), a participation in the kingdom of God, and a witness to the power of resurrection. Indeed, this Easter theme ends our parables from Luke, in which the writer warns the rich man that his brothers will not believe, even if "someone rises from the dead." Well, we do believe that someone rose from the dead—Jesus specifically—and it is for that reason that we recognize that others (Lazarus and company) carry with them the dignity and worth of God. PHS



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