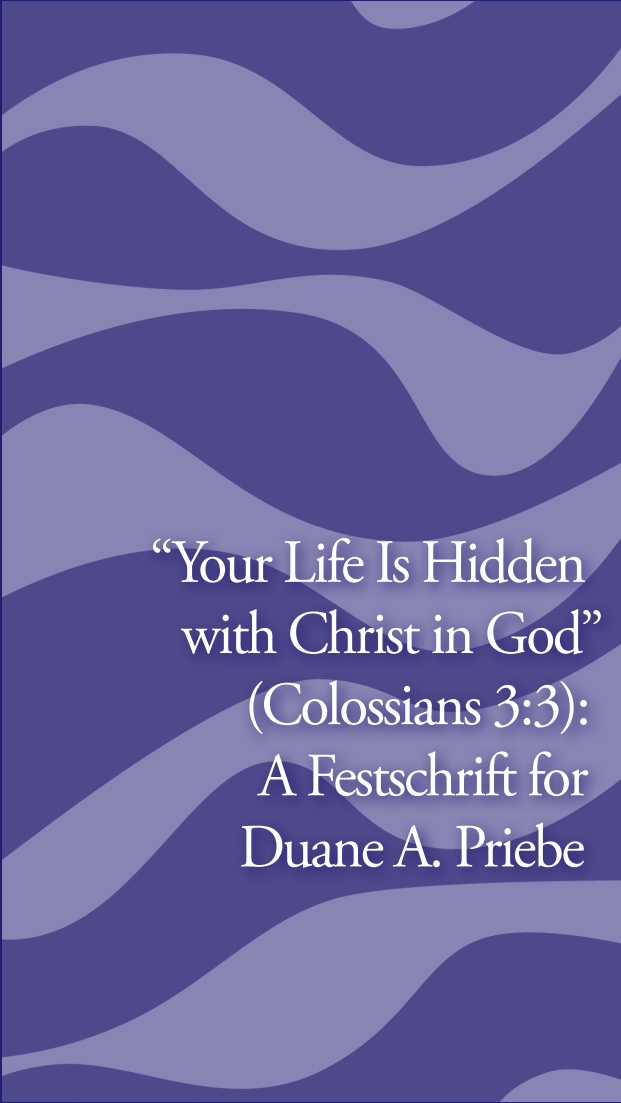


February 2014 Volume 41 Number 1



“Your Life Is Hidden  
with Christ in God”  
(Colossians 3:3):  
A Festschrift for  
Duane A. Priebe

**CURRENTS**  
in Theology and Mission

# Currents in Theology and Mission

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# “Your Life Is Hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3): A Festschrift for Duane A. Priebe at Eighty

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The Rev. Duane Allen Priebe, ThD, who holds a Bachelor of Science degree in physics, thought that the Lord had called him to prepare himself through his seminary education to be a missionary. While that was not the direction in which his call to ordained service has taken him, anyone who has been around him—in his classes in the various settings in which he teaches, in worship where he has preached, or in informal conversations—would easily learn that at the heart of his thinking about the biblical text and the meaning of the Christian faith is his deep, unabashed, unapologetic commitment to bearing witness to Jesus Christ, through whose death and resurrection God identifies with and offers life and forgiveness to all sinners—whoever they are.

As the essays in this *Festschrift* demonstrate, Duane enjoys challenging others and himself not to settle for easy theological answers which draw boundaries between those who are embraced by Jesus Christ and those who are not. For him, listening to and engaging people from diverse backgrounds, not only in the U.S.A. but from around the world, is grounded in Scripture which presents worlds of diversity in which God speaks and acts in the particularities of peoples' lives and contexts.

Convinced that theology and theological thinking are not themselves the gospel but are to serve faithful proclamation of the gospel, Duane is not slow to admit that he welcomes the opportunity to learn from his students and others, even to the point of changing his theological position! His *modus operandi* is at its heart pastoral: he thinks of his calling (as he has in countless ways and various settings across the world practiced it!) as one of hearing confession and announcing God's forgiveness in Jesus' name.

**Roger W. Fjeld** offers an insider's look at his long-term friendship with Duane Priebe: the life of the mind, his approach to teaching by provoking others to think, the range of his teaching contexts, his service as academic dean, his love for rural ministry, and the memorableness of life together within his company. Above all, Duane Priebe takes Jesus seriously and summons others to do the same.

**Winston D. Persaud** calls attention to the theological non-negotiable that a theologian of the cross holds: the identity and character of God determines who human beings are and are called to be. For the theologian of the cross, believing in and following the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, does not inoculate one against suffering, shame, negativities of life, and even death. Rather, one believes in and bears witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in the face of the reality and experience of what contradicts the truth that God alone gives life, freedom, forgiveness, and wholeness.

**Kristin Johnston Largen** reminds the reader that openness to learning from a wide range of religious (and other) sources needs to characterize the approach of the Christian theologian who reflects upon the presence of God who is essentially triune. She demonstrates what this means when the focus is on the Hindu goddess Kālī, who (re)presents the dark side of the divine. The theologian of the cross knows that the “ugliness, chaos, and death,” which Kālī personifies find resonance in the God in Christ who suffers shame and death on the cross.

**Inagrace T. Diettrich** explores Christian doxological participation in the life of the Triune God. The Christian’s offering of praise to God begins with and affirms “that we can only know God because God has first known us; we can only speak of God because God has first spoken to us.” Christian doxology, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is performative theology whereby the Christian and the Christian community participate in God’s life as revealed in the mystery of salvation.

**George L. Murphy** argues that it is imperative for the church to engage science, insofar as the scientific worldview is a significant factor in the predominant anxiety of modern times, which leads to emptiness and meaninglessness. Theology and science need to be in dialogue with one another, in order for theology to articulate God’s purpose for creation and to address issues of meaninglessness in ways that take into account the scientific worldview.

**Ann Fritschel** reflects on how Israel’s wilderness experience can be viewed as a rite of passage for transforming the Israelites from Pharaoh’s slaves to the servants of God. The gift of manna in Exodus 16 not only teaches the people to trust in God, it also establishes a society where God’s abundance calls forth an egalitarian distribution of the basic necessities of life.

**S.D. Giere** draws Luther into the contemporary conversation among biblical theologians about the place of the Rule in Scriptural interpretation. Giere argues that Luther’s commitment to the Rule as hermeneutical lens through which Scripture in its plain sense is read and interpreted is unwavering because for Luther the relationship of Scripture and the Rule is organic and intimate, an expression of Scripture’s unified witness to the Triune God.

**Jennifer Agee** makes reference to a meditation on a Northwest Coast model totem pole as the starting point for comparative mythology between late nineteenth century Kwakwaka'wakw and ancient Israelite sea monster traditions. The sea monster figures prominently in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East as a mythological creation motif, representing chaos, while the Kwakwaka'wakw sea monster is a family crest (totem). The author explores the risks and possibilities of cross-cultural interpretation and imagination through a christological hermeneutic.

**Craig L. Nesson** claims that Luther's theology not only operates dialectically regarding two uses of the law, but functions analogously according to two uses of righteousness (civil and alien), two uses of reason (as gift and harlot), two uses of the will (free regarding creation and in bondage unto salvation), and two uses of works (for the neighbor and works righteousness). The two kingdoms or, better, two strategies paradigm elucidates how these apparent contradictions each contribute to precision in theological reflection.

**Stanley N. Olson**, in a concluding tribute, insightfully names how the teaching ministry of Duane Priebe continues to instruct all of us in what it means to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Because Duane Priebe clearly teaches us what it means to be on Christ's side, he is also on our side as a conversation partner toward understanding the faith.

This year, 2014, marks not only the eightieth birthday of Duane Priebe but also the anniversary of fifty years since he first taught at Wartburg Theological Seminary. This issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* marks these milestones in his life on behalf of a multitude of grateful colleagues and students from three generations, who have been blessed by his ministry of teaching and mutual learning. The shining christological center of Duane's proclamation and thought leads us to thank God for his life and legacy in the words of Col 3:3: "...your life is hidden with Christ in God." To God in Christ be the glory!

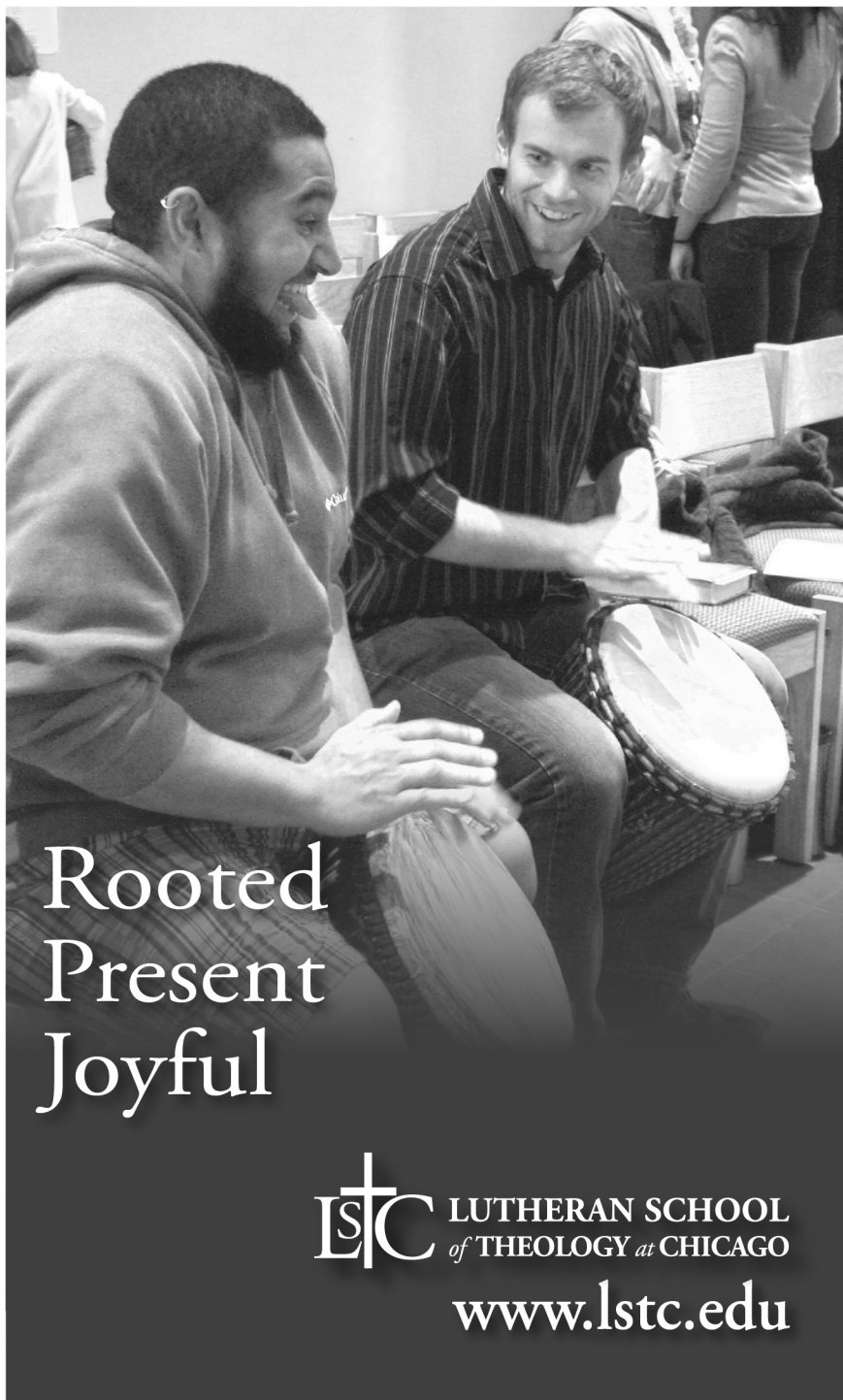
Ann Fritschel

S.D. Giere

Craig L. Nesson

Winston D. Persaud

*Issue Co-editors*



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## Upcoming Events:

### ***Rural Ministry Conference***

Revitalizing Rural & Small Town Ministries  
March 2-4, 2014

### ***Conference on Ministry***

March 8-10, 2014

A weekend at Wartburg Seminary to explore your call to ministry.



# A Tribute to the Rev. Dr. Duane Priebe

Roger W. Fjeld

*President Emeritus, Wartburg Theological Seminary*

There are lots of ways one can describe Duane Priebe. Octogenarian is not one I would choose, even though this *Festschrift* honors him as he turns eighty. There is nothing old about the way he thinks, the way he teaches, or the way he interacts with all sorts of people in all sorts of settings. It is my privilege, as one who has known him as colleague and friend for more than forty years, to offer a few apt descriptors. Those who know Duane as teacher, colleague, and friend will think of more ways to describe him, as we celebrate his ministry among us.

*Duane engages the life of the mind with uncommon vigor!*

Duane Priebe brings a wide variety of interests to any conversation, whether in the classroom or in more casual settings. His University of Washington undergraduate degree in theoretical physics, his Master of Divinity from Luther Seminary, and his doctoral work in New Testament at the School of Theology at Claremont are only the most obvious sources. But he reads across a broad range of subjects—world religions, cross-cultural studies, social ethics, developments in the world of science, and more. All of these fields are evident in the way he thinks and the way he teaches.

Traveling with Duane has always been a learning experience—for him and for those traveling with him. He regularly describes things as “interesting,” but you know “fascinating” is closer to how he

absorbs and incorporates new experiences and new insights into his thinking. And all of us are the richer for that gift!

*Duane would rather teach people to think theologically than to give them answers!*

Students quickly learn that asking him a question is likely to be answered with a question. That process challenges them to think more deeply and more creatively. Ralph Quere and I substituted for Duane during one January session of the East Central Wisconsin Synod Lay School of Ministry, included the late evening Beer and Theology session at a local pub. Participants were offering insights and asking questions. When it ended, they commented that Ralph and I actually answered questions, while they said Duane always responded to their questions with more questions of his own. What a gifted teacher he is!

*Duane loves teaching in all sorts of settings.*

He was a pioneer in continuing theological education when District President J. Elmo Agrimson invited him to be the Director of Theological Education and Pastoral Renewal in the Western North Dakota District of The American Lutheran Church. He had a pilot's license and flew a single-engine plane around the District, bringing teaching and learning opportunities to folks, both clergy and lay, where they lived and worked (and at least once he made an emergency landing when running out

of fuel!). That program became a model for continuing theological education in our church. Partly on that account, the Western North Dakota District had no difficulty finding new seminary graduates who wanted to serve congregations there.

He has taught at Wartburg Theological Seminary for more than forty years, influencing two generations of students who have gone out to serve the gospel of Jesus Christ in congregations and specialized settings. They remember him! They give thanks for the way he stretched their

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**H**e brought  
a sense of  
centeredness and  
Spirit to those  
troubled times,  
offering calm and  
careful leadership.

---

minds. Many of them eagerly recount continuing contact with him over the years, because he is so interested in them and their ministries.

He continues to teach in the Lay School of Ministry in Appleton, Wisconsin, and has done so since its beginning two decades ago. He has passion for equipping lay Christians for their ministries in the world.

He has led January Term study tours to places like Wittenberg, Germany, and Namibia. In such settings, he invites people from those cultures to be the teachers.

These have been life-changing experiences for many participants. Moreover, Duane has traveled to many of the partner churches from which graduate students have come to Wartburg Seminary to study. Travel, for him, is never just a vacation; it is always a learning/sharing experience. Duane was committed to the globalization of theological education long before it became a popular theme in North American churches and their seminaries.

*Duane was Wartburg's Academic Dean.*

In 1983 Duane was elected Academic Dean in a time of fiscal crisis for the Seminary. With fewer faculty members and a large entering class the following fall, his first task was to shepherd the faculty and student body through the academic dimensions of that crisis. He brought a sense of centeredness and Spirit to those troubled times, offering calm and careful leadership.

Next, he set about the task of developing a new Faculty Handbook to replace one that had never received final Board approval. His leadership style in that process was so inclusive that the result was a document shaped in whole community, rather than one developed by a small committee. His sense of his calling as Dean was to enable the faculty to shine, and then to step back into a supporting role.

Duane brought that same style of leadership to the subsequent task of revising the curriculum around the theme "Where Learning Leads to Mission." Theological education, for Duane, was never an end in itself but always learning for the sake of effective witness to the gospel and equipping people for the mission of the church. He is patient about many things but his patience runs short when ecclesiastical or institutional complexity gets in the way of mission.

Duane brought another gift to those sixteen years as Academic Dean. That was his dislike for long and tedious meetings. He streamlined the committee structures so that meetings did not dominate either his time or ours. We were led to focus on the few things that mattered most, echoing the words of an earlier faculty member, Dr. William Streng, who offered the maxim that “the good is the enemy of the best.” Duane helped us focus on the best! He also streamlined the process by which new faculty members were identified and called to serve at Wartburg.

It would be safe to say that administration was not Duane’s main career goal. He accepted the election as Dean because he felt it his duty to do so, especially in those difficult circumstances. When I was elected as President a few months later, I rejoiced at the prospect of having him as an administrative partner. As a fellow administrator, I celebrated our easy partnership. We entered it as friends and have remained best of friends throughout the years. He made my work easier because he did his work so well!

*Duane has a special passion for rural churches and rural ministry.*

Duane started life in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, later lived in the Seattle, Washington, area, and studied at institutions in very urban settings. Nonetheless, he has a special passion for rural settings, rural people, and rural ministries. His first call as pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Garrison, North Dakota, and his work with the continuing education program of the Western North Dakota District helped cement that passion. In later years, Duane and Kathy, his wife, have chosen to be active members of rural congregations in the Dubuque area. His teaching is peppered with rural illustrations of what it is to be the church in

the world. As Dean he helped shape the Center for Theology and Land, a joint program with our Presbyterian partner seminary in Dubuque.

*Then there were the memorable moments with this memorable guy!*

I will start the list and hope others will chime in with their favorite memories.

I remember the time when Duane and I flew out of Dubuque to connect in Chicago for a flight to the East Coast for a presidents’ and deans’ meeting. At the terminal in Chicago he discovered that he had only \$5 with him. I learned to carry enough money for both of us.

Faculty colleagues remember the time they flew with him to that same Chicago airport on their way to a conference in Mexico City. That was when Duane discovered that he had forgotten to bring along his passport. After improvisation, he was able to complete the trip.

Dr. Augie Wenzel, many years Director of the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest, used to marvel at the way Duane would rent the smallest car he could get at the Austin airport and then “strap it on like a roller-skate” for his time with the Program.

When it was Duane’s turn to lead chapel at the Seminary, we experienced short, pointed sermons and then five minutes of silence for reflection. Visitors and first-year students often started looking over at the organist to see what was wrong. But then they learned, as all of us did, to welcome those few minutes of silent reflection together.

These “memorable moments” might be called idiosyncrasies, and Duane would have no trouble owning that they are. Because he does not take himself too seriously, he could laugh at himself and has no problem when others of us laugh with him. That is part of what makes him

such a beloved person. But I've saved the best for last!

*Duane takes Jesus really seriously!*

Duane Priebe can lead you into a discussion of other world religions, or developments in science and technology, or the implications of doing theology in cross-cultural settings. But at the end of the day, the

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**F**or example, he  
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conversation always comes back to talking about Jesus. Such conversations challenge people to get beyond proof texts or favorite verses in order to try to understand what it means that Jesus is both Savior and Lord. For Duane, the biblical understanding of church as “body of Christ” is central. Over and over again I have heard him ask: “What does that have to do with Jesus?” Sometimes he has raised that question in the context of the social issues that have generated more heat than light in the early years of the ELCA. For example, he has often said that whenever we are inclined to divide the world into “us” and “them,” you can be sure that Jesus is with them! Is he radical in that regard? Not in any political sense. But as a faithful disciple of Jesus, he is radical in his call to us to take Jesus more seriously—more seriously than we take each other; more seriously than our convoluted arguments about the issues that currently exercise us; more seriously about how we view the world and its peoples; and more seriously in our calling to be the body of Christ in and for the world! *For all of that and more, thank you, Duane!!!*

# The Theology of the Cross as Christian Witness: A Theological Essay

Winston D. Persaud

*Professor of Systematic Theology; The Kent S. Knutson and UELC Professor in Theology and Mission; Director of the Center for Global Theologies, Wartburg Theological Seminary*

Anyone who has heard Duane Priebe talk about his academic expertise and contribution as a teacher of the church will have heard him describe his theological engagement as being on the boundary between biblical and systematic theology. It does not take long in being with him and hearing him preach, teach, and engage in theological reflection to discern that the biblical and theological hermeneutics he characteristically lifts up and returns to is this theological core: Jesus ate with prostitutes and sinners and died as a consequence of refusing to give up on those under God's judgment. Committed to doing theology within a biblical horizon that is both confessional and global, he holds the view that there are basic structures of theology and doctrine which allow for a welcome and necessary openness to learning new and surprising ways of interpreting biblical texts in their witness to Jesus Christ. He readily points out that when anyone draws lines to determine where Jesus would be found, Jesus is actually to be found with the one(s) placed outside where Jesus purportedly stands. Not surprisingly, therefore, he displays a palpable fascination with learning from others, including those who hold positions that contradict his own. Moreover, this fascination is not confined to explicit biblical and theological material; he welcomes thinking about biblical and theological

hermeneutics in arenas which seemingly or actually are removed from the worlds of Bible and Christian theology. Here, I recall a conversation he and I had with a salesperson from Kashmir, in September 1992, in a carpet store in a hotel in Agra, India. After the conversation had moved from talking a bit about cricket and turned to considering a quality, not-too-expensive "Persian" carpet, the chap gave us a lesson on how to determine the quality of a carpet. He pointed out that it is critical to look at the backside of the carpet being considered and note the number of knots per square centimeter or square inch: the greater the number, the higher the quality. In addition, he said to pay attention to the trimming at each end of the carpet. Later, Duane said to me that what we had learned about evaluating a carpet—paying attention to the number of knots and to the trimmings at each end—was similar to asking our students to attend to the biblical or theological text. Paying careful attention to what the text actually says, noting its peculiarities, is like attending with care to the number of the knots and nature of the trimmings on a carpet! It needs to be noted here that Duane's hermeneutical style goes hand-and-glove with his Socratic style of teaching: question is met with another question.

In honor of Duane's style and commitments, I offer a theological reflection

on the theology of the cross as Christian witness.

## The paradoxical character of the theology of the cross

Fundamental to the theology of the cross is the paradoxical character of God's revelation in hiddenness. The theology of the cross is intrinsically Trinitarian: the Father *of the Son* sends the Son *of the Father* in the power of the Spirit *who proceeds from the Father (and the Son)*. It is only through

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God surprises  
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the Spirit that we can discern God's liberating presence when God seems to be absent. Viewed from the standpoint of the exercise of political, economic, military power—which constitutes the focus of history—the cross, shame, and suffering and death of Jesus, fundamentally, do not bespeak power and wholeness. Nevertheless, the theology of the cross scandalously asserts that is where God is.

Martin Luther perspicuously captures those themes in his contrast between the formulation of a theologian of the cross and that of a theologian of glory. Luther

rejects any speculation which looks away from and avoids Jesus' suffering and cross as the center of God's saving presence and self-disclosure. Such avoidance, in preference for speculation which seeks to find God where God does not wish to be found, inverts what constitutes good and evil. In the Heidelberg Disputation, 1518, Luther declares:

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1:20].

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.<sup>1</sup>

Witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, Christians—as theologians of the cross—face the unavoidable, pressing challenge of how to declare the good news of hope and new possibilities when the signs of hope of a new day of freedom, reconciliation, and the end of violence, shame, guilt, and dehumanization are not perceivable in the present or on the horizon. But the idolatrous alternative to that scandalous message is the declaration that human beings—the created, yes, creatures—are the source of hope and life and freedom in which enemies are transformed into

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1. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 31f.

friends, and communities of reconciliation and healing become living realities. This theology of glory is met with the unequivocal rejoinder from the theologian of the cross: God surprises us with the unexpected, radical alternative to our futile human projections and promises of forgiveness, liberation, and new life. In Romans 4, Paul “defines” God as the one “who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (v. 17). God creates *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). God gives life to the dead. Today, with the saints who have gone before us, we cling to God’s promise limned in Ezekiel’s vision:

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezekiel 37:1-6).

## The cross and Christian suffering

The Christian story is about the identity and character of God, and consequently about who human beings are and are called to be. Thus, with Luther (and others) we argue that the cross of Christ and the cross of the Christian belong together. Of course, the cross of Christ and the cross of the Christian are not the same. Cross, suffering and pain will characterize

the church and Christian communities. Notwithstanding the danger of appearing to prescribe the pursuit of suffering and pain—which I am not!—it needs to be said that in the theology of the cross, cross, suffering and pain are to and will characterize the church in its mission in the name and manner of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. It is unrealistic to think that following the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ, inoculates one from having some marks of cross, suffering and pain. When the church calls people to faith in Jesus and to be his disciples, it would be a misrepresentation of the gospel to say, “Come if you have crosses that you are bearing, and there is pain and suffering; believe in and follow Jesus and you will not have any of those.” This would not be calling a thing—discipleship in Jesus’ name and its consequences—what it is!

On the contrary, to follow Jesus and to be a witness to him has consequences. Confusing the theology of the cross with religious language that promises no suffering and ambiguity may be expressed thus: “I am a victim, look what they are doing to me. I did not realise that my decision in faithfulness to the call of the Spirit into discipleship to the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ, would mean suffering.” To posit that such suffering is anathema to the theology of the cross is *de facto* to call for a theology of glory. When we think about the identity and character of the God of Jesus Christ, who does not inoculate us from suffering, we do so knowing and continuing to learn that the God of the cross of Jesus Christ engages suffering through the suffering, ultimately in the death of Jesus on the cross. Here, it needs to be said that not all suffering is consequent upon following the crucified and risen Lord. In many instances, suffering may be on account of poor, naïve decisions, and may even be on



account of the unexamined presumption that we are too good, skilled, a cut above other, lesser mortals and, thereby, we have divine “protection” from the vagaries of the underside and negativities of living in a fallen world.

## The cross and ultimate reality

In the theology of the cross, the Christian story is the interpretative lens through which we are called to see the world of competing narratives about “ultimate reality.” The pastoral leader is not called

read the Bible, we encounter a world of competing narratives about true and false worship and the consequences, invariably disastrous, of idolatry.

Here, I mention in passing the advertisement world, in which we have to deal fundamentally with what people feel about who they are. You cannot sell something if you do not get to the core of who people feel they are. That is a very religious presupposition. We need to pay attention to how the effectiveness of advertisements subtly plays on our essential proclivity towards idolatry.

Theology of the cross says “no” to counterfeit goods, including words of promise offered in the name of Jesus Christ. We need to be honest and recognize and admit that Christians are not immune to offering such counterfeit religious and non-religious alternatives to the gospel. In the Lutheran use of the law-gospel dialectic, law can be and is presented as the gospel. Some of the counterfeit words of promise offered in the name of Jesus Christ include such declarations as: “If you are a Christian, you will be materially rich.” “If you truly believe in Jesus Christ you will be spared brokenness, suffering, doubt, and uncertainty.” “God will bless you personally if you vote for this candidate of a political party.” “It is because you have a strong faith that God has blessed you.” “God’s mercy is limited and scarce, so you had better ensure you do what you can to qualify to receive it.”

In the face of the formulation and presentation of such counterfeits to the gospel, the church is called to remember that its church is uniquely centered and rooted in the narrative of the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Notice that in the previous sentence a comma is placed after Lord and before Jesus Christ. The Lord we are talking about is not Caesar, ancient and contemporary. No, it is Jesus. This

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## Theology of the cross says “no” to counterfeit goods, including words of promise offered in the name of Jesus Christ.

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to preach and teach and minister as if the only narrative that claims to speak about “ultimate reality” is the Christian story. In whatever context they live, people live with competing narratives about “ultimate reality.” The Christian message—its essential narrative about “ultimate reality”—speaks about God’s coming in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word (the only begotten Son of God), decisively in history, and suffering and dying in consequence of taking human sin and its consequences upon Godself. This story is presented in the face of competing alternatives. Witness to it is not done in a vacuum. When we



confession was a radical message in the face of the prevailing, dominant alternatives. The one whom God *the Father* sent suffered death, which *is* the epitome of God's power over sin, death, and the devil. And in Jesus' death, God gives life to all.

We cannot assume that the Christian story is the norm of life for Christians, given that the Christian life is lived in the face of competing alternatives to the gospel. When we look at a biblical text, it is critical and necessary that we ask: What are the competing alternatives to what the text says about the reign of God? In relation to a text from the Gospels, we ask: What is Jesus saying the kingdom of God is not? Further, saying to listeners, "You are broken, I am broken, and Jesus is present with us in our brokenness," is not the complete Christian story. Divine solidarity in brokenness and sin is not the complete Christian story. Jesus did not go down to the depths of hell just to say, "I went down there." Jesus "descended into hell" to conquer sin. Refusing to stop after saying, "You are broken; I am broken, and Jesus is present with us in our brokenness," the theologian of the cross goes on to speak about how Jesus' death and resurrection make the ultimate difference. Of course, in the face of people not wanting to hear that life is broken, in the framework of the theology of the cross, one is called to say what reality is. But, one does not stop there. The theologian of the cross witnesses to the new life, forgiveness, and healing God the Father offers in Jesus Christ, *the Son incarnate*, in the power of the Spirit *who proceeds from the Father and the Son*.

## The cross and the church's mission

Not surprisingly, therefore, in the theology of the cross, the mission of the church necessarily includes describing reality—

private and public, local, national and global—as accurately as possible. In the contemporary world, with the plethora of means for the creation and dissemination of information, there seems to be no end, wittingly and unwittingly, to make truth the victim. In pursuit of what is true and good, wholesome, and liberating, Christians should not be afraid to listen to the insights into the human condition which people of other faiths, people of no faith, or even those who are hostile to the Christian faith articulate. With honesty and rigor, we are to listen to the insights across the board: even to those who are deemed unrighteous and unworthy and beneath our dignity. Such listening is a communal act of solidarity and mutuality. For Christians, one of the basic challenges before us is to examine and determine with care, honesty, and humility when we would allow an ethical position to lead us to break fellowship. When an ethical position we hold trumps the unity we have in Christ, that in Christ there is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), the question becomes unavoidable: Is the gospel under threat? Faithful and unfaithful interpretations can also lead to brokenness and separation.

The thrust of the theology of the cross is missional. The church is thrust outward with its scandalous message. Theology that is not missional is theology that has nothing to confess that is a matter of death and life. That theology hides rather than illumines the truth about the human condition before God, God who alone is the source of life. In Jesus Christ crucified and risen, God offers life and wholeness to all. The "all" transcends and embraces far more than the people who are "like me, and who are my own." This "all" is part of the scandal intrinsic in the gospel borne in the theology of the cross. It is part of the scandal because the "all" includes those we would not include, and

those whose good we would sacrifice for the sake of promoting and pursuing making ourselves number one. But the Lord Jesus Christ died for all. The church's mission is to declare this news, and, here is an indispensable ingredient of that proclamation: let that good news characterize its life—the totality of life and being. This means that both the stranger to the gospel and the one who once believed it but now is plagued by doubt and despair, who dare to join the Christian assembly in worship, would hear the truth about the human condition: sin and brokenness are real as we stand before God, and Jesus Christ becomes the victim of human sin and brokenness in order that life and freedom might be ours.

In the theology of the cross, the Christian life is to be characterized by and is to be lived in the rhythm of confession and forgiveness. The Christian is simultaneously righteous and sinner (*simul justus et peccator*). Central to this act of making confession is acknowledging how easily

the word of promise of justification, *sola gratia, sola fide, solus Christus*, is made into an ideology to justify a quietism that avoids seeking the neighbor's good because, for example, we calculate if we seek the neighbor's good, she/he might rise above us in the eyes of those around. Today, the persistent twin sins of jealousy and envy continue to be masked and justified when uncovered by a misuse of the doctrine of justification.

Confessing that the crucified and risen Jesus Christ is *the* one in whom and through whom God loves the world unconditionally (John 3:16) is a witness that cannot be done through one's own efforts. It is the Spirit who engenders that confession (1 Cor 12:3). In some form or other, in the theology of the cross, we are actually explicating this basic teaching and confession: it is not creatures, not ourselves, but God alone who is the source of life, healing, and forgiveness!

# A Walk on the Dark Side: A Christian Reflection on Kālī

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*Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.* —Psalm 111:2

## Twin convictions which engender expansive theological study

If I had to characterize Duane Priebe's study of theology with one word, that word would be *delight*. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have studied under someone whose theological research and analysis was characterized by absolute joy and wonder—and to this day, I am shocked when someone describes systematic theology as “boring.” It is simply impossible to have been a student of Dr. Priebe and consider theology “boring”: challenging, frustrating, captivating, and surprising, sure, but never, never dull or boring. More than anything else, Dr. Priebe impressed upon me two things, which I hope have come to characterize my own theological work: first, his awareness of the vast world of possibilities open to the Christian systematic theologian; and second, his absolute confidence that God can be found in the most unlikely places. These twin convictions—and the expansive theological study they engendered—bring an extraordinary richness to his own Christian faith and theology, and serve as the inspiration for this article, which seeks to honor those convictions.

In light of the fact that it was Dr. Priebe who first encouraged and stimulated

my interest in Hinduism, and at the same time, in a large measure, provided the good soil in which my own theological roots were nourished, this article returns to those roots with a comparative exercise concerning language and imagery for God. In what follows, I introduce and describe the Hindu goddess Kālī—her imagery and character—and suggest ways that reflection on the role she plays in Hinduism can helpfully challenge and inform Christian imagery for God. I argue that through this engagement, a more complex and nuanced picture of God can result, which enhances not only our understanding of who God is but also how God is in relationship with humanity and the whole cosmos.

## Who is Kālī? A union of opposites

Kālī has a complex, multi-faceted history within Hinduism as a whole, and as such, summary statements are difficult, and always run the risk of omitting important information.<sup>1</sup> However, according to David Kinsley, one of the foremost Kālī scholars, several points can accurately be made. First, Kālī, as we think of her today,

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1. This is to say nothing of her depictions in a contemporary Western context, which often have only a tangential relationship to her Indian origins. See the incisive, clever account in *The Hindus: an Alternative History*, by Wendy Doniger (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Press, 2009), 642–645.

does not appear in Hindu sacred texts until sometime between 200 B.C.E. to 300 C.E., even though her name appears earlier, and there are other “prototypes” of her in earlier Hindu literature.<sup>2</sup> She comes into her own in the *Devī-māhātmya*, composed around 400-500 C.E., where she is described as a deity with her own history and definitive characteristics. In this text, she first appears in the midst of war, sprung from the forehead of another goddess, Durgā, and slaughters two demon brothers and their army. In this account, she is “born from wrath, is horrible in appearance, and is ferocious in battle. Taking delight in destruction and death, she epitomizes the wild, fearful aspects of the divine.”<sup>3</sup>

From this and other similar stories in which she appears, Rachel Fell McDermott describes Kālī’s nature as “a union of opposites, as a paradoxical deity who combines within herself the poles of creation and destruction, birth and death, love and fear. This dual aspect of her character is implied by her epithet, ‘Terrible Mother’.”<sup>4</sup> Kālī is unpredictable and unexpected, a “mother” goddess who both saves and destroys. These basic characteristics have endured through the centuries to form the core of her persona as she is known and worshipped today.

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2. David R. Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute: Kālī and Kṛṣṇa, Dark Visions of the Terrible and the Sublime in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1975), 87.

3. As quoted in *The Sword and the Flute*, 92.

4. Rachel Fell McDermott, “The Western Kali,” in *Devī: Goddesses of India*, edited by John S. Hawley and Donna M. Wulff (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996), 285.

## What is Kālī like? Ugly, chaotic, destructive

One of the first theological challenges that Kālī raises for Christians is the idea that God is beautiful; and what’s more, that there is a feminine ideal of beauty that has divine origins, to which all women should ascribe. For many centuries in Western society—up to and including the present day—the word “goddess” immediately conjures up images of surpassing beauty, grace, and gentility: Botticelli’s “Birth of Venus” comes to mind, as does Helen of Troy. Kālī, however, is nothing like either of these figures. Instead, Kālī is ugly, vulgar, and entirely lacking in propriety; and nowhere is this more evident than in her appearance.

It is true that in contemporary Hinduism one can find images of Kālī that are more traditionally feminine and beautiful; however, this is not at all the dominant way she has been depicted in her history, nor is it the primary way she is viewed today. Instead, when seeing an image of Kālī for the first time, one is struck first and foremost by her “extreme appearance and her dubious associations.”<sup>5</sup> As to the first, her “look” is unquestionably unique and unforgettable:

Her hair is disheveled, her eyes red and fierce, she has fangs and a long lolling tongue, her lips are often smeared with blood, her breasts are long and pendulous, her stomach is sunken, and her figure is generally gaunt. She is naked but for several characteristic ornaments: a necklace of skulls or freshly cut heads, a girdle of severed arms, and infant corpses as earrings.<sup>6</sup>

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5. *The Sword and the Flute*, 81.

6. David R. Kinsley, “Kālī: Blood and Death Out of Place,” in *Devī: Goddesses of India*, edited by John S. Hawley and Donna M. Wulff (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996), 77.

In appearance, then, Kālī is about as far removed from both the regal, respectable images of God the Father and the gentle, charming images of the Virgin Mary as one can imagine. Kālī is not noble, dignified, or attractive; instead, she represents a presence that “dramatically and unambiguously confronts one with ‘the hair-raising, horrifying aspects’ of reality. She presents, it seems, something that has been apprehended as unspeakably terrifying, something totally and irreconcilably ‘other’.”<sup>7</sup> She is not pleasing, inviting or welcoming—as we typically envision God to be [and, not coincidentally, desire others to be as well]; instead she is dreadful, repugnant, and abhorrent.

Kālī is not only wild in appearance, however; she also is wild in action, best seen in her utter disregard for cosmic order and rational thinking. Reflection on Kālī, then, challenges both the long-held Christian belief that God is orderly and rational, and also the cherished idea that the world is orderly and rational. Thus, worship of Kālī does manifest a connection between the cosmic and the divine, but with a very different lens than typically found in Christianity: “Insofar as Kālī reflects the phenomenal world, or is identified with the phenomenal world, she presents a picture of that world that underlines its ephemeral, unpredictable, spontaneous nature.”<sup>8</sup> In her very being, Kālī embodies the chaos and often dreadful impetuosity that the world exhibits.

The Bengali poet Rāmprasād sees Kālī as “...she who reveals (or is) the world process, the entire creation in all its ambiguity...the mistress of a mad, reeling world.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Ramakrishna, perhaps

Kālī’s most famous devotee, describes Kālī as “the Mistress (but also the Mother) of a dizzying, intoxicated creation.”<sup>10</sup> In this way, we see that Kālī herself is a frightening and frantic goddess, personifying a world that is frequently frightening and frantic. Suffice it to say that neither of these concepts appeals to Christian thinking about God.

Finally, and related to the above, is the fact that Kālī is dangerous, destructive, and deals in death. Kinsley writes, “In general, then, we may say that Kālī is a goddess who threatens stability and order...she is ultimately dangerous and tends to get out of control. In her association with other goddesses she appears to represent their embodied wrath and fury—a frightening, dangerous dimension of the divine feminine that is released when these goddesses become enraged...”<sup>11</sup> As already noted, many Hindu myths associate her with battle, and she is often found in cremation grounds. She wears emblems of death on her own body, and death is still used as a means of approaching her: Diana Eck notes that at the famous Kālī temple in Kolkatta, Kālī Ghāt, a goat is still sacrificed daily and symbolically offered to the goddess. And, in fact, just a few decades earlier, as many as seventy goats were offered daily—and as many as 700 on a feast day.<sup>12</sup> In this way, Kālī challenges the idea that God is gentle, kind, and exclusively life-giving, forcing one to ask about the role of death in divine activity, and the connections between the end of life [broadly understood] and its beginnings. In a nutshell, then, we can

10. Ibid., 121.

11. “Kālī: Blood and Death Out of Place,” 86.

12. Diana Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography*, (New York, N.Y.: Harmony Books, 2012), 262–263.

7. *The Sword and the Flute*, 82.

8. Ibid., 135.

9. Ibid., 115.

say that Kālī is terrifyingly ugly, fearfully chaotic, and dreadfully destructive.

## **Kālī: What's the attraction? Facing the darker side of reality**

So after reading all this, one might well ask: Why is Kālī worshipped—and even more, why is she called “Mother” by some of her devotees? The answer is both surprising and insightful. According to many scholars, the appeal of Kālī is that she quite vividly and dramatically brings people into an awareness of the darker side of reality—the resistance of things to conform entirely to the orderly structure Hindu dharma imposes upon the world. Kinsley writes, “Kālī puts the order of dharma in perspective, or perhaps puts it in its place, by reminding the Hindu that certain aspects of reality are untameable, unpurifiable, unpredictable, and always threatening to society’s feeble attempts to order what is essentially disorderly: life itself.”<sup>13</sup> Kālī thus reveals to Hindus [and to Christians as well] that as much as human beings attempt to impose an order on creation—through technology, development, and domestication—creation continually and insistently refuses to cooperate. And in the same way, as much as human beings attempt to prescribe God’s activity—through rituals, rites, and rules—God also continually and insistently refuses to cooperate, choosing instead freedom and novelty in ways that both delight and disappoint us.

Thus, to be Kālī’s child “is to suffer, to be disappointed in terms of worldly desires and pleasures. Kālī does not give what is normally expected. She does allow her devotee/child, however, to glimpse a

vision of himself [or herself] that is not circumscribed by physical and material limitations...Kālī does not indulge her devotees in worldly pleasures. It is her very refusal to do so that enables her devotees to reflect on dimensions of themselves and of reality that go beyond bodily comfort and world security.”<sup>14</sup> This points to the fact that one reason for Kālī’s enduring appeal—both in India and beyond—is that she brings her devotees an unflinching view of the darker side, the dangerous aspects of life, demanding that they reflect on the transience of all life, and the reality of suffering we all face. Yet, in facing that reality, she creates the possibility for accepting it, and thereby transcending it.

## **A theology of the cross dares to consider the implications of Kālī for Christian God-talk**

What might all this then mean for Christian God-talk? In this concluding section, I suggest three insights for deeper reflection, ideas that offer possibilities for new ways of thinking and talking about God. First, it is clear that Kālī challenges Christians to think more incisively about “ugliness” as it relates to God. It is somewhat ironic that this idea is actually not entirely foreign to Lutherans, and, in fact, has an analogue in Luther’s discussion of a “theologian of the cross” in his *Heidelberg Disputation*. There, in thesis 20, Luther writes, “That person deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through

13. “Kālī: Blood and Death Out of Place,” 84.

14. David R. Kinsley, *Kālī, in Encountering Kālī: In the Margins, at the Center, in the West*, edited by Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003), 34.

suffering and the cross.”<sup>15</sup> More specifically, the theologian is called to see God in the “suffering and despised crucified Jesus:”<sup>16</sup> a scourged, bruised body, with blood oozing from wounds on his head, hands, feet, and side. Is that not, too, an ugly, revolting sight? By refusing to see God that way [and, by extension, refusing to see God in the sight of our similarly suffering neighbors], we are, in effect, replacing God’s own self-revelation with an image of our own choosing—one more palatable and pleasing; in short, we are functioning as theologians of glory.

Kinsley offers the following example, which seems to relate directly to this difference between the cross and glory. He writes:

Most individuals find themselves protected, coddled, cradled, and nourished within the apparently inviolable confines of a loving family in which the mother figures most prominently. For many, the supportive warmth of their human mother is perceived to pervade the entire creation and to reveal a divine mother who creates and nourishes the whole world.... Kālī reveals that there is more to the world than this apparently free flow of grace, fertility and strength.<sup>17</sup>

Surely there is something about Kālī that speaks to the reality of many, many people who find themselves outside that “free flow of grace,” and whose experience of the world is characterized primarily by brutality, destruction, and loss. Kālī is ugly, unapproachable, and, frankly, disgusting—just

like the people Jesus sought out, ate with, and welcomed. What would it mean for Christians to confront an image of God with leprous skin, a naked God lurking about in a cemetery, a God diseased and hemorrhaging blood? Kālī forces Christians to consider that possibility.

Second, Kālī invites Christians to contemplate God’s “shadow side:” God’s “backside,” God’s inscrutability. Most Christians would rather avoid this, of course, and consequently we spend much of our theological time and energy focusing on God’s goodness, God’s love, and God’s benevolent activity in the world. This kind of thinking reassures us with a vision of an orderly, sensible God who is at the helm of an orderly, sensible creation. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, of course, unless and until we forget that this is not the whole story; and that there is much in God’s life and work that is mysterious and incomprehensible to us. Kālī suggests another point of view: “Meditation on Kālī as an image of this world calls into question the stability, order and destiny of the phenomenal world. Confronted with the reality of a world either as embodied by Kālī or as ruled by Kālī, one is compelled to question seriously a vision of the world as dependable, stable, and predictable.”<sup>18</sup> Perhaps we need to take God much more seriously when God says in Isaiah “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.”

One Hindu priest describes it this way: “...Kālī’s actions sometimes don’t make sense, but life itself often doesn’t make sense, so what can one say?”<sup>19</sup> Some-

15. Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 77.

16. Ibid., 79.

17. David Kinsley, “The Motherhood of God as Expressed in the Goddess Kālī,” *Anima*, 8 no 2 Spring Equinox, 1982, 135.

18. *The Sword and the Flute*, 136.

19. Usha Menon and Richard A Shweder, “Dominating Kālī: Hindu Family Values and Tantric Power,” in *Encountering Kālī: In the Margins, at the Center, in the West*, edited by Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Berkeley, Calif.: University



how, I find this much more comforting than some Christian responses to life's tragic, inexplicable occurrences, which try to force a divine order or meaning where none exist. Not everything is God's will, not everything has a divine purpose; and we deceive ourselves and others when we try to pretend that it is so.

Finally, and related to the above point, reflection on Kālī challenges Christians to see God present and at work in destruction, death and disorder. To be clear, this does not demand that Christians see God as the author of death and destruction, such that one has to interpret every event through the lens of God's will and divine intention. However, at the same time, reflection on Kālī reminds Christian theologians that one cannot simply consider death and destruction apart from God, excluding them from the larger picture of God's presence in creation. This reflection forces Christians to ask hard questions about our own understanding both of God and a world that is not nearly as benevolent and benign as we would like it, instead exhibiting behavior that we find shocking and entirely inexplicable. What are we to say about a violent volcanic eruption, or an unpredictable disease outbreak that causes the loss of an entire harvest or an entire local population of a species? What are to say about a God who makes it rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous alike, a God whose own incarnate life ends in suffering and the cross, and who demands suffering and a cross for his followers? Christian theology must reflect squarely and honestly on such a world and such a God, costly as those reflections might be.

## Conclusion

Christian reflection on God is always incomplete, always in process, always seek-

ing—and that is as it should be, because the Triune God we worship chooses to reveal Godself in such a way that God is experienced as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*: a “awe-full” and compelling mystery before whom we both shudder and draw near.<sup>20</sup> We do well to cast our nets widely in the quest for rich and faithful language to describe this God, and best understand how God is in relationship to creation. Examining the image and function of Kālī in Hinduism aids Christians in this quest by encouraging us to rethink our understanding of God in relationship to the unpleasant realities of life that we too often seek to ignore: ugliness, chaos, and death.

Meditation on Kālī...restores [hu] man's hearing, thus enabling or forcing a keener perception of things around him. Confronted with the vision of Kālī, he begins to hear, perhaps for the first time, those sounds he has so carefully censored in the illusion of his physical immortality: 'the wail of all the creatures, the moan of pain, and the sob of greed, and the pitiful cry of little things in fear'. He may also be able to hear, with his keener perception, the howl of laughter that mocks his pretense, the mad laugh of Kālī, the Mistress of Time, to whom he will succumb inevitably despite his deafness or his cleverness.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps in this way, Kālī has something to teach all of us, who, despite Jesus' warning, still spend our time building bigger barns, attempting to deny our own mortality, and refusing to engage the darkness either in creation or—dare we say it—in God.

20. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, translated by John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

21. *The Sword and the Flute*, 141.



# Sing to The Lord a New Song: Theology As Doxology<sup>1</sup>

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Inagrace T. Dietterich

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All Christians are called to the doing of theology as they contemplate the “mysteries” of faith. Theology as doxology means giving themselves, their words, thoughts, and actions as an offering of praise to the glory of God. By discerning and embracing the “revealedness” of God in the midst of human life, Christians enter into the very life of the Triune God. As communities of prayer and thanksgiving, they are called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate in God’s creative and redemptive presence through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is my recollection that at the beginning of my first theology course at Wartburg Theological Seminary with Duane Priebe and Richard Jensen, we were asked to identify a theological question that we wanted to explore. My question was: “How can we speak of God as active and present in the midst of human life?” Whether my memory is accurate or not, this is the question that shaped not only my days at Wartburg, but also my graduate studies and my ministry at the Center for Parish Development. My responsibility has been to develop the biblical and theological resources to shape and undergird the church transformation processes carried out by the Center. So my focus has been on ecclesiology, the life, practice, and witness of the church, but always with

the question of how to speak of God at the heart. I have enjoyed our friendship for these many years as well as Duane’s ongoing theological tutelage. So it seems appropriate that to celebrate his eightieth birthday and his many years of service to the church, I share my thoughts on how to speak of God as active and present in human life.

## **The mysteries of the faith**

The church is a community called to proclaim the creative, redemptive, and transformative acts of God. It is a community empowered to tell the story of what God has done, is doing, and will do with and for God’s creation. But within a secular world, how can and should we as Christians speak of God? How can human words and concepts witness to the reality of the almighty God: “of God the Father who is ceaselessly at work in all creation and in the hearts and minds of all human beings whether they acknowledge him or not, graciously guiding history towards its true end; of God the Son who has become part of this created history in the incarnation; and of God the Holy Spirit who is given as a foretaste of the end to empower and teach the Church and to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.”<sup>2</sup> The

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1. This essay draws upon material originally published in *McKendree Pastoral Review*, May 16, 1995.

2. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 135.

doing of theology—studying and talking about God—is the responsibility of all who participate in the church. Church members themselves are to be involved in the process of exploring the “mysteries” of the Christian faith.

One widely accepted and ancient definition speaks of theology as “faith seeking understanding.” This perspective implies the human effort of making sense of things.

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But there is an equally classical definition of theology as “the contemplation of the mysteries of God.” This latter approach recognizes that the subject matter of theology represents “experience which surpasses all understanding.”<sup>3</sup> As “contemplation of the mysteries of God” the theological task is, in openness and receptivity to the “revealedness” of God in our midst, to recognize the ways in which the hidden God has been and is being disclosed. “The

secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever” (Deut 29:29).

The Christian tradition declares that God has been revealed through the historical event of Jesus Christ and the present activity of the Holy Spirit within the community of those who confess Jesus as Lord. Within this context, the real mystery is not those things that we do not know or do not understand about God, but that which we **do** know: the mystery of salvation, the good news that God “so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16). Christians are called to express their faith in human words and concepts, but at the same time to recognize the limitations and inadequacies of these attempts. Through doxology, by offering our “theology” to God in adoration and praise, we affirm that we can only know God because God has first known us; we can only speak of God because God has first spoken to us.

## Doxological affirmations

O sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
Sing to the LORD, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous works among all the peoples.

Psalm 96:1–3

Doxology is the use of language to offer praise to God: “the living language of faith in which praise is offered to God for the abundance of God’s generous love.”<sup>4</sup> Doxology does not so much answer questions about God as assert that there is One worthy of our praise. Moved by the extravagance of God’s love, by the abun-

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3. Vladimir Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), 38.

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4. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, “Can Liturgy Ever Again Become a Source for Theology?” *Studia Liturgia* 19 (1989), 5.

dance of God's good gifts in creation and in Christian community, hearts that are full of delight and wonder express themselves in an outpouring of praise. Thus, doxology expresses faith, trust, praise, and thanks to the living God for God's undeserved mercy and loving goodness.

If we consider theology as doxology, our words and concepts are placed within the dynamic and communal context of worship. It is the common vocation of the participants in the community of faith to find their identity in praise of God's glory: "the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise" (Isa 43:21). In the liturgical recounting and remembering of God's gracious redemption of the world through Jesus Christ, individual worshipers are transformed and united in a communion of prayer and praise. In worship, through the offering of our thoughts and words we are drawn beyond ourselves into the creative communion—the glory—of life with God and with each other.

Doxology can also extend beyond words. Doxology is a way of life: attitudes and actions which express praise. We are most fully human when we praise God, since this is the purpose for which we were made: "We, who were the first to set our hope on Christ live for the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:12). Our praise is grounded in God's glory. God's glory is a saving glory, for glory is what God does: "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so that we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). God's acts toward us are doxological. That is, God's actions manifest God's glory and so stimulate and enable our praise. So too, empowered by the Holy Spirit, our words and actions become doxological as through praise we participate in God's glory. Thus the whole of the Christian life, God's life with us and our life with God and with each other, is doxological.

Human beings were created for the purpose of glorifying God by living in right relationship with the Creator of all that exists through faith in Jesus Christ. Illuminated and empowered by the Holy Spirit Christians become holy and through communion with God and every other creature, manifest God's desire and intention for all of humanity. Lives of holiness and loving service participate in the structure of doxology. Everything that promotes the fullness of humanity and builds up relationships based on charity and compassion praises and glorifies God. "Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet 4:9–11).

Within this context "sin" is the absence of praise, the lack of right relationship with God, the failure to witness to God's mighty acts. Thus salvation is the restoration of praise: the recognition of God as the source and destiny of everything that is. God alone is worthy of our commitment, devotion, and exaltation. Doxology is not occasional pious speech about God. Rather, doxology actualizes—shapes and reflects—lives of openness and receptivity, of involvement and participation in God's active presence and purpose. "Words and gestures of praise are 'performative;' their utterance makes actual the glory of God to which they refer and which they intend."<sup>5</sup> Through our doxology (praise) the doxology of God (God's glory) becomes a living reality.

## An offering of praise

As doxology, theology is intended to express reverence and praise to God on

5. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco Harper, 1991), 339.

the basis of what God has done, is doing, and will do with and for humanity and all of created reality. In the process of opening ourselves to God's glory, we are empowered to discern and express God's vision for our lives and for our ministry. Rooting theological declarations in worship and praise guards against erroneous calculation, against the assumption that we can grasp or capture God through human effort whether intellectual, pious, or moral. God's truth cannot be controlled, whether by containment within frozen formations from the past or by adaptation to the caprice of contemporary experience. Both are attempts to fit God comfortably within predetermined agendas, and both are appropriately judged as idolatry—efforts to make God in our own image.

The God of Jesus Christ is not a God limited to the past, nor a God determined by the dilemmas and crises of the present, but a God who promises to be about the creation of new life. Such divine promises when taken seriously tend to reframe our particular concerns. They are then defined not in terms of our limited perspective but in light of God's vision of human life. Christianity is oriented to the future, to the **eschaton**, the final consummation or fulfillment of God's promises for forgiveness and reconciliation, peace and justice. "What God has done in the past is to make promises that will be kept in the future."<sup>6</sup> Therefore we are challenged to base our faith in the biblical witness to God's redemptive activity in the people of Israel and the event of Jesus Christ, and to remain open and receptive to the new things that God is doing.

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6. Carl Braaten, "The Significance of the Future: An Eschatological Perspective" in *Hope and the Future of Man*, Ewert Cousins, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 38.

The dynamic of praise is thus an invitation to have faith in a God who has acted in the past, who is an active presence in the present, and who continues to keep the promise of restoring the whole cosmos to wholeness of life in communion with God. "Praise is gospel activity, for it announces the gracious message of hope and life that is given unconditionally to all through Jesus Christ."<sup>7</sup> Not an empty optimism, not based upon human ability or goodness, our hope for the future is grounded in faith, in trust in the creative power and redemptive love of God. We offer praise to the glory of God who declares: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isa. 43:19).

Theology as doxology—singing a new song to the Lord—means recognizing the foundational position of wonder and adoration in all our talk of God. Theological affirmations are a mode of expression in which those who worship God offer themselves, their words, their thoughts, and their actions as an offering of praise to the glory of God. As doxology, human words and lives are surrendered in praise to God and by the glory of God transcend their everyday meaning—they become mysterious. "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).

## The doxological affirmation of the Triune God

The understanding of God as triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the natural working out of the biblical witness. As such it is rooted in God's redemptive activity in history. "To find a basis for the doctrine of the Trinity we must begin with the

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7. Mark A. Olson, *The Evangelical Pastor* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 38.

way Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come on the scene and relate to one another in the events of revelation.”<sup>8</sup>

The Christian God is not a generic God or “God in general,” but a God in particular. This God is intimately involved and thus revealed in the concrete events of the journey of the people of Israel and, above all for Christians, in Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost. We do not have to search for a God above, behind, or beyond the events of time and space. Nor do we have to turn inward and find God in our own private consciousness or religious experience. Our knowledge and our experience of God is “public” and communally accessible. It is located in the history of God’s self-disclosure in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and in the illuminating and liberating presence among God’s people of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is the specifically Christian way of speaking about God. And this doctrine is profoundly related to the living of the Christian life for it summarizes what it means to participate in the life of the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament and in the early church, the term “God” was assumed to be synonymous with the term “Father.” It was only as the church reflected upon the redemptive event of Jesus Christ and the transforming experience of the Holy Spirit that the trinitarian perspective began to be explicitly expressed. The doctrine of the Triune God emerged from the life and witness of the community of those who confessed Jesus Christ as Lord. Doxological trinitarian patterns of prayer and praise were present in Christian worship before the doctrine of the Trinity was expressed by Christian theologians. “It was in simple faith that the early Christians experienced

the presence of the triune God; and it was in that presence that they gathered and held together the remembrance of the God of Israel, the presence within the congregation of the crucified and risen Christ, and from Pentecost, the power to hope in God’s coming Kingdom which is the future of humankind.”<sup>9</sup>

In the early church the presence of the one God was an accepted reality, the difficulty was in conceiving the “threeness” of God. In our time, the redemptive activity of Jesus Christ, or the inspiring and transforming presence of the Holy Spirit, is often easier to understand than is the oneness of the Triune God. Christians are monotheists: we believe in one God, but we are also trinitarian: we believe that the one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The history of Christian doctrine could be read as an effort to clarify, relate, and draw out the implications of these two declarations.

## The communion of the Triune God

Speaking of God in terms of the Trinity is a commentary on and interpretation of God’s dealings with the world. Such God-talk declares that God **is** and what God **does**. God’s identity (God in God’s self) is not separate and distinct from God’s activity (God with and for us). Theology in the mode of doxology declares that the mystery of God can only be known in and through the mystery of salvation. Thus theology is the attempt to understand the eternal mystery of God on the basis of what is revealed about God in the “economy” or work of redemption. The purpose of theology is to offer praise to God for God’s mighty acts in the midst of human history.

Today, many theologies of the Trinity express a “social trinity.” God is not

8. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 299.

9. Laces Vischer, ed., *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* (SPCK, 1981), 7.

portrayed as a solitary and domineering Father, or even as a benevolent and caring “Grandfather,” but as the very essence of a loving, interdependent, and interactive community. Rather than a solitary monarch who is the enemy of human freedom, God is the ultimate in community, mutuality, and sharing. “The Trinity points to a relational ontology in which God is more like a dynamic event than a simple substance and is essentially relational, ecstatic, and alive. God exists as divine persons united in a communion of love and freedom. God is the perfection of love and communion, the very antithesis of self-sufficiency.”<sup>10</sup>

Trinitarian theology then becomes interactive theology which explores the mysteries of love, relationship, personhood, and communion. The mystery of the eternal God has been revealed in the historical event of Jesus Christ and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon God’s people as a mystery of love, “the mystery of persons in communion who embrace death, sin, and all forms of alienation for the sake of life.”<sup>11</sup> This is a God who is truly “for us.”

By the power of the Holy Spirit Christians are called and enabled to participate

in the life of God through faith in Jesus Christ. We are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow members of the household of God (Eph 2:19). The mystery of the Christian life is that in God’s self-disclosure and self-communication, sins are forgiven and believers are saved. Offering praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are freed from sin and death for a life of trust, freedom, and love in communion with God and with each other. Participating in the glory of the Triune God, we concretely experience the divine reality as a dynamic and loving communion, a “mission” of grace and forgiveness which seeks the empowerment and fulfillment of the entire created world.

Singing a new song to the Lord means giving honor, praise, and thanksgiving to God the Father Almighty who is the source of all good things, who sent God’s Son to redeem humanity for a “right” relationship with God, each other, and the created world, and who through the Holy Spirit offers a foretaste of the promised eschaton—the wholeness of life in peace, justice, and love—when “God will be all in all.”

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10. Clark Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” in *The Openness to God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 108.

11. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 1.

# Science-Technology Dialogue and Tillich's Second Form of Anxiety

George L. Murphy

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## Why do theologians need to know science?

I came to Wartburg Seminary in 1979 with a background in physics and a conviction that it was important for the church to speak about relationships between Christian faith and science. That was not a common belief in those days when little was being done in the religion-science field.

Because of that it was encouraging for me to begin theological study with Duane Priebe. He was interested in science, with an undergraduate degree in physics, and encouraged those studying for the ministry to know something about it. Students were urged to read books about cosmology or Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and one of his junior courses began with the reading of Barbour's *Myths, Models and Paradigms*,<sup>1</sup> which compared scientific and theological methods.

Interest in relationships between science and theology is not unusual today. Work in this area has exploded during the past thirty years, with numerous books, courses, conferences, journals, and organizations addressing aspects of it. The Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science, & Technology, an independent Lutheran organization recognized by the ELCA, helps the church deal with issues raised

by science and technology, cooperating with other denominational groups in the Ecumenical Roundtable on Science and Technology.<sup>2</sup>

But why it is important for theology to be concerned about science? What makes this important for the church's mission? And, bearing in mind Duane Priebe's concern for pastoral education, what is its value for someone studying to become a pastor or teacher in the church?

If we believe in God as the creator of the real world which science studies, we ought to speak about the world as truthfully as possible. Unfortunately, some Christians insist loudly on a view of the world that denies well-established science so that we need to counter the idea that Christianity is for ignorant and fearful people. In particular, the impression many young people have that the church is anti-science is a significant factor in their belief that Christianity is not a serious option in today's world.<sup>3</sup>

This is an important concern but it is not the whole story. The most important task of theology is to support the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In what way is an understanding of science and its

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1. Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms* (New York: Harper Collins, 1974).

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2. The new web address for the Alliance is [www.luthscitech.org](http://www.luthscitech.org). That for the Roundtable is <http://ucc.org/ert/>.

3. See, e.g., Reason #3 at <https://www.barna.org/teens-next-gen-articles/528-six-reasons-young-christians-leave-church>.



relation to Christian doctrine needed for such proclamation?

## Anxiety in a scientific world

One important answer suggests itself if we rephrase the question: How does science influence the fundamental concerns of people to whom proclamation is to be addressed? How does the Christian message answer existential questions that people are asking?

Over sixty years ago Tillich presented a taxonomy of types of anxiety.<sup>4</sup> Nonbeing, he argued, threatens a person in three forms: fate and death, emptiness and

aware.<sup>5</sup> Our analysis here will, however, differ considerably from his.

Certainly science can contribute to a sense of at least a penultimate meaning of life and the universe. The pleasure of being able to comprehend the distant past, the evolution of life and the properties of matter can forestall a sense of emptiness. Knowing the basic patterns of the universe is the ultimate concern of some. The very possibility of knowing these basic patterns ensures meaning for them.

But science can leave people with a sense of being lost in a vast, ancient and uncaring world. The ancients knew that the universe was huge, as Psalm 8 makes clear. But the apparent emptiness of that universe can be frightening. When I once asked students in a college astronomy class why there was so much interest in the possibility of extraterrestrial life, one young man replied that the possibility that we are alone in the universe was too terrible to consider.

Even greater anxiety is produced by the tremendous *age* of the universe, now estimated at 13.7 billion years. "Deep time" is now extended indefinitely into the future by the recent discovery that the expansion of the universe is speeding up, apparently to continue forever. It is no wonder that many Americans prefer the coziness of a 6000-year-old world and an imminent "rapture."

In the biological realm, the idea that evolution is driven primarily by natural selection means that there is no long-term goal or purpose for the whole process. While details of evolutionary theory are debated, that conclusion is consistent with the whole scientific approach since the seventeenth century, when Aristotelian teleology and the attempt to explain phenomena in terms of final causes was abandoned.

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meaninglessness, and guilt and condemnation. He pointed out that while these may be present at any historical epoch and are not isolated from one another, in modern times emptiness and meaninglessness are particular threats. The modern scientific picture of the world is a major factor in today's predominance of this type of anxiety, something of which Tillich was

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4. Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale, 1952), especially Chapter 2.

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5. Tillich, 137.



The impact of these developments is exacerbated by militant scientists who proclaim that the ultimate meaninglessness of life is implied or demonstrated by science. Atheists among today's scientists press this point. At the end of a survey of big bang cosmology that takes the reader back to "the first three minutes" of the universe, Nobel physics laureate Steven Weinberg asked what meaning can be obtained from this scientific knowledge. His answer was, "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless."<sup>6</sup> And the subtitle of evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins' book *The Blind Watchmaker* is *Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design*.<sup>7</sup> It is a small step from "without design" to "meaningless."

Scientists, atheists or not, are right to say that science itself sees no ultimate purpose or "point" to the universe or its parts. There are regularities in nature, and thus some meaning embodied in what we formalize as laws of physics. But those laws do not describe phenomena in terms of an attempt to reach any goal. Biological organs have functions—eyes really see. But evolutionary theory describes the development of eyes in terms of the survival advantage that gradual development of light sensitive cells and their accompanying structures confer, not by any striving of life toward sight.

The affects produced by the scientific picture of the universe are enough to make many people anxious, and this anxiety is increased by knowing that detailed understanding of natural phenomena has been possible without reference to any God.

6. Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes* (New York: Basic, 1977), 144.

7. Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987).

This can be very unsettling for those from a religious culture. The result is not merely the existential anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness of which Tillich spoke, an anxiety that is met courageously by taking the threat of non-being into oneself, but can become a pathological form of this anxiety. Tillich described this condition when major changes take place in a culture.

The dangers connected with the change, the unknown character of the things to come, the darkness of the future make the average man a fanatical defender of the established order. He defends it as compulsively as the neurotic defends the castle of his imaginary world. He loses his comparative openness to reality, he experiences an unknown depth of anxiety.<sup>8</sup>

This sounds like our society today with influential political, social, and religious voices opposing such well-established scientific results and technologies as evolution, climate change, and vaccination and rejecting scientific approaches to knowledge. When science is painted as a threat, anxiety increases in society.

## Seeing the world in the light of the cross

How should the church respond to this sense of emptiness and meaninglessness, and a feeling that the individual is only a tiny cog in a vast machine—albeit a quantum machine? We should neither resist well-supported scientific theories nor attempt to correct them or supplement them by theistic additions, as is done in the "Intelligent Design" movement. Instead, we should enable mature Christian thought to engage science as it really is.

While proclamation of the Christian message has priority, we cannot address

8. Tillich, 69–70.

people's concerns in a scientific world entirely with kerygmatic preaching but must do some teaching to inculcate familiarity with adequate ways of relating science and Christian thought. Classes or adult forums are the best setting for this but some didactic preaching is also advisable because many Christians who participate in worship do not attend classes. Other possibilities, such as articles in a newsletter or on a congregation's website, should be considered.

One basic issue has to do with the way of relating science and religion. Barbour has described four possible approaches: warfare, independence, dialogue, and integration.<sup>9</sup> The first two are badly flawed—the notion that science and religion have always been, and must be, at odds, is simply not true, while the idea that religion and science have nothing to say to one another does not take seriously the fact that the Christian understanding of creation and salvation talks about the same world that science studies.

On the other hand, science and Christianity should not be expected to merge, as integration suggests. I believe that the relationship should be a dialogue that can result when scientific knowledge of the world is viewed in the light of God's revelation in Christ. This might at first seem to be a bit arrogant, as if theology were to swallow science or dictate to it. But it is a necessary consequence of the belief that God is indeed the creator of the world that science studies.

The possibility that theology would try to dictate to science is removed if the context in which science is placed is a theology of the cross.<sup>10</sup> This means that

God is hidden in the world, though present and active, just as God is active and paradoxically revealed in the hiddenness of the cross. (For nothing seems to natural ways of thinking less like God's presence than *that*.) Bonhoeffer was thinking this way when he wrote that "God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross," so that we can understand the world "though God were not given" and that "We are to find God in what we know, not in what we don't know."<sup>11</sup>

To discuss God's activity in the world we can use a traditional concept of God's cooperation with creatures in their actions, an analogy with the way in which humans work with various tools.<sup>12</sup> Both God and God's creatures are genuine causes of what happens. But God's activity remains hidden from our observation if God limits divine action to the capabilities of creatures, working in accord with what we call the laws of physics. Science does not observe God but God's "tools" which are, in Luther's phrase, also "the masks of God."<sup>13</sup> This self-limitation is consistent with the action of the God who, for our sake, limited himself to the human condition "emptied himself" (Phil 2:7).

This helps us to see how God's action in the world can be understood together with the laws that science discovers. This does not imply a rigid determinism which deprives God of any freedom because that is not the way the laws of physics are understood today. Quantum mechanics and chaos theory, the sensitivity of phenomena to initial conditions, mean that there is

Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003).

11. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, enlarged ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 360–361 and 311.

12. Murphy, *The Cosmos in the Light of the Cross*, Chapter 6.

13. LW 14:114.

9. Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), Chapter 4.

10. I have developed this approach in some detail in George L. Murphy, *The Cosmos in the Light of the Cross* (Harrisburg,

some flexibility in the relationships between events. God, even operating within the bounds of the laws of physics, has some freedom to direct the course of events.

## The Christian message in a scientific world

In order to address the news of Jesus Christ to those who fear that the scientific picture of the world is empty and meaningless, we need to give adequate attention to biblical texts that speak of God's plan or goal for creation and those that announce God's guidance of individual lives and cosmic history. The Cosmic Christ material in Ephesians and Colossians immediately comes to mind. Eph 1:10 speaks of God's plan to unite "all things" in Christ, and Col 1:15–20 announces the reconciliation of "all things" to God through the blood of Christ's cross. These suggest that what we see in the Gospels' picture of Jesus, a life of complete trust in God and love for others, is the purpose and goal of creation.

Other biblical language can be used. The first creation account in Genesis (1:1–2:4a) has always attracted attention, and today continues to provide theological insight into the meaning of scientific discoveries about cosmology, evolutionary biology, and the environment. This text is about beginnings but it also points to an end, the Great Sabbath, God's shalom for all creation, which is symbolized by the seventh day of creation. (Many of Jesus' healings were on the Sabbath because they are signs of the messianic kingdom which ultimately is the true sabbath of creation.)

People who know about today's science will wonder how all this could come about. How could Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have any connection with the reconciliation of extraterrestrials? If the universe expands faster and faster forever, thinning out and inexorably cooling, what could the unity of all things with Christ or

pictures of the peaceable kingdom mean? Are people supposed to forget about scientific developments that seem to "point to no point" when it comes to eschatology?

It is wrong not only scientifically but theologically to suggest that God will simply step in at some point and replace the present universe with something else. What purpose would there then be for the present order of things? Scripture's hints about the end suggest both continuity and discontinuity, the renewal of the present creation rather than its mere replacement, so that it is appropriate to look for connections between today's scientific knowledge of the universe and God's final future.

There is not room here to describe in detail suggestions that have been made to deal with such issues as the cosmic future and the significance of Christ for extraterrestrials. Peters' use of the concept of prolepsis, Russell's discussion of the resurrection of Christ as "the first instantiation of a new law of nature," Wilkinson's recent book on the possibility of extraterrestrials, and even Luther's argument for the omnipresence of Christ's humanity are a few things that can be useful for reflection on these questions. Those interested in the topic, and especially those to whom the tasks of teaching and preaching in the church are committed, can consult the references given here.<sup>14</sup>

These large-scale matters need to be dealt with to some extent, if for no other reason than to sketch the framework in

14. Ted Peters, *Anticipating Omega* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); Robert John Russell, *Cosmology from Alpha to Omega* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), Chapter 10; David Wilkinson, *Science, Religion, and the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence* (New York: Oxford, 2013). The use of Luther's idea is sketched in Murphy, *The Cosmos in the Light of the Cross*, 192–193.

which God's penultimate purposes are worked out. However, most people will not be concerned primarily with cosmic questions. "If God is real," they may ask, "what is this God doing in my life? And why doesn't God do something about the senseless violence and suffering in the world?"

Luther's explanations of the First Article in his catechisms make it clear that belief in God as creator means that God is the one who provides "me" with the necessities of life. The production of food, maintenance of bodily functions for health and so on can be understood as God's cooperation with created things in their natural processes, as we have discussed. This need not be understood as only a "general providence," with exactly the same thing done for everybody. The freedom which is made possible by quantum and chaos theories means that to some extent God can respond to the specific needs of individuals in acts of "special providence" which are, nevertheless, within the scope of the laws of physics.<sup>15</sup>

Some may object that this has to do with First Article matters, not what is most important in the Christian message, soteriology. But as Duane Priebe would point out, creation is not merely a preliminary to "the real thing," the story of sin and salvation. Without the belief that the God present for us in Christ is our creator, the work of Christ would not mean reconciliation to the source of our life.

It is true, however, that the purpose of a person's life is more than being provided with what is needed to survive in the

world. In the fullest sense it is to be part of that ultimate uniting of all things with Christ. It is not simply creation but new creation, and when it is thought of in this way rather than with legal concepts like forensic justification, important parallels and connections with the relationship between creation and the scientific picture of the world can be drawn.<sup>16</sup>

The last book of the Bible pictures the people of God in a chaotic situation of persecution and worldwide disasters. Believers in that situation could easily conclude that things were out of control and that life had no meaning. But if we resist the notion that we are being given a timetable for the future and look beyond the wild apocalyptic imagery of Revelation, we see that things are quite different. Between sequences of seven catastrophes on earth we are shown scenes in heaven where "the Lord God, the Almighty, ... [who] created all things" (Rev 4:8, 11) and the Lamb are worshipped. With all the apparently senseless things that may happen on earth, God is in control of things.<sup>17</sup> And in the midst of all that is going on, an angel proclaims to the earth the good news of the creator, "an eternal gospel": "Worship him who made heaven and earth, and the sea and the springs of water" (Rev 14:6-7).

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16. For further discussion see George L. Murphy, *Models of Atonement: Speaking about Salvation in a Scientific World* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2013). This work had its beginnings in Duane Priebe's soteriology class.

17. N. Turner, "Revelation" in Matthew Black (ed.), *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962).

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15. Russell, Part II.

# Exodus 16 as an Alternative Social Paradigm

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It is joy to write a paper honoring Duane Priebe for his eightieth birthday. This contribution reflects the passion for exploring fascinating biblical language and inter-textual connections, which I learned from him.

## Creation, food and identity

All of the biblical creation accounts include definitions of what people can and cannot eat. In Gen 1:29 God gives plants and fruit for human consumption. In the second creation account, humans can eat of every plant and tree, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). In the re-creation account after the flood, for the first time humans are allowed to eat meat, just not the blood (Gen 9:3–4). Most scholars see the link between creation and food as a sign of providential care, however others have argued there is a theological purpose, such as linking kosher food laws to the orders of creation.<sup>1</sup> It is argued here that the gift of manna in the wilderness serves a dual purpose as well. It not only tests the obedience for the Israelites, but promotes thinking about how Israelite society in the Promised Land should function.

Food and food rituals are central components of the social creation and the

maintenance of the identity of the people of Israel. The Passover, for instance: at the beginning of the Exodus experience, its next celebration when the people enter the land, and its reintroduction during King Josiah's religious renewal demonstrate that the Passover is formative in understanding God's actions and Israel's identity as the people of God.<sup>2</sup> Observing kosher food laws during the Babylonian Exile also helped the Israelites maintain their sense of identity and prevented assimilation into the Babylonian populace.

While most scholarly attention has been on the Passover ritual, it is fruitful to explore the gift of manna in the wilderness. Many scholars see this as one of several examples of a gift of food that provides for people's hunger. Upon closer examination, we recognize that this gift helps shape the Israelites' identity as the people of God and begins the creation of an alternative social paradigm.

## Exodus 16 as murmuring story

The people of Israel, recently freed from slavery and oppression in Egypt, are called to trust God for daily bread, water, and protection. This absolute trust in God to provide for all their needs does not come

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1. Edwin Firmage, "Genesis 1 and the Priestly Agenda," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 82 (1999): 97–114.

2. Similar arguments could be made for the Lord's Supper in shaping and maintaining Christian communal identity.

easily. Immediately after the victory at the Red Sea, the people murmur about lacking fresh water (Exod 15:22–25). In Exodus 16, the people murmur about a lack of food.

Exodus 16 is one of the many “murmuring” stories. A common theme of the murmuring stories is the testing of the people to show their trust in God. This trust will be necessary if the people are to enter into a covenant with God where they promise obedience and loyalty, and where their identity as God’s chosen people will be affirmed. Learning to trust God prior to the covenant, however, is part of a larger narrative. The wilderness period can be seen as a liminal period within a rite of passage moving the people from oppressed slaves under Pharaoh in Egypt to free servants of Yahweh in the Promised Land.<sup>3</sup> The liminal periods of rites of passages are times to think about communal, social, political, and religious identities. So it is for ancient Israel.

## Rites of passage and liminality

Two classic anthropologists, Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, have studied rites of passage and liminal experiences.<sup>4</sup> According to Van Gennep and Turner, rites of passage move a person from a former identity to a new identity. In many societies this is a movement from child to adult. Often between these new identities a liminal period occurs. The word “liminal”

comes from the Latin word for threshold. It is an in-between place. In the threshold of a door you are neither in nor out of the room. In a rite of passage you are neither child nor adult, but something in-between.

One common pattern for the liminal period in tribal societies includes taking the “former” children away from their homes and camps to a new space, unknown to them. They are separated from their former identity. In this new space—this liminal period—time is spent teaching the “children” skills, mores, and patterns of the adult life as well as foundational myths and religious knowledge known only to adults. At the end of this training period, the group is brought home, some ritual is observed, and the group is given their new identity. They are then reincorporated into the new society as adults, often wearing different clothing, and possibly moving out of their parents’ home.

North American society has similar rites of passage, even if these do not follow all of the particulars. Confirmation is a time apart to learn the adult religious knowledge and faith needed by young people. Once through the rite of confirmation, confirmands are viewed as adult members of the congregation (including not having to go to church anymore!). Graduation, weddings, and getting a driver’s license are each rites of passage that can fit this pattern.

Even Jesus’ recapitulation of Israel’s wilderness experience by his temptation in the wilderness can be seen as a rite of passage.<sup>5</sup> In the synoptic Gospels the temptations occur immediately after Jesus is baptized by John. He has been announced as God’s Son, although not all of the crowd

3. The theme of journey can also be seen in the Genesis accounts of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. See Walter Vogels, “D’Égypte à Canaan: un rite de passage,” *Science et Esprit* 52 no 1 Ja-Apr 2000: 21–35.

4. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) and Victor Turner *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).

5. Mark McVann, “Rituals of Status Transformation in Luke-Acts: The Case of Jesus the Prophet,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 333–360.



may know this. The wilderness is a liminal place, where dangers lurk yet also where one can meet God. For forty days Jesus ponders what his identity as God's Son means. The temptations attack the newly proclaimed identity as God's Son. Satan continues to challenge, "If you are the Son of God..." The liminal experience is all about his identity. Embracing this identity in its completeness, all three synoptic Gospels record that upon returning from the wilderness Jesus begins his proclamation and ministry. He begins to live out in fullness his identity as God's Son.

In the wilderness Israel is also called to a new identity. Formerly they were the oppressed slaves of Pharaoh. Their responsibilities and moral choices were limited. If challenged about an action, they could exclaim: "I was only following orders." Not just physical freedom must be learned. The people of Israel have to make moral, ethical, political, social, and legal choices. They also must learn to live with the consequences. Obedience is no longer enforced by oppressive powers but is a free choice each person must make.

Taken away from the place of their former identity, the Israelites come to the blank slate of the wilderness. Here they learn that being the people of God calls for a radical trust in God. They truly must look to God for daily bread, water, and protection. It is a difficult lesson to learn.<sup>6</sup> Anxiety about the scarcity of food and the future produces a longing for "the good old days": "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt,

when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread..." (Exod 16:3). It seems that food security, even at the expense of oppressive slavery or life, is more important than freedom based on trusting God to provide everything.

God gives the Israelites their fill of bread through the gift of manna. The gift of manna serves one of the functions of the transitional/liminal period, that of instruction. The gift of manna reminds Israel that God brought Israel out of Egypt and is their God. It is also a test to see whether they are willing to become the covenant people of God by trusting God. Their trust will be shown in their daily gathering and by gathering twice as much food prior to the seventh day.

This trust entails believing that there is abundant manna—enough for everyone to be satisfied. It is provided daily for six days a week. Every person gathered what they needed; there was neither lack nor surplus. They discovered that what was needed is what they had gathered. Those who tried to hoard manna from one day to the next discovered it was rotten. Whether manna was hoarded as a security against future need or as an attempt to gain surplus to sell to others in need, hoarding is not allowed. In the prohibition to hoarding we begin to see another lesson of the liminal period. What will the future Israelite society look like?

## Construction of an alternative social paradigm

Israel is not only learning to trust God in the wilderness. Israel needs to develop a type of society for settling and thriving in the land of Canaan. For 400 years the Israelites had experienced a harsh, hierarchical society of oppression, bondage, and death. At its head was Pharaoh, who claimed to be a living God. It was by Pharaoh's word and command that Egypt

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6. In fact the new identity of the free people of God is so difficult for people to accept, accustomed as they were to generations of slavery, that only two of the people who were enslaved in Egypt make it to the Promised Land. All others were of the generation born in the wilderness or were themselves only children in Egypt.

lived and worked. For some, life was good; for others it was oppressive death.

The Israelites are moving into a land and need to determine what type of political and social structures they will live by. God replaces Pharaoh as the head of the society. It is through God's word and command that Israel will prosper and thrive. What will this trust in God as ruler look like at the political and social level? The wilderness experience helps to explore these issues.

The giving of manna in Exodus 16 suggests one idea. In the most basic necessities of life, God's abundance provides enough for everyone to thrive. There will be no hunger or starvation. The gift of manna indicates that Israel is to build a society where there is no hoarding of the basic necessities. One cannot store up the basics of bread, in order to be ready to sell if there is a famine or a need. While there may be surpluses of other goods, at the level of basic necessities Israel is to be an egalitarian society. The promise later given, that there shall be no poor among you, reflects a warning against hoarding that harms others and a promise, if properly used, of God's abundance. Unlike Pharaoh, God's reign is one of freedom, life, and wholeness. People can live in trust and generosity toward their neighbor.

Another way an alternative social paradigm is being constructed is through Sabbath rest on the seventh day. In the ancient world, rest was a divine prerogative. In many ancient Near Eastern creation myths, humans were created as slaves so that the gods may rest. Hinting at the

Sabbath, Exodus 16 shows God inviting the Israelites into divine rest. Former slaves are given an identity as those who share the honor of this divine prerogative, as the people who rest on the seventh day, trusting in God's abundance.<sup>7</sup> This rest will be built into the political and social life of ancient Israel.

Exodus 18 shows a further development of this alternative social paradigm in the leadership structure for the people. Leadership is both plural and local. Leaders are chosen not because of their wealth or physical strength but because of their wisdom, trustworthiness, and knowledge of God's will.

At Sinai God will declare Israel a chosen people, a royal nation. Their vocation and mission is to represent God and God's will to the nations. God guides Israel to do this by creating for them an alternative social paradigm. Israel will not be like other nations. As a nation where God rules, there will be abundance, trust, generosity, hope, and a sharing of divine prerogatives, so all creation may experience God's shalom. Having known only the oppressive, death-dealing reign of Pharaoh, God uses the wilderness as a liminal period to help Israel claim its identity as God's people and discover new ways to live in the world.

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7. This identity for Israel echoes the positive anthropology of Genesis 1 where all humanity is created in God's image and is given dominion over the earth.



# “As a Bee Gathers Honey”: The Rule of Faith in Luther’s Interpretation of the Old Testament

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## **Beer and Theology— a weekly spirited theological conversation!**

Over the past few decades, Duane Priebe has convened a weekly Wartburg Theological Seminary tradition: Beer and Theology. The back room of the *Bier Stube* in Dubuque, Iowa, flows with pints of Millstream and spirited conversation around the pressing biblical and theological questions raised by students, faculty, and guests. As his student and now as a faculty colleague and co-convenor of Beer and Theology, I continue to learn and to take joy in Duane’s delight in study and in teaching. Duane’s questions and insights are as timely and valuable today as they have been in years past.<sup>1</sup> In the spirit of this delight and in honor of Duane’s consistent interest in and contributions to the study of hermeneutics, I offer this essay in gratitude.

The conversation about how Christians should interpret the Old Testament has been on-going since there have been

followers of Christ trying to understand who Jesus was and is in relation to the God of Israel. In recent years a number of scholars committed to this conversation have sought to reassess the role of the Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*)<sup>2</sup> in the interpretation of Christian Scripture. The modest goal of this essay is to draw Martin Luther (1483-1546), biblical theologian,<sup>3</sup> more fully into the conversation.<sup>4</sup>

2. The Rule of Faith is the basic Christian confession of the Triune God—the *sine qua non* of Christian belief without which Christian faith becomes unrecognizable. While not synonymous with either, the Rule of Faith is often identified with both baptismal formulae and the ecumenical creeds, which function as widely accepted witnesses of the Rule. Luther assumes the relationship of the Rule and the Apostles’ and Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creeds.

3. “...it is important to see the title ‘Biblical theologian’ as an integral part of Luther’s sense of calling. It was as a Biblical theologian that he took up polemics. In fact, it was as a Biblical theologian that he became the Reformer. And it is as a Biblical theologian that he deserves to be interpreted.” Jaroslav Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer’s Exegetical Writings* (*Luther’s Works*, companion volume; St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 47.

4. On this topic, see also Christine

1. I continue to require students to read Duane’s article, “Theology and Hermeneutics,” in *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 295–311.

For Luther, the Rule of Faith functioned as an interpretive assumption more than as an overt hermeneutical tool. While his language is at times inconsistent when speaking of the Rule of Faith, his reverence for the Rule within Christian biblical interpretation is clear and unwavering.

Consider the following excerpt from Luther's sermon on Trinity Sunday, 23 May 1535:

This confession of faith we did not make or invent, neither did the fathers of the church before us. But as the bee gathers the honey from many a beautiful and delicious flower, so this creed has been collected in commendable brevity from the books of the beloved prophets and apostles, that is, from the entire Holy Scriptures, for children and plain Christians.<sup>5</sup>

The relationship of Scripture and the Rule of Faith is organic and intimate. Clear that Scripture is its source, the Rule for Luther is the nectar that the bee has gleaned from Scripture's garden. It is the honeyed center of the whole of God's written word. This natural relationship between Scripture and the Rule of Faith plays itself out in Luther's biblical interpretation and practical theology, as we shall see.

## Luther used the term *regula fidei* sparingly

Early in his teaching career in his lectures on the Psalms (1513–1515), he used the term in its technical sense: "I do not object

Helmer, "Luther's Trinitarian Hermeneutic of the Old Testament," *Modern Theology* 18 (2002) 49–73, and Mickey L. Mattox, "From Faith to the Text and Back Again: Martin Luther on the Trinity in the Old Testament," *Pro Ecclesia* 15 (2006) 281–303.

5. Ewald M. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959) 1.352; see also WA 41.275.

[to differing interpretations], as long as the Rule of Faith does not object."<sup>6</sup> The Rule here is not a limit of the varied ways a text might be interpreted, for Luther's rather conventional medieval exegetical methods at this point in his life assumed Scripture's polyvalence. The measure of the Rule, rather, is of Scripture's unity in its witness to the Triune God. Interpretations may vary, but the divine Subject of the text does not. The Rule served to measure an interpretation in relation to Scripture's unified witness to the one divine Subject.

After the 1517 incident with the Wittenberg door, there is a marked semantic shift in Luther's use of the term *regula fidei*. An example comes from his lectures on Isaiah (1527–1530), here commenting on Isa 44:9–20, the prophet's scathing critique of Israel's idolatry:

Whatever is outside of faith, however attractive and toilsome it may be, is idolatry, because the opinion that we are justified by works apart from faith is the source of all idolatry. Therefore if you have one notion of idolatry, you must apply it to all idolatry. [By contrast] this is the rule of faith, that we are justified by the grace and mercy of God. All self-righteousness must depart.<sup>7</sup>

The central concern of Luther's exegesis shifted from medieval hermeneutical

6. ...*non repugno, quamdiu regula fidei non repugnant*. D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe; Weimar: 1883–) 3.533. [Hereafter, WA.] Luther twice appeals to the Rule as hermeneutical guide with this language in his comments on Psalms 75 (cf. LW 10.462 / WA 3.517) and 77 (cf. LW 11.14 / WA 3.533).

7. LW 17.114. The original of the penultimate sentence: *nam haec est regula fidei gracia et misericordia dei justificari*. WA 31-2.351.

convention<sup>8</sup> to a central theological tenet of the Reformation: justification by grace through faith. This shift presents a semantic challenge to anyone interpreting Luther's use of the Rule as *regula fidei* becomes *regula sola fidei*.

## Luther, the Rule of Faith, and the Roman orders of his day

Luther's polemics against the Roman Catholic orders of the day provide an additional challenge, this time with the focus on the rule (*regula*). He regularly critiques the "rules" of the religious orders as emblems of works righteousness. This is evident in his 1535 commentary on Galatians, here commenting on Gal 6:16a: "Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule" (RSV):

The Franciscans and all the other monks do indeed have a righteousness and holiness; but this is hypocritical and ungodly, because they hope to be justified by the observance of their rule, not solely by faith in Christ. In addition, although they make an outward pretense of holiness and do restrain their eyes, hands, tongue, and other parts of their body, they still have an unclean heart, filled with the desires of the flesh, envy, anger, sexual lust,

8. Luther's development as an exegete in his own words: "When I was young I was learned, especially before I came to the study of theology. At that time I dealt with allegories, tropologies, and analogies [*sic*] and did nothing but clever tricks with them. If somebody had them today they'd be looked upon as rare relics. I know they're nothing but rubbish. Now I've let them go, and this is my last and best art, to translate the Scriptures in their plain sense. The literal sense does it—in it there's life, comfort, instruction, and skill. The other is tomfoolery, however brilliant the impression it makes." LW 54.406.

idolatry, contempt and hatred for God, blasphemy toward Christ, etc. They are violent enemies of the truth.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding his clear lack of ecumenical sensitivity, Luther's interprets "rule" in Gal 6:16, as the new creation in Christ. In stark contrast he sees the monastic rules as "enemies of the truth." From his early lectures on the Psalms, when he was living and working as an Augustinian monk, to his exegetical work after his rejection of his monastic vows, his reading and use of "rule" is often marked with his severe critique of Roman Catholic orders and their monastic rules.<sup>10</sup>

These semantic challenges, of course, do not mean that the Rule of Faith was unimportant to Luther, exegetically or otherwise. Quite the opposite is true. To get at this, we move to Luther's comments on translation and interpretation and his pastoral use of the Rule in the form of the Apostles' Creed.

In "On Translating: An Open Letter" (1530), Luther counts faith in the Triune God as a prerequisite for translating Scripture.

[Translating] requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing, Christian, trained, informed, and experienced heart. Therefore I hold no false Christian or factious spirit can be a decent translator. That becomes obvious in the translation of the Prophets made at Worms. It has been carefully done and approaches my German very closely. But Jews had a hand in it, and they do not show much reverence for Christ. Apart from that there is plenty of skill and craftsmanship there.<sup>11</sup>

9. LW 27.141.

10. In his 1519 commentary on Gal 6:16a, Luther makes the same theological point about the rule being the new creation without the polemics against monastic rules, cf. LW 27.406.

11. LW 35.194–195.

While there is no excuse for Luther's offensive language, his use of "Jews" here refers to the Anabaptist translators Ludwig Haetzer and Hans Denk, who were reported to be "antitrinitarian" with "Denk denying the atonement of Christ and Haetzer disputing even Christ's deity."<sup>12</sup> While Luther is able to compliment the linguistic achievement of Haetzer and Denk, their translation of the Old Testament prophets was theologically blemished because they lacked the orthodox Trinitarian faith necessary for the proper translation of Christian Scripture.

Closer to the end of Luther's career, he reaffirms the prerequisite of faith in his 1543 treatise, "On the Last Words of David":

We Christians have the meaning and import of the Bible because we have the New Testament, that is, Jesus Christ, who was promised in the Old Testament and who later appeared and brought with Him the light and true meaning of Scripture. Thus He says in John 5:46: 'If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me.' Also Luke 24:44-45: "'Everything written about Me in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'" Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.'

For that is the all-important point on which everything depends. Whoever does not have or want to have this Man properly and truly who is called Jesus Christ, God's Son, whom we Christians proclaim, must keep his hands off the Bible—that I advise. He will surely come to naught.<sup>13</sup>

## Triune faith centered on Christ is necessary for proper interpretation of Scripture

Faith in the Triune God<sup>14</sup> is an essential hermeneutical lens for reading and interpreting the Old Testament as much as the New. Luther's appeal to the Rule as a *sine qua non* for the translation of Christian Scripture is illustrated by two interpretive guides from this same treatise: "Whenever in Scripture you find God speaking about God, as if there were two persons, you may boldly assume that three Persons of the Godhead are there indicated."<sup>15</sup> And also: "But where the Person does not clearly identify itself by speaking and apparently only one Person is involved, you may follow the rule given above and be assured that you are not going wrong when you interpret the name Jehovah to refer to our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son."<sup>16</sup> These interpretive guidelines, discordant with much of contemporary biblical scholarship but seen clearly through the Rule of Faith, convey that Luther's commitment that the plain sense of the biblical text was never divorced from the Rule as interpretive lens. Witness to the Trinitarian God is Scripture's *res*, its "eternal unity, above time and beyond reason."<sup>17</sup> Scripture's unity is in the God to whom the whole of it testifies.

14. Luther provides his own version of the Rule later in the treatise, cf. LW 15.316. This suggests at least operationally the Rule for Luther was not more than but not synonymous either with the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds.

15. LW 15.280.

16. LW 15.336.

17. Helmer, "Luther's Trinitarian Hermeneutic," 54.

12. Ibid., 194 n. 59.

13. LW 15.268.

The place of the Apostles' Creed in Luther's catechisms highlights the esteem granted the Rule in his pastoral theology. From the Large Catechism:

Thus far we have heard the first part of Christian teaching [the Ten Commandments], and in it we have seen all that God wishes us to do and not to do. The Creed properly follows, which sets forth all that we must expect and receive from God; in short, it teaches us to know [God] perfectly.<sup>18</sup>

The Creed complements the Ten Commandments' focus on God's expectation of the world with what the world can expect from God. Toward the hermeneutical horizon of this essay, we turn to the final paragraph of Luther's explanation of the Creed in the Large Catechism:

This is enough now concerning the Creed to lay a foundation for ordinary people without overburdening them. After they understand the substance of it, they may on their own initiative learn more, *relating to these teachings all that they learn in the Scriptures*, and thus continue to advance and grow in understanding. For as long as we live we shall have enough here in the Creed to preach and learn.<sup>19</sup>

Luther's concern for the faith and understanding of "ordinary people" has an essential hermeneutical edge: knowing the Creed makes way for learning from Scripture and growth in understanding. While I would never suggest that Luther would make the Creed normative—Scripture is the norming norm (*norma*

*normans*) and Creeds are normed norms (*norma normata*)—on the level of practical exegesis for "ordinary people," the Creed provides the heart of the Triune confession of who God is and what God does which then helps the Christian to read Scripture more clearly. Teaching and understanding the baptismal creed, often for Luther the Children's Creed (*Der kinder Glaube*),<sup>20</sup> was a critical move in the life of a Christian, the vocation of the Christian community, and the interpreter's work with the biblical text. The Rule informs reading, and reading informs the Rule.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, Luther's hymn, "We All Believe in One True God" (*Wir glauben All an einen Gott*), is also important.<sup>22</sup> Inspired by a medieval hymn that summarized the Creed in a single verse, Luther penned this hymn with three verses, one for each article of the Creed.<sup>23</sup> He intended it to be sung during the morning service,<sup>24</sup> and from Luther's own references to the singing of the Creed,<sup>25</sup> his intentions seem to have been met. Generally sung after the

20. E.g., LW 12.114

21. "This distinctive 'rule of faith' consists not in an external list of theological truths on the basis of which one ought to interpret the Scriptures, but in the simultaneous realities of the God who is known and the act of in which God is known." Mattox, "From Faith to the Text and Back Again," 302.

22. Cf. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2006) #411.

23. LW 53.271

24. Leonard Woolsey Bacon, ed., *The Hymns of Martin Luther* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 46.

25. E.g., "For what could be written or said with more clarity or definiteness than the words which even children confess in their Creed and which all Christendom sings, recites, and preaches..." LW 24.91.

18. Robert Kolb & Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Fortress: Minneapolis, 2000) 431.1. [Hereafter BC.]

19. BC 44.70.

sermon,<sup>26</sup> this creedal hymn, the Rule of Faith in song, served as the assembly's regular response to the proclamation of God's word in scripture and sermon. Perhaps the hymn's prelude was the sound of buzzing bees.

### **The *Christian* interpreter of the Old Testament views the Rule of Faith as a hermeneutical *sine qua non***

There are many complex aspects to Luther's biblical theology. The role of Rule of Faith is an important one. His commitment to the Rule as hermeneutical lens through which Scripture in its plain sense is read and interpreted is unwaver-

ing, for the relationship of Scripture and the Rule is organic and intimate. The Rule flows from Scripture and expresses the unity of Scripture's witness to the Triune God. Luther's assumption of the Rule in academic and pastoral expressions of his biblical interpretation is valuable for our contemporary conversation, where the opposite is often assumed. While to assert that the non-Christian cannot interpret Christian Scripture is hogwash in Luther's day and in our own,<sup>27</sup> to say that the Rule as hermeneutical lens is a *sine qua non* for the *Christian* interpreter of the Old Testament is in harmony with Luther.

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26. James F. Lambert, *Luther's Hymns* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1917), 83.

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27. See the beautiful Sikh interpretation of the New Testament gospels by Gopal Singh, *The Man Who Never Died* (Honesdale, Pa.: The Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the U.S.A., 1990).

# And All the Tribes Fear Him

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The Inside Passage of the Pacific Northwest—the waterway from Seattle to Alaska—is a place of mountains and sea, islands and surf and eagles, whales and canoes and fantastic art. Its gardens are tangles of thorny rosebushes and delicate ferns, made radiant by the setting sun, whose light is thrown up again and again from deep sea water. Here one eats salmon and clams outdoors among tall and fragrant cedars, and listens for the wing-beats of the Thunderbird—that mighty avian that hunts whales, stunning them with the twin Lightning Snakes that live under its wings, and carrying them off to the skyscraping mountain peaks to feast.<sup>1</sup> But if you do not glimpse the Thunderbird, then at least you can hope to catch sight of a tiny golden hummingbird sipping eagerly from a thicket of fuchsia.

Somewhere in this verdant seascape, near the Queen Charlotte Strait in the late nineteenth century, a native Kwakwaka'wakw artist carved a model totem pole. With the influx of European traders had come many new complications, among them Christianity and disease, but also new pigments and an eager market for the native art, which was unlike anything seen in the rest of the world. The coastal tribes' towering totem poles, tremendous cedar logs carved with the highly stylized images of a family's crest and heritage and raised to commemorate

their potlatch feasts, truly evoked the old metaphor: they captured the imagination. They still do. To meet the sudden demand for their highly unique art, enterprising native sculptors created “model” totem poles: smaller versions of their titanic originals, suitable for tourists to purchase and carry away. Our artist chose to create his model totem pole in the distinctive sculptural style of the Kwakwaka'wakw people, but with the unusual subject of a nursing mother at the top, seated on a sea monster. The other characters, in descending order, included a wolf, an octopus, and a man. In addition to traditional black, the model was painted with ultramarine and vermilion, non-local pigments available only through trade with Europeans.<sup>2</sup>

Authors Aldona Jonaitis and Aaron Glass describe the history of the totem pole as “a history of colonial relations, for it emerged...in the context of transactions between the original inhabitants of and the newcomers to the Northwest Coast.”<sup>3</sup> This is especially true of model totem poles, which were essentially created as souvenirs. They serve as “significant documents of the intercultural encounter. Carvers understood and took advantage of the ready market for these items, which they knew would travel...

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2. Photo and description are from Bill Holm, *The Box of Daylight: Northwest Coast Indian Art* (University of Washington Press, 1983), 114.

3. Aldona Jonaitis and Aaron Glass, *The Totem Pole: An Intercultural History* (University of Washington Press, 2010), 9.

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1. Hilary Stewart, *Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast* (University of Washington Press, 2003).



to territories remote from their own, by people who had little understanding of the subtleties of their artistic and cultural heritage.”<sup>4</sup> As souvenirs, the models did little to educate their new owners about the deeper cultural realities of native artists, but instead became the locus of personal memories and the embodiment of assigned meanings; outsiders subjected both models and full-size totem poles to “varied judgments, interpretations, appropriations, or celebrations, and in the process imposed on the artworks meanings that their Native creators could never have imagined.”<sup>5</sup>

## A text in a new context

Many years later, the model totem pole was photographed for a book called *The Box of Daylight*, edited by the art historian Bill Holm, who first undertook to formally analyze the unique characteristics of Northwest Coast native art.<sup>6</sup> The book is filled with samples of all the power and splendor of the artistic vision of the coastal tribes, with its refracted forms and ovoid shapes that seem to capture the essence of life as reflected in sea water, and of the mythical understanding that all the animals used to be people.<sup>7</sup>

This model totem pole in particular captured my imagination because it features a nursing mother seated on a sea monster—two images that are evocative for most, if not all the human race. For anyone who has studied the biblical ac-

counts of creation with Dr. Duane Priebe, the words “sea monster” immediately conjure conflict mythology—the development or ordering of the world via divine battle with a sea monster. But does the sea monster of Kwakwaka’wakw mythology bear any resemblance to the sea monster of the Bible and its role in the ancient Israelite creation accounts?

## The sea monster in Kwakwaka’wakw tradition

The Kwakwaka’wakw sea monster goes by several names: Tseygis,<sup>8</sup> Yagis,<sup>9</sup> Yakim. (The last name means “badness.”)<sup>10</sup> One of the many fabulous denizens of Kwakwaka’wakw religion, art, and mythology, the sea monster makes his appearance at their winter ceremonies in the form of a mask, or may appear as a primary totem of a family, as it does in Chief John Scow’s “Sea Monster House,” erected around 1900 to honor the family crest of the ‘Namgits tribe.<sup>11</sup> Supernatural beings or “numaym” like the sea monster are the founding members of a given group or family; the traditions are carefully preserved, as they govern various family privileges and status.<sup>12</sup>

8. Holm, *The Box of Daylight*, 114.

9. Personal correspondence with Bill Holm, May 2013.

10. Wayne Suttles and William Sturtevant, eds., *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7: Northwest Coast* (Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 1990), 375. The article continues: “Masks portraying Yakim take many forms, as all versions of sea monsters are called by this term.”

11. “Chief Scow’s House,” Bill Reid Centre for Northwest Coast Art Studies, Simon Fraser University. [http://www.sfu.ca/brc/virtual\\_village/Kwakwaka\\_wakw/gwayasdums--gilford-island-/chief-scow-s-house.html](http://www.sfu.ca/brc/virtual_village/Kwakwaka_wakw/gwayasdums--gilford-island-/chief-scow-s-house.html) Retrieved May 2013.

12. Suttles and Sturtevant, *Handbook*

4. Ibid., 103.

5. Ibid., 9.

6. Not to be confused with the poet and travel writer Bill Holm who often focused on Iceland.

7. Dr. Jessica Joyce Christie, ed., *Landscapes of Origin in the Americas: Creation Narratives Linking Ancient Places and Present Communities* (University Alabama Press, 2009), 45.

The monster's home is the undersea world, which is associated with food (fish) and riches (copper). One of his distinctive features is a wide, gaping mouth.<sup>13</sup> Like the Thunderbird or the Sisiyutl (a double-headed snake with a grinning human face at its center), the sea monster is eerie or "wonderful," distinct from any merely natural creature. He "obstructs rivers, endangers lakes and the sea, and swallows and upsets canoes. The sea is said to boil when he rises, and all the tribes fear him."<sup>14</sup>

He makes the depths churn like a boiling cauldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment... Nothing on earth is his equal—a creature without fear. No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up (Job 41:31, 33, 10).

More specific references to the sea monster are tantalizing and few, slippery as fish. The monster arises where there are reefs.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes it is described as having the shape of a halibut, possibly with humans standing along its edge. In connection with the world deluge story, which is common among Native Americans, it is said:

One ancestor of the 'Namgis Tribe was sent a message from the Creator in a dream that when the flood came, the great halibut-like Sea Monster 'Namxiyalagiyu "Only One" would rise from the depths of the ocean and take him to a place where he would be protected for

the duration of the flood... This creature was so big that the man appeared to be small speck on the rim of the monster.<sup>16</sup>

The man is given the ability to breathe underwater and is taken by the monster to a safe place under the sea until the floods finally abate. The monster then returns him to dry land. In some versions, a family is vomited up by the sea monster and revived by the Creator.<sup>17</sup>

But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights... Then the Lord spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land (Jonah 1:17; 2:10).

As a *numaym*, the Kwakwaka'wakw sea monster makes his most frequent appearance at their winter ceremonies, elaborate rituals that not only celebrated various family totems, but also did the important work of taming the cannibal dancer who must be restored to his humanity. The Kwakwaka'wakw's highly developed "dramatic arts cannot be separated from the potlatch,"<sup>18</sup> feasts in which material goods were lavished upon attendees to the honor of the host. The greatest potlatches were those "to which 'all the tribes' were invited."<sup>19</sup>

## Chaos and creation

In the Hebrew Bible, sea monsters are closely connected with the idea of creation. For example, speaking of Psalm 74 (see especially verses 12–17), Jon

of *North American Indians*, Volume 7, 373.

13. Personal correspondence with Bill Holm, May 2013.

14. Suttles and Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American Indians*, Volume 7, 375.

15. Franz Boas, *The Religion of the Kwakiutl Indians: Texts* (Columbia University Press, 1930), 178. Note that the term "Kwakiutl" is no longer in widespread use. It was replaced by the term favored by the tribes: Kwakwaka'wakw.

16. Christie, *Landscapes of Origin in the Americas*, 45.

17. Boas, *The Religion of the Kwakiutl Indians*, 178.

18. Suttles and Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American Indians*, Volume 7, 379.

19. *Ibid.*, 372.

Levenson explains that “the context is... one of creation, provided we do not restrict our understanding of the term to the traditional, but postbiblical, doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*.”<sup>20</sup> In Psalm 104, that great paean to God’s world, Leviathan sports in the sea. In Job, where God overwhelms the innocent sufferer by recounting the wonders and mighty aspects of the creative work, the Leviathan is a prominent figure. In the world deluge story, which is a kind of second creation,<sup>21</sup> God opens the fountains of the great deep (*tehom*) as well as the windows of heaven, letting the waters above the sky spill down onto the earth. Why, however, were there waters above the sky? In the *Enuma elish*, when Marduk used a fierce wind to inflate and overcome the water monster goddess Tiamat, “he split her in half to form the sky and the Earth.”<sup>22</sup> Echoes of this worldview remained even when Tiamat had been ungodded. Indeed, she is even referenced (in a whisper) in Genesis 1 with that word *tehom*.

Scholar Safwat Marzouk describes this theme:

Various ancient Near Eastern *Chaoskampf* myths (e.g. Enuma-Elish, Baal Cycle, Re-Apophis) speak of the concept of chaos (e.g. political, natural, etc.) as an embodied entity, as a monster. Tiamat, Yamm, Mot, and Apophis, who represent chaos in Enuma Elish, Baal-Cycle, and Re-Apophis respectively, are embodied. Though on the surface chaos seems gigantic and out of control, the purpose of the combat myth is to assure

the reader that this chaos is contained and will eventually be defeated.<sup>23</sup>

If the ancient Israelites feared the sea and associated it with chaos, the Northwest Coast Indians loved the sea, because it was their abundant source of food, society, and wealth.<sup>24</sup> And yet, even the sea-loving Kwakwaka’wakw might be peacefully floating about in a canoe when something monstrous explodes out of the depths with overwhelming power.

## Cosmogony and liturgy

Franz Boas, a primary anthropologist of the Kwakwaka’wakw, makes it clear that the coastal tribes do not have an *ex nihilo* origin myth such as the Western tradition presumes:

The idea of creation, in the sense of a projection into objective existence of a world that pre-existed in the mind of a creator, is...almost entirely foreign to the American race.... There was no unorganized chaos preceding the origin of the world. Everything has always been in existence in objective form somewhere.<sup>25</sup>

And yet, as one scholar argues:

...[T]he ultimate aim of pre-colonial Kwakwaka’wakw cosmology was the regeneration of the natural world... Kwakwaka’wakw ritual forms [were]

20. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 9.

21. “[T]he story of Noah and his survival of the great deluge is a reiteration of primordial creation.” *Ibid.*, 73.

22. *Ibid.*, 121.

23. Safwat Marzouk, paper presented to the Society of Biblical Literature: “The Semiotics of the Dismembered Body of the Monster in the ANE Chaoskampf Myths and Ezekiel in the Light of Foucault’s Discipline and Punish,” November 2012, Chicago.

24. Suttles and Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7*, 364.

25. Franz Boas, *Race, Language, and Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 468.

aspects of a cosmogonic scheme... the Kwakwaka'wakw saw themselves as participants in a universal ecology requiring continuous maintenance.<sup>26</sup>

The elaborate Kwakwaka'wakw winter ceremonies were essential for maintaining—and thus creating—the world. As with the Enuma elish, and later in Israelite liturgy, chaos could be neutralized in cult. Jon Levenson explains:

[T]he creative ordering of the world has become something that humanity can not only witness and celebrate, but something in which it can also take part...through the cult...we are enabled to cope with evil, for it is the cult that builds and maintains order, transforms chaos into creation.<sup>27</sup>

Such ritual mythology can reveal the essential outlook of the human condition: sin as the fearful, ravening cannibal that wants to devour rather than serve its neighbor. Monsters rising all unexpected from the depths, causing the sea to boil in a hoary swath of chaos. Annual gatherings and rituals, the community performances that are so essential to keeping our “world” going.

This human situation is not incidental. The doctrine of the Incarnation demands that we take the nature of humanity seriously, including its imaginative life. As Duane Priebe has said:

What God has done in Christ can be understood only in the context of the history of the entire world and its cultures. Conversely, he is the whole

through whom our world, cultures and histories come into their truth.<sup>28</sup>

Just as all tribes are invited to the greatest potlatches in which wealth is reckoned in terms of what is given away and the cannibal is finally tamed, so all the world is invited to Christ's triumphant feast in which he shares his own body and blood and the glory of his resurrection.

## Conclusion: Creation, context, and connections

Despite interesting textual similarities with Hebrew Bible creation themes, the sea monster of the Kwakwaka'wakw myth is not a creation motif. The sea monster is primarily a family crest, not an elemental figure of chaos. However, the parallels that do exist tell us something about the human imagination and our “competing symbolic systems,” which are “human attempts to live with divinity, and to transcend the specter of death.”<sup>29</sup>

Studying and attempting to interpret the traditions of another culture raises profound questions about method, right, colonialism, ethnocentrism versus relativism, and hermeneutics in general. The foreign intricacies of the Kwakwaka'wakw culture should remind us that those traditions, which we claim as our own, are stranger and more profoundly *different*, than we may assume. We can so easily take Psalm 74 or Genesis 1 at surface value, assign-

26. “‘It Is a Strict Law That Bids Us Dance’: Cosmologies, Colonialism, Death, and Ritual Authority in the Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch 1849 to 1922,” Joseph Masco, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, No. 1. (January 1995), 44–46.

27. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 127.

28. Duane A. Priebe, “Mutual Fecundation: The Creative Interplay of Texts and New Contexts,” in Karen L. Bloomquist, ed., and Lutheran World Federation, *Transformative Theological Perspectives* (Lutheran University Press, 2009), 91.

29. Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Indiana University Press, 1992), 131.

ing objective validity<sup>30</sup> based on our own limited experience, and forgetting that the cultural distance is even greater.

N. Clayton Croy points out that writing rather than reading is the proper activity of someone who insists on creating her own meaning.<sup>31</sup> Texts are always stranger, more complex, and more urgent than they appear at first reading. The best imaginative work will dig deeply, seeking to understand. It then exegetes and combines meaning in new and compelling ways, imbuing ever more abundance into the living conversation between reader, text, and worldview. This “mutual fecundation”<sup>32</sup> finally indicates that the meaning of creation expands as we make more connections among sacred texts, and that the truth of Christ, which takes up the “whole of human culture,” is expanding with the rest of the universe. The creation of the world is as much metaphor as material. When we have satisfied our need for security and sustenance, we move on to poetry and other expressions of meaning making. The monsters that beset us, the churning surf that rises at the edges of the unsuspected reef, come to represent the

very chaos that stirs in the depths of our particular worlds.

The model totem pole that originally inspired this study featured a nursing mother as well as a sea monster. Like pregnancy, the sea monster rises out of unexpected depths in a swollen wash of salt water. The creation of the world or of a child are mysterious, fecund, rich processes that are gravid with fear and chaos, loss of control, threatened by powers at the limits of our being.

The Christian claim about salvation is that God will redeem our sins of imagination as well as action; that every meaning will ultimately contribute to the Logos. God made this possible in the incarnation by emerging into the world through the watery womb of a human woman. Jesus connects the sign of Jonah with his own passion; in later Christian tradition, the routing of Hell is pictured as Christ overcoming a monster with a gaping maw. Thus the new creation is made real. And thus Mary holding her child becomes one of the thrones of God, seated in triumph on the ancient sea monster.

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30. Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” in Robert A. Segal, *Theories of Myth: Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Myth* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 39.

31. N. Clayton Croy, *Prima Scriptura: An Introduction to New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), xxv.

32. Priebe in Bloomquist, “Transformative Theological Perspectives,” 91.

# Law, Righteousness, Reason, Will, and Works: Civil and Theological Uses<sup>1</sup>

Craig L. Nesson

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Employing Luther's two strategies paradigm as an overarching heuristic for interpreting his theology proves fruitful for understanding several apparent contradictions or paradoxes in his thought. Just as it has proven customary and insightful for distinguishing between two uses of the law in Luther's writings, so also we gain clarity about his discussions of righteousness, reason, will, and works by recognizing both a civil and a theological use of these key concepts.

## Two uses of the law and the two kingdoms/strategies

As evidenced by classical interpreters, it has become convention to distinguish between a first civil use of the law and a second theological use. Bernard Lohse makes the bold claim that "Luther is clearly the first in all of history of dogma and theology to view the law from the viewpoint of its *usus*, thus in its concrete function."<sup>2</sup> Lohse analyzes Luther's twofold use of the law, which first appeared in his writings in 1522 and reached its most fulsome exposition in the

Galatians lectures of 1531.<sup>3</sup> Lohse concisely summarizes Luther's two uses of the law:

The two functions of the law are the "political" or "civic" and the "theological." Here too there is a profusion of formulas and terms. By means of the political use, external order on earth is to be maintained, and peace and the securing of justice preserved. The law has also the task of inculcating the divine commandments and of instructing the consciences. It also furnishes the needed means by which to punish evildoers. The order established by the political use of the law is affected through the offices of the temporal authorities, of parents, of teachers, and of judges, instituted by God for this purpose. If the law in its political use is obeyed, then an "external," "civic" righteousness is achieved, to which Luther assigned the highest value.... The "theological" use comprises the authentic task of the law. It is, so to speak, the law in its spiritual sense. This use serves to show persons their sin, to "convict" them of sin.... The law "accuses," "horrifies," indicating that owing to their guilt humans are not what they should before God.<sup>4</sup>

Paul Althaus interprets the two uses of the law in a corresponding manner, as does Oswald Bayer.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Dedicated to my teacher and colleague, Duane Priebe, in honor of his distinguished career as pastor, teacher, and academic dean in the life of the church and in service at Wartburg Theological Seminary.

2. Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. and ed. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 184, 270.

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3. Lohse, 270.

4. Lohse, 271.

5. Paul Althaus, *The Theology of*



The distinction between the two uses of the law in Luther is grounded directly on his theological paradigm of the two kingdoms, or, more precisely, two strategies.<sup>6</sup> Due to the prevalent misinterpretation of the two kingdoms as separate realms or arenas dividing church from public life, which has led tragically to political quietism (for example, the failure of Christian resistance to fascism in Nazi Germany), a more dynamic approach views the two kingdoms as two distinct and complementary forms of divine activity in the world. God engages ambidextrously with both hands to rule the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the right hand spiritual strategy and by means of the structures and institutions of public life according to the left hand civil strategy.

## Two uses of righteousness: civil and alien

The two strategies paradigm provides background for the conventional distinction in Luther's theology between the two uses of the law. The first use of the law functions as God's way of ordering and structuring the world in the left hand strategy, while the second use of the law functions to expose and condemn sin in preparation for the proclamation of the gospel in the right hand strategy. However, it is equally compelling to parse other central themes of Luther's thought according to their contrasting uses and functions in rela-

tion to the two strategies. Thereby Luther distinguishes two contrasting forms of righteousness. In God's right hand spiritual strategy, the only righteousness that matters is the alien righteousness that belongs to the sinner through justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus.

The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner. God sees the sinner as one with Christ. He forgives his sin and considers the sinner to be righteous for Christ's sake. Thus the righteousness granted to the sinner is not his own produced by himself but an "alien" righteousness belonging to Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

By the work of Christ the sinner receives the alien righteousness of Jesus Christ as pure gift (*extra nos*) and becomes for Christ's sake through faith truly righteous before God.

Civil righteousness, by contrast, is that form of righteousness that all individuals perform in relationship to their neighbors in God's left hand civil strategy. Even non-Christians have the capacity to engage in civil righteousness in service to neighbors in their families, workplaces, and public life. God structures and provides order in daily life through those who live out their roles with responsibility for the care of others as neighbors. Although this form of righteousness is ascribed a secondary role in Luther's thought, it remains an essential concept for accomplishing God's purposes of protecting and preserving the world.

Thus this outward righteousness is indeed considered less valuable than the true righteousness of the Christian. However, it does have positive value, for it says "that in his station everyone should do his duty." If people were seriously concerned about this secular righteousness, "there would be no

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*Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schutz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 253:255 and Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 61, n. 27.

6. For a fuller exposition of the two kingdoms as two strategies, see Craig L. Nessan, "Reappropriating Luther's Two Kingdoms," *Lutheran Quarterly* 19 (Fall 2005): 302:311.

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7. Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 227.



rascality or injustice, but sheer righteousness and blessedness on earth.”<sup>8</sup>

Human ethical capacity, even under the condition of sin, can and does contribute a measure of civil righteousness in the created world according to the left hand civil strategy. This civil righteousness remains at best an approximation of God’s created purposes, however, due to the pervasiveness of human waywardness, which becomes manifest not only in personal but also structural sinfulness.

The distinction between the first and second uses of righteousness in Luther’s thought is fruitful for elucidating both the centrality of the work of Christ in imputing alien righteousness according to God’s spiritual strategy and the ethical responsibility of human beings to contribute to public righteousness for their neighbors according to God’s civil strategy. Both forms of righteousness have their proper location and uses within Luther’s theology.

## Two uses of reason: gift and harlot

Luther famously asserted against reason: “And what I say about the sin of lust, which everybody understands, applies also to reason; for reason mocks and affronts God in spiritual things and has in it more hideous harlotry than any harlot.”<sup>9</sup> The standard view regarding Luther’s understanding of human reason is largely informed by his polemic in *The Bondage of the Will*. Here Luther, in defense of the doctrine of justification by pure grace through faith in Jesus Christ, takes an aggressive stance

against the synergism of late medieval scholastic theology, even as represented by a moderate figure like Erasmus. Reason confronts its absolute limit in relation to what God has revealed in Jesus Christ for accomplishing salvation. God’s right hand spiritual strategy has been fulfilled neither through human reasoning nor by the cooperation of the human will, but solely by God’s inscrutable action in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ask reason herself whether she is not convinced and compelled to confess that she is foolish and rash in not allowing the judgment of God to be incomprehensible, when she admits that everything else divine is incomprehensible.... We cannot for a while believe that he is righteous, even though he has promised us that when he reveals his glory we shall all both see and feel that he has been and is righteous.<sup>10</sup>

Human beings do not cooperate with God in the attainment of eternal salvation. To claim a human role, even a minor one, would be an affront to the majesty and glory of God, who has taken sole responsibility for all matters pertaining to human redemption. As Paul attests: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18).

Whereas Luther takes a decidedly negative stand against the use of reason in the right hand spiritual strategy, his writings demonstrate the positive and valued use of reason through human engagement with creation according to the left hand civil strategy.

It is certainly true that reason is the most important and the highest rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of this life, the best

8. Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 49:50. The citations within the quote are from LW 46:99:100 and LW 21:26.

9. LW 51:374.

10. LW 33:290.

and something divine. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life. By virtue of this fact it ought to be named the essential difference by which man is distinguished from the animals and other things. Holy Scripture also makes it lord over the earth.<sup>11</sup>

Luther himself was an educator, providing materials for the instruction of the church at every level, including especially the Small and Large Catechisms. Consequently, Lutheran theology always has placed a high value on the contribution of human reason for understanding the nature of the world.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the Lutheran churches have dedicated themselves to institutions of higher learning, understanding education as a great contribution to civil society.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most compelling reference by Luther to the gift of reason in the left hand civil strategy was his testimony before the Emperor at the Diet of Worms on April 18, 1521:

Since then your serene majesty and your lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and

my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.<sup>14</sup>

Here Luther not only demonstrates the practice of sound reasoning through the logic of his statement, but he grounds his reasoning on the two sources of authority most befitting each of the two strategies: Scriptural authority in the right hand spiritual strategy and reason as authority in the left hand civil strategy. Not only Scripture but also reason has its proper use, for example, when standing before the tribunal of an emperor.

## Two uses of the will: limited within creation and in bondage regarding salvation

Not only through the exercise of reason but also in the exercise of the will is it fruitful to distinguish between two uses. Regarding the saving work of God in Jesus Christ according to the right hand spiritual strategy, the will is totally and completely in bondage and of no use:

For my own part, I frankly confess that even if it were possible, I should not wish to have free choice given to me, or to have anything left in my own hands by which I might strive toward salvation....But now, since God has taken my salvation out of my hands into his, making it depend on his choice and not mine, and has promised to save me, not by my own work or exertion but by his grace and mercy, I am assured and certain both that he is faithful and will not lie to me, and also that he is too great and powerful for any demons or any adversities to be able to break him or to snatch me from him.<sup>15</sup>

11. LW 34:137.

12. See the several essays underscoring the value of reason in the Lutheran tradition in Jennifer Hockenbery Dragseth, ed., *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

13. Cf. Richard W. Solberg, *Lutheran Higher Education in North America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985).

14. LW 32:112.

15. LW 33:288:289. For further

Again it is clearly demonstrated that neither human righteousness nor reason nor will has anything constructive to contribute to the winning of salvation according to the right hand spiritual strategy. God alone has secured salvation in Christ Jesus without any cooperation on the part of human beings.

Throughout his writings, Luther is overall skeptical about the human exercise of the will, affected as it always is by the power of sin. In his argument with Erasmus in *The Bondage of the Will*, however, he does allow for some exercise of free choice in relation to human involvements in the left hand civil strategy:

But if we are unwilling to let this term go altogether—though that would be the safest and most God-fearing thing to do—let us at least teach men to use it honestly, so that free choice is allowed to man only with respect to what is beneath him and not what is above him. That is to say, a man should know that with regard to his faculties and possessions he has the right to use, to do, or to leave undone, according to his own free choice, though even this is controlled by the free choice of God alone, who acts in whatever way he pleases. On the other hand in relation to God, or in matters pertaining to salvation or damnation, a man has no free choice, but is a captive, subject and slave either of the will of God or the will of Satan.<sup>16</sup>

In relation to the created order the human will can play a useful role “with respect to what is beneath him.” Once again the two strategies framework provides a constructive paradigm for distinguishing between two contrasting uses of the will in Luther’s theology.

commentary, Bayer, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 185:192.

16. LW 33:70.

## Two uses of works: for the neighbor and works righteousness

Finally, with regard to Luther’s interpretation of human works, again there is a distinct difference between works righteousness in the right hand spiritual strategy and the performance of works for the sake of the neighbor in the left hand civil strategy. The Reformation was launched in protest of the late medieval theological program that promoted the performance of religious rituals as the way to earn status before God. The 95 Theses exposed the fallacies of a theological system that assigned merit to sinners through the trade and sale of papal indulgences, which were understood as good works.<sup>17</sup> Luther roared against the “claim to be justified by works, whatever their character”:

...since faith alone justifies, it is clear that the inner man cannot be justified, freed, or saved by any outer work or action at all, and that these works, whatever their character, have nothing to do with this inner man. On the other hand, only ungodliness and unbelief of heart, and no outer work, make him guilty and a damnable servant of sin. Wherefore it ought to be the first concern of every Christian to lay aside all confidence in works and increasingly to strengthen faith alone and through faith to grow in the knowledge, not of works, but of Christ Jesus...No other work makes a Christian.<sup>18</sup>

This quote from *The Freedom of a Christian* elucidates Luther’s first thesis that

17. LW 31:25:33. Other forms of pious works earning merit included worshipping saints, pilgrimages to shrines, private masses without communicants, and venerating relics.

18. For this and the previous citation, LW 31:346:347.

“A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.”<sup>19</sup> We are justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ, not by works of law. In the right hand spiritual strategy faith, trusting in the saving work of Christ, is the only good work.<sup>20</sup>

Luther, however, does preserve an essential place for the performance of good works—not for earning merit from God toward salvation, but completely as a service to the well being of the neighbor. This is the meaning of Luther’s second thesis in his treatise on Christian freedom: “A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”<sup>21</sup>

Lastly, we shall also speak of the things which he does toward his neighbor. A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself.... Therefore he should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and advantage of the neighbor.<sup>22</sup>

Luther’s theology retains a prominent place for the performance of good works, not in relation to God’s saving work in Christ but as an indispensable aspect of God’s left hand civil strategy through service

to our neighbors. Good works proper, as described in the *Treatise on Good Works*, are those due others according to the 10 Commandments, particularly in the Second Table of the Law.<sup>23</sup> Once again regarding the meaning of works, Luther distinguishes two uses in accordance with the two divine strategies.

## Conclusion

This essay demonstrates that it is hermeneutically fruitful to identify and distinguish in Luther’s theology not only a first and second use of the law, but also a first and second use of righteousness, reason, will, and works. The subtleties of Luther’s thought are elucidated by consistent reference to the fundamental paradigm of God’s two complementary strategies for ruling the world. According to the first use in the left hand civil strategy, each of these human capacities has a necessary, though circumscribed, role in preserving God’s creation. However, when these human capacities are exercised in relation to a second use in the right hand spiritual strategy, they are rejected by Luther as threatening divine sovereignty over the securing of salvation through Jesus Christ and procuring the gifts of the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the power of the devil, and eternal life.

19. LW 31:344.

20. Cf. Craig L. Nessan, *Shalom Church: The Body of Christ as Ministering Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 13-19.

21. LW 31:344.

22. LW 33:364:365.

23. LW 44:80:114.

# Duane Priebe Tribute: At His Eightieth Birthday and for Forty Years Teaching at Wartburg Theological Seminary

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Stanley N. Olson

*President, Wartburg Theological Seminary*

“We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things.”

(Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*)

Giving thanks for Duane Priebe—for his eighty years of life and forty years teaching at Wartburg Theological Seminary—I think about these familiar words from Martin Luther. Luther’s conviction comes to mind for two reasons, one serious and one playful.

Duane has a serious conviction that Martin is right. Duane, like Martin, is an advocate for theology and ministry that allow God in Jesus Christ to be seen clearly, never obstructed. And Duane confronts students and others when he sees this conviction endangered.

The “fear” named in Luther’s phrase is a complex reality—there is an appropriate element of fright when one encounters the living God—but what is deeply named is awe, profound respect, and worshipful appreciation. With self-conscious laugh, most of us who know Duane Priebe would acknowledge that at least on some days, we *fear* him. His is a mind fully engaged with what one says, and he is ready to challenge. That can be frightening—as frightening to anticipate as to experience. But colleagues know and students learn that because Duane intends to be on Christ’s side, he

is also on our side. He is a conversation partner toward understanding and faith. A probing question or sharp comment from Duane can sweep away chaff, but the grain remains, and that is his intent. We respect Duane, we appreciate him. We stand in awe.

As a new member of the Wartburg Theological Seminary community, I quickly gained insight into Duane’s service from three of his habits.

- The first, of course, is that he convenes a gathering called Beer and Theology every Thursday night of the semester. It’s an occasion for good conversation about questions on students’ minds and for questions about the questions. It’s an evening where Duane helps us think about the richness of a sharp focus on Jesus Christ.
- The second is Duane’s approach to office hours now as a senior fellow. When he is on campus and not in class, he can be found in the Refectory, at the center table in back—working on his own projects but always readily available for conversation. Usually there’s a student or two (or a president) happily claiming a bit of his time. Duane’s concern for the Gospel leads him to make himself available to people.

- The third insight I gained came from learning that more than a decade ago, Duane taught Wartburg Seminary's first online course, that he continues to teach online, and that he has mentored other professors for this work. Duane's persistent focus on Jesus Christ does not make him rigid in thought or pedagogy. He sees new possibilities in service of the Gospel and tests them.

There's also that familiar smile—Duane looks like he enjoys life and people and teaching. And he does. He looks like he's glad to see you and to talk. And he is.

Duane, in the name of Christ, we thank God for the privilege of calling you colleague, teacher, mentor, and friend!



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# FAITH SHAPING MINISTRY

Paul E. Hoffman

FOREWORD BY CHRISTIAN SCHAREN

What happens after a congregation welcomes new Christians into its ministry? Building on the work of the first volume in this series, *Faith Forming Faith*, Paul Hoffman interprets how a congregation that intentionally practices baptism and its renewal is itself re-formed. Pastors, teachers, lay leaders, students of ministry, and people in the pew—all will find the compelling story of the ministry of Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church in Seattle, Washington—one of our nation's most secular cities—to be an inspiring and practical primer for renewal. Who would have thought? Bringing others to the waters of baptism transforms those already at home in the congregation. In fact, this intentional spiritual practice completely transforms the parish and the lives of God's people. There are new discoveries to be made in the ancient treasures of the church as these gifts are shared with those hungering and thirsting for a place at God's table.

Paul E. Hoffman is an author, speaker, and teacher on the topic of faith formation and its practice in the Church. Because of his work in bringing new Christians to baptism and beyond at Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church in Seattle, he is a leading authority on the topic of faith formation and its practice. Hoffman is the author of two previous volumes published by Cascade Books, including *Faith Forming Faith* (2012).

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# Book Reviews

## ***Comparative Religious Ethics: Everyday Decision for Our Everyday Lives.***

By Christine E. Gudorf. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8006-9861, Paper; ISBN: 978-1-4514-2621-2, ebook. 248 pages. \$49.00.

This is a helpful, accessible, wide-ranging book! Christian ethicist Christine Gudorf has extensive experience teaching undergraduate students in secular settings, and has written much to make the field of religious ethics accessible to a broad range of audiences in and beyond the academy. Here she has written a book that in method and style invites those without previous background (or even interest) in religion or ethics to consider how such perspectives are relevant for a wide array of realities that ordinary people (especially “seeker-skeptical students”) encounter in everyday life.

An opening section sets forth helpful discussions of ethics and spirituality that such readers are likely to connect with today, and in non-technical ways introduces basic ethical distinctions that undergird the discussions in subsequent chapters on: food, fasting and feasting; making work human; body covering, appearance and identity; sexuality and marriage; making and keeping families; anger and violence; and charity and beggars. In each of these chapters, she not only indicates how different religious perspectives approach these practices, but also draws readers into consideration of the wider systemic challenges evoked by the topic. For example, in discussing “body covering, appearance and identity,” which immediately brings up matters such as head-scarves, she quickly connects this with wider matters of identity and clothes that are directly relevant to young adults in the West, and with the wider social, ethical challenges posed by this whole topic.

The case studies and questions at the end of each chapter further stimulate reflection and discussion.

Written as a survey undergraduate textbook, this would also be helpful for discussion in local congregations, with a wide variety of age groups (including high school).

Karen L. Bloomquist  
Bellingham, Wash.

## ***The Church: A Guide for the Perplexed. (Guides for the Perplexed).***

By Matt Jenson and David Wilhite. Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2010. ISBN 978-0-5670-3337-6. 264 pages. Paper. \$24.95.

Instead of assuming the perplexed as problematic, Jenson and Wilhite have taken the discussion to a deeper level that critiques the internal reasoning of ecclesiology. They question whether a vision of the church should correspond to people’s spiritual need. If this is the main concern throughout the book—and indeed the book is not about how to be a perfect church—then the authors challenge us to rethink the being of church lest that becomes the supreme adjudicator of morality.

Jenson and Wilhite point out that ecclesiology fails if it rests solely on any single model. They hardly intend to overturn the rule of faith; however, Jenson and Wilhite take seriously the perplexities arising out of contextual challenges. The church cannot be focused inwardly or the church ceases to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Their deep convictions of the ministry of Jesus and *missio Dei* reach the focal point in which Jenson and Wilhite affirm that the mission of God should precede any established view in understanding the church. Precisely because the church is embodied with the mission of God, the church is entrusted to participate in the Trinitarian missions. Reconciliation is core; it does not require conformity of minds, but respects differences. The church takes care of issues pertaining to people’s feelings and experiences. Imaginative possibilities emergent in the local church make the church relevant for the here and now.

Mission is not an end in and of itself. Since the being of church is in relation to the orientation of the church, Jenson and Wil-



hite believe worship becomes the goal of the church. The idea of renewing worship inside out is not controversial, but Jenson and Wilhite unashamedly challenge the church to transcend the rigidity of self-identities. Does the church have the courage to be?

*Man-hei Yip*  
*The Lutheran Theological Seminary*  
*at Philadelphia*

***Grace at the Garbage Dump: Making Sense of Mission in the Twenty-First Century.***

By Jesse A. Zink. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012. ISBN 978-1-6109-7613-8. 182 pages. Paper. \$21.00.

Zink's story about his work with AIDS patients in South Africa gives a unique voice to the study of Christian missions. Like other well-meaning missionaries, Zink wanted to succeed in his life-saving work and bring transformation to the livelihood of the broken and destitute. Unlike many others, Zink exposed his fears of failure. He invited readers to journey with him and feel his struggles while being overwhelmed by poverty and death. Zink could pride himself on his honesty; for he admitted that effectiveness and efficiency are culturally loaded terms and in such circumstances, missionaries are falling prey to the messiah complex.

What is required for the reconstruction of mission narratives in the global era is no longer magnifying the glorious days when white men saved colored people, but to dismantle the dichotomized relations between North and South by recognizing the presence of grace bestowed upon all peoples, even those at the garbage dump. Therefore when Zink realized that God meets people in their vulnerability, he was able to see that mission is not about doing but being. In God's mission, as he understands, Christians never play the saving agent, but are the ones called to participate in the life of others and see others as they see themselves.

This book is particularly useful for those who are planning to do cross-cultural mission and those who are already involved. It

is easy to read, enjoyable, compelling, and refreshing. As the book contains reflections on mission practice, it would also be helpful for church leaders to further the discussion and debate on mission praxis in context and to conceptualize anew the understanding of Christian mission, thus crafting meaningful messages and mutually enriching engagements with the local people of the context.

*Man-hei Yip*

***God is Beautiful.*** By Joel Danker-Dake.

Woodbridge, Va.: Kingdom Journey Press, 2012. ISBN: 0-9827-0010-5. xv and 247 pages. \$16.99.

In 2005 pornography sales generated \$10 billion in the U.S. alone. By 2011, these revenues had been reduced by half, but only because of the free pornography now available online. While viewers cut across all demographic categories, men are 543 percent more likely to look at porn than females. In a recent analysis of Google mobile searches, more than 1 in 5 searches were for pornography. Twenty-five percent of 16- and 17-year-olds have been exposed to pornography on the Internet when they were not looking for it. Twenty percent of these same 16-year-olds and 30 percent of the 17-year-olds report having received a "sext" (a sexually explicit text message). One 2012 study estimates that 3-6 percent of the U.S. population suffers from some form of sexual addiction or compulsion. The ELCA social statement titled "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" provides astute theological and ethical analysis of the consequences of sexual abuse, pornography, commercial sexual exploitation, and sexual trafficking of human beings, a document worthy of our study with regard to these topics.

It takes courage to write about one's own addiction to pornography. Joel Danker-Dake has taken the risk to write this account of his own 10-year battle against this addiction. From the ages of 13 to 23, the author was in bondage and slavery to the ritual use of porn. Danker-Dake testifies that it was only by the deliverance of God that he was rescued from



the emotionally and physically numbing effects of this addiction. The author proclaims that only the Lord is beautiful! Only God can heal the human emptiness that drives those seeking to satisfy their heart's desire through the use of pornography. The entire book is punctuated by biblical quotations, which have provided Danker-Dake the compass to reorient his life to the worship of God.

While this book may take Lutheran readers out of their theological element, this is a story about the authority of God to defeat the principalities and powers that possess human beings with demonic force. Clearly, professional help is also instrumental for the healing of those addicted to pornography. Those suffering from this illness are advised to seek the guidance of a licensed counselor. The International Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals is one organization providing resources for practitioners who treat people with addictive and compulsive sexual behaviors. God works healing through such trained counselors. At the same time, we can be grateful to Joel Danker-Dake for naming the demon of pornography that took control of his life and for telling the story of his own salvation. Likewise, we can share the author's confidence in God's power to liberate and free God's sons and daughters from all forms of demonic possession, including addiction to pornography.

*Craig L. Nessan*  
*Wartburg Theological Seminary*

***Wide Welcome: How the Unsettling Presence of Newcomers Can Save the Church.***

By Jessica Krey Duckworth.  
Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. ISBN:  
978-0-8006-9939-0. vii and 128 pages.  
Paper. \$19.00.

How refreshing to read a book with such imagination for welcoming newcomers into the church! Jessica Krey Duckworth explores with creativity how congregations may draw upon the historic practice of the catechumenate for the renewal of the church in our time. Building upon solid theological foundations, enriched by empirical study, and

made practical by concrete examples, this book deserves widespread attention as the ecumenical churches, including the ELCA, reinvent themselves in our time. If the community called church is itself a means of grace for the life of the world, as I concur that it is, the key to vibrant outreach (and in-reach!) through ministry with newcomers must, at the heart, be based on relationships. Relationships are what give us life and the church is nothing if not a community immersed in life-giving relationships with the Triune God, one another, and all the creation. These relationships are fostered wherever we together engage in the faith practices, including new capacity for speaking the language of the Christian faith with one another.

Duckworth deepens these claims by insisting that the church community lives together under the sign of the cross: "...the *ecclesia crucis* becomes the locus—the space—in which communities of practice arise by designing opportunities for learning through a cruciform catechesis" (75). This entails openness to grappling with the unanswerable questions that are inherent in the faith, what Kathryn Tanner calls "engagement as disarticulation." Only by living together—"oldcomers" with newcomers—can we incarnate communities of practice that constitute themselves through mutual engagement toward a shared repertoire of faith and competence in the central Christian things. The case material interspersed in the text assists the reader in envisioning the several ways in which core practices of welcome might be implemented. Three priorities for effective ministry with newcomers include: 1) listening to the newcomers' questions, 2) facilitating participation of newcomers alongside oldcomers in discipleship practices, and 3) accompanying newcomers over time in learning the resources and repertoire of a given congregation (96).

This book deserves a wide welcome among church leaders as a sign of hope and practical wisdom for the future of the ecumenical churches at this moment in time, ripe for renewal.

*Craig L. Nessan*



***Who Is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century.*** By Cheryl M. Peterson. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. ISBN-10: 0-8006-9881-2. viii and 153 pages. Paper. \$22.00.

The church is not a “what” but a “who.” The church is that people into whom the Spirit breathes life. The core question involves not what the church *does*, but rather its very *identity*. Given the crisis of mainline church decline, the crucial question becomes: “Can these dead, dry bones live?” Peterson’s proposal, following Ezekiel, is that only the Spirit of God can revive the church in this post-Christendom context.

Generated from dissertation research, this book examines church history and comparative theological approaches in leading to its constructive proposal. Peterson locates ecclesiology in North America within a historical narrative that runs from seventeenth century Puritanism through the eighteenth century Enlightenment and nineteenth century revivalism. Key factors shaping notions of the church in North America include voluntarism, the church as an association of those who choose to join, and the idea of progress. The church crisis in our time relates to its disestablishment from the cultural supports that previously propped it up in the form of American civil religion. “As long as we continue to operate with this concept as the *de facto* American ecclesiology and its corresponding focus on meeting individual needs, we will keep... coming up with the wrong solutions to the challenges facing the churches” (32).

Peterson juxtaposes an ecclesiology of the word-event (Luther, Barth, Ebeling, Forde) with an ecclesiology of communion (Congar, Vatican II, the Ecumenical Movement, Jensen) on the way to an examination of the missional church movement (Newbigin, Guder, Van Gelder, Barger). From this discussion, she concludes that the key issue facing ecclesiology today involves reimagining the church in its very identity as a Spirit-breathed community, employing narrative theology (Lindbeck) as the preferred method for construction. The narrative of the Book of Acts is paradigmatic for this project, particularly the story of how

the Spirit breathes resurrection life into the community called church.

Drawing upon the ecumenical creeds, particularly from the Third Article of the Apostles Creed and the four marks of the church in the Nicene Creed, Peterson begins to define the identity of the church in relation to pneumatology. The mark of apostolicity, resonating with advocates of missional church, takes central place in this account. The Epilogue begins to sketch the contours of what this Spirit-breathed ecclesiology means for the church in practice, including disciple making, Scripture study, preaching, liturgy, and evangelizing.

This book does much to diagnose the sickness facing the mainline churches in our time, including the Lutheran churches. The inclusion of questions for reflection and discussion at the end of the chapters can facilitate fruitful group study. The author has charted a course for reinventing the church after Christendom. Beginning with clarity about ecclesial identity points us in the right direction, and retrieval of the Holy Spirit accords with Luther’s own focus on the *Spiritus Creator* (Prenter) in his ecclesiology. The limit of this proposal is the potential disjuncture with Christology. Following Paul, it is the Spirit who makes the church alive as the very body of Jesus Christ. Spirit and Christ are not two but one.

Craig L. Nesson

***An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe.*** By Douglas H. Shantz. Foreword by Peter C. Erb. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. ISBN: 1-4214-0831-7. xix and 490 pages. Paper. \$35.00.

One of the lost and controversial treasures of the Protestant churches is the legacy of Pietism. All too typically the standard narrative of Protestant history leaps from the events of the sixteenth century through the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) directly to the influence of the Enlightenment on modern theology with special focus on the nineteenth century after Schleiermacher. Such an approach deprives at-



tention to two of the most fascinating historical and theological developments that continue to cast enormous influence on Christianity up to the present: Protestant Orthodoxy (both Lutheran and Reformed) and Pietism, with their colorful cast of characters and wide range of commitments. This book makes a tremendous contribution to filling in part of this gap, chronicling the streams and eddies of German Pietism with special focus on 1670–1727.

Unlike some historians, Shantz casts a wide net in his definition of what counts as pietism, incorporating in this treatment major figures and movements from radicalism, spiritualism, and churchly expressions of Pietism. “The genius of Pietism lay in the adjectives it employed: *true* Christianity; *heartfelt*, *living* faith; a *living* knowledge of God; the *inward* Christ and the *inner* Word. Another set of adjectives expressed Pietist hopes for renewal of humanity and a better future for the church: the *new* man, *born-again* Christianity, the coming *Philadelphia* church. Born-again laypeople became agents of their own spirituality, reading the Bible for themselves and teaching and encouraging one another in non-church settings” (284). One of the most impressive aspects of Pietism was the capacity to focus on a personal, relational appropriation of the faith while at the same time reaching out in social ministry to neighbors in need, both through local initiatives and by international missions.

The major centers of Pietism included in this study are Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Halle. In setting the stage for the main developments of the period under study, Shantz gives attention to figures who prepared the way for the emergence of Pietism (Paracelsus, Johann Arndt, Jakob Böhme), major figures of Orthodoxy (Gerhard and Löscher, whose contrast to Pietism should not be overdrawn), and other significant contributors (Labadie, Undereyck, Tersteegen). The central focus, however, is directed toward the leaders and achievements of Pietism at three centers of gravity: Johann Jakob Schütz and Philipp Jakob Spener in Frankfurt; eight leaders in Leipzig (Anton, Francke, Friedel, Huffland, Lange, Schade, Thieme, and Wartenburg); and August Hermann Francke with several colleagues in Halle.

Separate chapters are devoted to particular topics of interest in Pietism studies: radical Pietism; Pietism and gender; Pietism and the Bible; world Christianity, including missions to South India and Labrador; and the contributions of German Pietism to the modern world. The volume concludes with a concise, masterful reflection on the cultural and religious legacy of German Pietism.

Here is a book that challenges readers to reclaim constructive contributions of Pietism for the life of the contemporary church, while also learning from cautionary tales about its excesses. The book is highly recommended as a resource for closing the breach in our historical knowledge regarding Protestant history and theology.

Craig L. Nesson

***Two Kinds of Love: Martin Luther's Religious World.*** By Tuomo Mannermaa.

Translated, edited, and introduced by Kirsi I. Stjerna. With an Afterword by Juhani Forsberg. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010. ISBN-13: 978-0-8006-9707-5. xvii and 125 pages. Paper. \$19.00.

Discussion of the *Heidelberg Disputation* often gravitates to theses 19–21 regarding what constitutes a “theologian of the cross,” or one who comprehends “God hidden in suffering.” The epistemological trajectory of such a revelation is thereby developed. By contrast, Mannermaa frames discussion of the *Disputation* through the lens of thesis 28 (“The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it.”). The distinction between God’s love and human love (which “comes into being through that which is pleasing to it”) informs Luther’s entire theology.

Mannermaa sketches the distinction between God’s love (directed toward “what is not,” or that which appears deficient or evil) and human love (aspiring to “what is,” or that which appears precious and good) in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, he places Luther’s articulation of God’s love into sharper relief by elaborating the framework of its antithesis,



based upon Thomistic scholasticism. According to this scheme, the unifying power of the human-divine relationship is conceptualized according to the pattern of self-realizing human love which is oriented toward the “good” (“what is”), which is actualized in God. Human love seeks its own fulfillment.

Identifying these two kinds of love as expressive of a “theology of glory” and a “theology of the cross” in Chapter Three, Luther’s “theology of the cross” is developed through a delineation of God’s “proper work,” hidden within God’s “alien work,” so as to strip humans of their “false ideas” of “that which is good” with reference to the nature of God’s love (33). Elaborating upon the “site” or faith, by which a relationship with God is grounded (as opposed to appetitive human love), Chapter Four also opens up a reevaluation of the material world as the location of God’s giving. Chapters Six and Seven develop the implications of this love with reference to the neighbor and a “pure love of God.” The Afterword outlines the nature of Finnish Luther research since 1979.

What you discover in Chapter Five, however, is that you will need to purchase a second book! In this chapter Mannermaa articulates the fundamental revelation of that “new form”: working within the “form/matter” schema (36) by which Luther speaks of the “alien/proper” works of God and through which humans are stripped of the “form” of self-seeking love (oriented to “what is”), in order that they may be created in the “form” of “that which is lovable” (or “what is not”). Recognizing the distinction in Luther’s theology between the internal/external Word, he elaborates the manner by which the Word is grasped and understood. This external Word, Jesus Christ, is clothed with human need, sin, death, and hell (“what is not”) in order to communicate within it God’s life, holiness, and heaven. It is Christ—concealed in the form of “what is not” and received by faith—who reveals the gifts of God and the nature of who is “lovable.” Christ, as Mannermaa notes, is the form of faith itself. As Christ is the “object” of faith, so he is also its divine, animating “subject.” As “Christ is present in faith itself,” so he is also the form—hidden under its op-

posite—of the “good” and the “beautiful” who is both present in and imputed to sinners.

All of which means, as soon as you finish Chapter Five you may put down *Two Kinds of Love* and pick up *Christ Present in Faith*. What you will discover is that the latter provides the nature of the theological existence which the theological methodology of the former is developed. By reading Mannermaa in this fashion, the reader will be rewarded not simply with a deeper grasp of Luther’s “theology of the cross” but a greater sense of what it means to live a “theological existence.” “Theology” and “theological existence” for Luther (and for us!) is a “seamless robe” bound together by the loving *extra nos* and indwelling presence of the Son of God. We discover what it means as individuals and as a church to be—literally—“Christ” for our world.

The second title: ***Christ Present in Faith: Luther’s View of Justification***. By Tuomo Mannermaa. Edited and introduced by Kirsi. I Stjerna. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. ISBN-10: 0-8006-3711-9. xx and 136 pages. Paper. \$24.00.

Neal J. Anthony, Pastor  
United Lutheran Church  
Lincoln, Neb.

***The Underground Church: Reclaiming the Subversive Way of Jesus***. By Robin Meyers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012. ISBN-13: 978-1-1180-6159-6. xiv and 263 pages. Cloth. \$24.95.

How should Christians in the U.S. respond to the decline of church membership and respectability within the past few decades? Meyers lifts up the first century church as a paradigm to consider. Since he sees a resemblance between the postmodern American landscape and the early church’s social situation, Meyers exhorts the contemporary church to emphasize orthopraxy (faithful practice) over orthodoxy (right belief). Rather than succumb to theological divisions, Meyers exhorts today’s churches to emulate early Christianity’s commitment to an active faith life of service and





witness instead of a strict adherence to static dogmas. Though this may not increase membership, it will reconnect with what Meyers sees as the church's core identity.

With the rise of Nicene Christianity, an orthodoxy he attributes to Constantinian convenience, Meyers sees a corruption of the early church that continues through today, particularly in the compromises on nonviolence, inclusiveness, and bold witness against the idolatry and injustice of the Empire. He envisions the Underground Church as a radically inclusive, anti-imperial community modeled after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Such a community should decline preferential treatment from the government (including tax incentives), commit steadfastly to nonviolence, embrace creation care, prefer inclusivity to propriety, and reform budgets to reflect Jesus' missional directive.

Readers should engage Meyers' exhortations judiciously. His predominant use of liberal sources for supporting evidence undermines his hopes to unite Christians from across the theological and political spectrum. Meyers often fails to acknowledge contradictory evidence, especially in his evaluations of orthodoxy within church history. Despite his overly general presentation, the complicated relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis was never mutually exclusive. Even with these limitations, *The Underground Church* deserves critical consideration. Meyers casts a vision for a church united in the selfless mission of Christ, a vision for which Jesus prayed and gave his life. Surely that deserves our attention.

Andrew Tucker  
Columbia, S. C.

## Briefly Noted

In *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology* (IVP Academic, 2013, \$30) Scott R. Swain presents a full-length study of Jenson's thought centered on Jesus Christ as the Son of God in Trinitarian perspective. Written capably and from an

American evangelical perspective, the author interprets Jenson's own program of naming God's very identity according to the Trinity for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This book serves as a fine introduction to Jenson's own theology, its sources (particularly Karl Barth), and important secondary literature (especially John Webster and Bruce McCormack), making this theologian in some ways more accessible than do his own writings. This study furthers the ecumenical and catholic significance of Jenson's theological contribution.

Craig L. Nesson

***Feminist Biblical Interpretation. A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature.*** Edited by Louise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Eerdmans, \$80). This massive paperback book (more than 1,000 pages) records feminist insights on every book of the Bible, including the Apocrypha, selected pseudepigraphic works, and seven non-canonical works from early Christianity. Almost all the writers come from German-speaking countries. First published in 1998, it has gone through three German editions. In addition to the critique of misogyny, the authors also oppose Christian anti-Judaism, Western colonialism, and all forms of racism. The editors acknowledge that feminist interpretation has undergone a number of changes since the first publication of this compendium and mention the publication of a German inclusive translation of the Bible called *Die Bibel in gerechter Sprache*. A similar, though much shorter, compendium in the United States is found in the *Women's Bible Commentary* (3rd edition, 2012). No one dare ignore the substantial contributions of feminist scholars to our understanding of the biblical message. Among the translators are two ELCA Lutherans: Lisa E. Dahill of Trinity Lutheran Seminary and Everett R. Kalin of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Ralph W. Klein  
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

# Preaching Helps

Fifth Sunday in Lent to Second Sunday of Easter

## The Grace of Community

Whether through face-to-face pericope studies in company with colleagues in a particular geographical area or through reading unknown colleagues' perspectives on texts, the knowledge that we stand always within a world-wide community of study and interpretation is a gift of grace. We do not have to do this work alone. We are invited to see a text through the eyes of another's struggles to understand; another's bold assertions and convictions in response to the scriptures.

This month, readers of *Currents* are offered the grace of community and collegiality both through several essays submitted in deep appreciation for the life and ministry of Duane Priebe and through the collaboration that has borne fruit in Preaching Helps. For this edition of Preaching Helps, Pastor **Paul Hoffman** of Seattle assembled a group of colleagues to reflect upon the powerful bridge texts that move us from the final days of Lent through Holy Week and into the beginning of the Great Fifty Days.

**Paul E. Hoffman** is the recently retired pastor of Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church in Seattle and is currently serving the larger church as a pastor, writer, and teacher. He is the author of *Faith Forming Faith* (Cascade Books, 2012) and *Faith Shaping Ministry* (Cascade Books, 2013)—two books that have deeply enriched my understanding of faith formation in a local congregation as the work of the people. **Wesley C. Telyea** is Associate Pastor of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Bellevue, Wash. He is also the author of the recently released *Your Theological Last Will and Testament* (Resource Publications, 2013). **Nathan Baker-Trinity** serves as pastor of Beaver Lutheran Church in Beaver Springs, Pa. **Annette Andrews-Lux** is pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Seattle. **Nancy L. Winder** serves as Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy in the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA and also as pastoral assistant at Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church in Seattle. **Debbie Boyce** is pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Issaquah, Wash.

The editorial staff of *Currents in Theology and Mission* is delighted to announce that after her retirement this spring as Joe R. Engle Professor of Preaching at Union Theological Seminary in New York, **Barbara K. Lundblad** will join the editorial staff of *Currents in Theology and Mission* as the editor of Preaching Helps. A distinguished professor, nationally known preacher, and ELCA pastor, she is the author of numerous sermons and articles as well as the books *Transforming the Stone: Preaching through Resistance to Change* and *Marking Time: Preaching Biblical Stories in Present Tense*.

Until then, thanks to the grace of community, we will "hold the fort" with Preaching Helps—grateful to our writers and our readers as we enter a new year.

Kathleen Billman (for the *Currents* team)  
*Temporary Editor, Preaching Helps*

## April 6, 2014

### Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1–14

Psalms 130

Romans 8:6–11

John 11:1–45

#### First Reading

A week away from Palm/Passion Sunday, depending on your congregation's tradition, and two weeks away from Easter, our readings today focus on the themes of hope and new life. In the Old Testament we read about Ezekiel who, in a dream, was taken by God into a valley of dry bones and commanded to prophesy. How odd this must have been for Ezekiel who, as a priest, just being around human remains would have made him ritually unclean (Lev 21:1–9). Yet not only is Ezekiel commanded to go and prophesy, to do the very thing that will make him unclean, but the message he speaks is how through “breath” (*ruah*: spirit, breath) the Lord will bring new life to the unclean (37:9). What is interesting to note in this text is how Ezekiel doesn't exhort the skeletons to get up; rather, the skeletons respond to the breath and come to life because of the word that is spoken to them! What hope must have been communicated in this message! Even better, God does this all so the bones will know that he is the Lord (37:6).

This message of hope for the desperate is reiterated in the psalm when the psalmist proclaims, “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, in his word I hope” (130:5). The psalmist acknowledges here that the only relief for those who are confronted with the depth of their sin is found in God alone.

In Romans Paul talks about the tension between life in the flesh and

life in the Spirit. This follows the great baptismal statements found in Romans 6, and serves to remind hearers that, as baptized members of the body of Christ, life in the Spirit frees people from their sinful nature, which is unable to please God (8:8), and gives them life through Christ (8:11).

In John once again we have a text ripe with the themes of new life and hope. Here Lazarus has died and Jesus will restore him to new life. This text is the climax to the first half of John's gospel, and in many ways points to Jesus' own resurrection. For preachers it is important to remember that while this text talks about the restoration of Lazarus, ultimately it is making a christological statement or, dare I say, a christological proclamation. Hence this text begins by stating that Lazarus' restoration “is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it (11:4),” and provides the opportunity for Jesus to state that he is the resurrection and the life (11:25). As the resurrection and the life Jesus brings his hearers belief, comfort, and hope that his work is the work of the Father (11:42).

#### Pastoral Reflections

My congregation is located in an affluent neighborhood on the east side of Seattle, Wash. Many of my parishioners work for large successful companies such as Microsoft, Boeing, and Amazon. To talk about hope and new life, especially in light of some kind of disappointment or struggle, is often an opportunity for this affluent neighborhood to talk about how a person's hard work has finally “paid off.” Yet, these texts don't talk about hope and new life as a “pay off” for one's hard work. As a matter of fact these texts are not concerned with what people do, rather they are concerned with what God is doing.

I bring this up to point out the risk

of the texts this week. For the preacher who is not careful, it is easy to take these texts and turn them into a preaching of a theology of glory. If you ask people how they have died and been raised, and through that dying and rising found hope and new life in the midst of life's many bumps, you would probably find that many of the stories would be examples of personal triumph.

The problem with this is that life isn't that clean, and the bumpy road of life doesn't always end with the kind of hope and new life we want to associate it with. For example, what about the woman who miscarries only to find out she is not able to have kids? Where is her resurrection? Where is her hope? Or the son or daughter who cannot kick their drug addiction, and one day suffers an overdose? What does new life look like for the family that is left to deal with the funeral?

In order to avoid a theology of glory those who preach these texts must boldly confront them. Maybe the preacher should take a page out of Paul's playbook and explore what it means to live in the tension between life in the Spirit and life in the flesh. Or, in light of the fact that Holy Week is quickly approaching, maybe the preacher should explore what it means that our hope is found on a cross that appears to the world as failure. Another avenue might be for the preacher to talk about new life in terms of failed worldly expectations, or, based on the Ezekiel text, the preacher could talk about the efficacy of the word, and how God's word does what it says. Whatever the preacher chooses to do, in order to avoid the trap of preaching a theology of glory, the preacher would be wise to remember that the main themes in our reading today, hope and new life, are gifts given by God to God's precious people.

In other words, hope and new life are not things people can control or use, rather they are the gifts that the people of God receive and respond to.

*Wesley C. Telyea*

## **April 13, 2014 Sunday of the Passion**

Matthew 26–27

### **A story that preaches itself**

In many parishes, there is no sermon on the Sunday of the Passion. The common assumption seems to be that hearing the entire passion story is sufficient, that the story "preaches itself." Hearing the entire passion account on what used to exclusively be called "Palm Sunday" has been strongly encouraged in recent years.

And for good reason. Negatively, attendance at Good Friday services continues to be spotty, and the rhythms of modern life continue to pay less and less attention to this day. The Sunday of the Passion offers us the opportunity to hear at least one evangelist's entire account of the death of Jesus.

Positively, hearing the entire story balances out the loud boisterousness of the following Sunday. We experience a real-life, tragic death before resurrection. Unlike the passion accounts, the resurrection accounts in all four Gospels are, of course, quite short. But they are usually (indeed, they must be!) followed by a robust and compelling sermon.

So how does one go about "preaching" this story? Along with reading the entire passion account, there is the strongly encouraged option of doing a dramatic "reader's theatre" style of reading. That is, to hear "the old, old story" in the contemporary voices of a few,

brave members of your congregation. Any volunteers?

This has been a very meaningful practice for me in the three parishes I have served, as well as for most who have been a part of it. Nothing compels you to hear the gospel more personally than hearing your brother or sister in Christ speak the words of a particular character.

### Who wants to be Judas?

Figuring out who will “preach” the story is the first step. Often it is assumed that one needs to “type-cast” each character. This makes sense, but it can also distract us from allowing the story to preach itself. The ultimate concern is not type-casting, but that each reader pay attention and read with conviction his or her part. So it need not be assumed that the pastor should be Jesus or that all the male characters have male voices. In our parish last year, the voice of Jesus was powerfully heard from the lips of a teenage girl. It was both a refreshing and challenging experience, for it helped us to hear again for the first time the powerful words of Jesus.

But who wants to be Judas? Who wants to be “the betrayer”? There is sometimes an amusing moment when someone is strong-armed into being this character that nobody wants to be. But for Matthew the role of Judas is no laughing matter. Judas’ deep remorse and regret, in fact, are unique to Matthew’s passion account.

In Matthew’s gospel alone, Judas repents. After betraying him to death for thirty pieces of silver, Judas (we can assume from Matthew’s narrative) is “following at a distance” like Peter. When Judas abruptly enters the narrative as the first disciple to witness Jesus’ handing over to Pilate, it is assumed that he has been watching the religious trial in Caiaphas’ courtyard:

When Judas, his betrayer, saw that he was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood” (Matthew 27:3–4a RSV).

There is some exegetical murkiness, however, about whether Judas really repents. His suicide a few verses later raises a lot of post-Augustinian red flags. But it would also appear that Matthew’s choice of word for “repent,” *μεταμελομαι* rather than the more common *μετανοεω*, surely indicates deeply remorseful feelings and regrets, but not “true repentance” that leads to a wholesale change of mind and heart in one’s relation to God.<sup>1</sup>

The clean distinction between *μεταμελομαι* and *μετανοεω*, however, fades when one encounters the general Hellenistic literature.<sup>2</sup> If we presume the Gospel writer’s public proclamation of the passion as inherited from an earlier popular oral tradition, might not the story fall into this category of “general literature” for a Hellenistic world that seeks to heighten Judas’ deeply remorseful feelings rather than split theological hairs?

To add to the murkiness, Judas, in

1. “The reference here is to remorse, not repentance. Judas sees that his action was guilty, and he gives way under the burden. The remorse of Judas...does not have the power to overcome the destructive operation of sin.” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. IV, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. and ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 628.

2. “When, therefore, the NT separates the meanings of *μεταμελεσθαι* and *μετανοειν*, it displays a clear awareness of the unchangeable substance of both concepts. In contrast, Hellenistic usage often effaced the boundary between the two words.” Ibid, 629.

fact, makes an explicit confession to the official religious leaders: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." Remarkably, he makes no excuses for his sin. Moreover, the priests have the power to drop the false charges against Jesus. Does Judas intend to right his wrong? Finally, giving back thirty pieces of silver is no small matter for a man presumed to be greedy.

If Judas had not fallen into the despair of suicide, might he have heard the same words of peace that Jesus offered to the other eleven disciples after his resurrection? And without Augustine's teachings on suicide hanging over our head, might Matthew be inviting us to identify with Judas?

### A Lutheran Judas

A compelling reading of the passion narrative invites the hearer into the darkest depths of human sin. Can the light of Christ shine on even so tragic a character as Judas? If you might be so bold as to offer a "brief devotional commentary" (as the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* rubrics suggest)<sup>3</sup>, consider taking up Matthew's challenge to pay attention to Judas. His tragic end invites a word of mercy and compassion for those whose sin wholly overcomes them.

Not so long ago, it was presumed there would be no forgiveness for someone whose life ended so tragically. None of us is literally Judas, of course, so it's easy to keep our distance and say, "Well, at least I'm not *that* bad!" Yet consider these words from the most recent translation of the well-known Lutheran passion hymn, "Ah, Holy Jesus":

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee?

Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee.

'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee;  
I crucified thee.<sup>4</sup>

We may presume to stand with Jesus, but we are also bound with Judas as a fellow sinner. Indeed, if we believe the words we sing, we are no better or worse than he is!

What Judas needs, and what we need, is what the church of Jesus Christ has been offering from the very beginning: unconditional mercy and forgiveness. Judas went to the wrong priests to confess his sins. He received no absolution but rather a callous "What is that to us? See to it yourself." Jesus' blood is on Judas' hands, but Judas' blood is on the priests' hands! (Matt 27:4b RSV)

The church is called to say the words of absolution in the face of deep remorse and regret, as well as to have compassion for the tragic end of a fellow human being. We are called not to run away from the dark corners of human life but to boldly walk toward them, and dare to shine the light of forgiveness and peace that can come only from Jesus.

Only forgiveness leads to true repentance. Forgiveness must and always come first. Judas assumes he's unforgivable. We are called to say otherwise, and to confess that the God of the cross intercedes for all sinners—even for those as tragic as Judas.

Lo, the Good Shepherd for the sheep  
is offered;

the slave hath sinned, and the Son  
hath suffered;

3. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Leader's Desk Edition (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 36.

4. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 349.



for our atonement, while we nothing heeded,

God intercedeth.<sup>5</sup>

*Nathan Baker-Trinity*

## April 17, 2014 Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1–4, [5–10], 11–14

Psalms 116:1–2, 12–19

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

John 13:1–17, 31b–35

### First Reading

As with other feasts that re-use the same lectionary selections year after year, the frequent hearing of these texts challenges us to remain intentional about receiving them with fresh ears—listening perhaps more with the heart than with the head.

The readings that launch us into the Triduum are aptly chosen table teachings that bridge the centuries between Jewish Passover, the Last Supper, and the Christian Eucharist. They focus us on food, faith, and feet, and bid us to remember.

The call to remembrance begins in the Exodus text that roots the Jewish community in the annual Seder celebration, remembering the night when God's judgment broke forth in Egypt. The ritual meal recalls the details of the long ago event, with the food itself carrying the memories. The ancient story of deliverance is re-told and once more made present, proclaiming the faith that the LORD continues to act for liberation of God's people. They are to eat with shod feet, in readiness to be sent out when called.

Paul's teaching to the Christian community at Corinth reflects the heart of the *traditio*, handed down as sacred story from

Jesus himself. The core memories once again are carried by food and drink—the bread and wine of Passover are imbued with new meanings. Faith is proclaimed in the breaking of the bread, recalling hands and feet that will be pierced in death and poured-out blood that will forge a new covenant.

“Do this in remembrance of me.”

The invitation to those at table is into *anamnesis*, a deep and abiding recollection which brings what is memory once again into present reality. As with the Seder celebration, the story is told not merely as past event but as current proclamation in which we participate: “This is my body that is for you.” To remember here is not mere mental activity but wholehearted reception of the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst and in our lives.

The gospel text leads us into that wholehearted embodiment, from food to faith to feet. To remember Jesus, to re-connect with his animating presence, leads to concrete action. Here the washing of the feet flows directly from the sacred meal. The *mandatum* that gives this feast its name—“love one another as I have loved you”—cannot be separated from the remembrance of the meal. The table teaching “do this” moves us directly from the sharing of bread and wine to the embodiment of Christ-like love in tender care for the other.

### Pastoral Reflections

“May I wash your shoes?” asked the elderly *campesina* as I trudged into the tiny Salvadoran village holding leather sandals dripping with mud. Outside of the Maundy Thursday ritual, this was the closest I have come to being asked if someone could wash my feet. We had made a long trek on a washed out road, and I must have looked like I needed a hospitable welcome. Her simple gesture

5. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 349.



was quite humbling to this North American *gringa*, who apparently had a bit to learn about appropriate footwear. It was one of many gifts I was to receive on that delegation visit to our Salvadoran sister parish in the late 1980s.

From these faithful Christians I first began to learn the depths of the *agape* love to which Christ calls us. To them the passion of betrayal and torture and death which Jesus speaks about at table was not some long-ago story, far removed from their experience. They have walked a similar *via dolorosa*. At table, along with generous servings of *frijoles* and *tortillas*, they fed us “eucharist” as we marveled at the presence of the Risen Christ in their own flesh and blood: in their trust, their courage, their unwavering commitment in the face of the cross. In turn, we “washed their feet” with the cleansing balm not of water but of a listening heart, as they shared their stories of loss, suffering, and hope.

The preacher would do well to search for stories from one’s own experience or community where the raw reality of cross-bearing confronts our faith and we are motivated to embody the kind of love that Jesus lived. This love stretches us way beyond our comfort zone and strips us of all empty platitudes about being “one body in Christ.” Perhaps this is why so many still hesitate to be part of the foot-washing ritual that is often included in this liturgy, because in that act we are brought face to foot with another, down on our knees, forced into a moment of surrender and self-giving. How can we continue to encourage this honest vulnerability and to create bonds of Christian community that nurture this kind of foot-washing love?

From these Central American brothers and sisters I also learned about the kind of remembrance to which the Eucharist calls us. Their deep faith shines through when they gather to remember

their fallen martyrs with the cry *presente!*, proclaiming simultaneously that both the Risen Christ and those who have died in his name are truly present with them. They are not simply memory; they are living Body. How can one invoke this sense of “real presence” among those in the congregation? Can we practice such remembrance of the communion of saints that deepens and broadens our sense of church?

Maundy Thursday reminds us that memory is carried in meal, a day to bring ancient faith into present reality and to remember that, together with the Risen Christ and with one another, we are truly one Body—dirty feet and all.

Annette M. Andrews-Lux

## April 18, 2014 Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16–25

John 18:1–19:42

### First Reading

When probed deeply, each of these four readings for Good Friday is a text that brings hope to the church as it gathers to celebrate the victory of its crucified Lord. However, the rich texture of these Good Friday texts, their length, their familiarity, and their history of interpretation create a potential danger. It is easy to imagine seeing each of these texts only in light of the crucifixion, and not on their own merit, in their own context.

It is tempting, for example, to jump from the Servant Song to the cross, ignoring the original setting of Isaiah. Similarly, it would be tempting to gloss over the depth of the Hebrews text,

picking out the crucifixion allusions and failing to allow Hebrews to stand on its own substantial feet.

Psalm 22, serving as a liturgical reflection on the Isaiah 52/53 text, holds a helpful key with which to unlock and connect all the texts of the day while still allowing each its due. That key is hope as seen in verses 3 and 4:

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

In you our ancestors trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.

To you they cried, and were saved;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

Israel, at least a remnant of Israel, trusted and was delivered. They cried and were saved. They were not put to shame. That's what holiness is: hope that does not disappoint.

And each text appointed for Good Friday gives voice to just such a hope. The holiness of God and the subsequent trust of God's people are affirmed in the face of one who suffers as Isaiah's Servant suffers. Hebrews proclaims a similar hope to a young church, "Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful."

Each in their own way, these texts carry that word of hope. There is no place where human pain and suffering can be driven beyond the reach of our God, not suffering, not even the accursed tree (cp. Deut 21:23). Each reading appointed for Good Friday affirms that there is nowhere we might go that God has not already gone before us. Not even the grave.

These are not texts read at a funeral for Jesus. They are instead the word of God proclaimed to a *hopeful* and *living* church. They give voice to the triumph of God over the worst of the world's

infirmities and diseases, our souls sin-sick even unto death.

John affirms that in our deepest fear there is inextinguishable hope. Those who carry Jesus to a borrowed tomb serve in secret. They carry in their bodies the age-old affliction with which every citizen of every century is familiar: fear. Yet, there is hope even there, for the tomb is in a garden. An ancient homily for Holy Saturday proclaims, "For the sake of you who left a garden, I was betrayed in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden. See on my face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you... My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in hell."<sup>6</sup> Fear not. There is no place we might go that God has not already gone before us. Not even a garden's grave.

Convinced of the holiness of God in all places, we are bold to proclaim John's counter-cultural, saving word of the cross. More, we are bold to find in that proclamation the timeless support of the prophet Isaiah, the psalmist, and the writer of Hebrews.

### Pastoral Reflections

The length, depth, and gravity of these combined pericopes provide the liturgical preacher with a significant challenge, particularly on an occasion when a brief, reflective homily is the norm. What direction to choose, what strand with which to weave a meaningful gospel word into the fabric of contemporary lives? Standing as these texts do in the center of the Triduum, and with John's gospel as the centerpiece of the day's proclamation, a hopeful and transformative word spoken into an aching world from the

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6. *A Triduum Sourcebook*, Gabe Huck and Mary Ann Simcoe, eds. (Archdiocese of Chicago. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1983), 64–65.

cross seems both pastoral and wise.

Convinced that the key to unlocking the mystery of both the day and these texts lies in the words of Christ himself, I suggest crafting a homily based on our Savior's final words: *It is finished*. Some prefer *It is accomplished*. Either way, hearing those words as the beginning of a new creation rather than as the miserable end of a brief and misunderstood life and ministry will ring a note of victorious cross-crowned triumph. Such a word will be consistent with John's entire passion narrative, indeed his entire gospel.

As at the Genesis account of creation, *It is finished*. Think of it in this way: *It is finished*, the new creation has begun. From those arms outstretched in love for the world, Christ by his dying accomplishes the Trinitarian work for which "the Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth." The blood and water gushing from his pierced side remind the church of the sacraments by which the Spirit will sustain the faithful in the proclamation of this saving word to the recreated cosmos. From the formless void of a borrowed tomb, the Creator will raise up the New Adam, as from the formless void in Genesis all things came into being.

Rather than attribute the unknown servant of Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song as a pre-Christ, let the reading stand instead as a testimony to the longevity of this fallen world's longing for that new creation. "All we like sheep have gone astray/we have all turned to our own way" (Isa 52:6). Could there be any more consistent witness for our separation from the Creator God? Turned to our own ways—*incurvatus in se*, in Luther-speak—we ache for this moment of cruciform transformation. *It is finished*, the new creation has begun.

Given this triumphant theme, it is not too early for the Good Friday homilist to point to the coming Vigil,

or Easter's dawn. The writer of Hebrews leads the way. Those about to be washed in baptismal waters need this affirmation and assurance. In fact, the whole church celebrating in the Easter victory our baptismal promise of recreation cannot be reminded too soon nor too often: "Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith...our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22). We come to the cross, as to the empty tomb, in full assurance of faith.

In the homily of God's Friday, let the preacher be bold to proclaim the gospel hope. We are people transformed by the one who came to live deep in our human flesh, full of grace and truth. John reports that when Jesus received the wine, he said, *It is finished*. As we receive that body into our own and drink deeply of the wine that is his own offered to us, for us, may we rising from our knees at each Eucharist proclaim, *It is finished*. It is finished by Christ *in us*. Through his cross, we are a new creation.

Paul E. Hoffman

## April 20, 2014 Easter Day

Acts 10:34–43

Psalms 118:1–2, 14–24

Colossians 3:1–4

Matthew 28:1–10

In post-World War II England, a Cambridgeshire priest preaches to his congregation on Easter Sunday:

'We are Easter people,' .... 'This is not one day out of three hundred and sixty-five, but the mainspring of our faith, We carry the Easter message each day of our lives, lives in which the pain of the Cross and the suffering of humanity

are followed by the uncomprehended magnitude of the Resurrection.'... The elderly looked benevolent and grateful, but the younger widows from the war carried a grief that could not be assuaged. [He] stressed that God must be one with whom humanity's pain and loneliness can identify, but he could tell that some of his parishioners could only look back at him and say, 'Not this pain. Not this loneliness.'<sup>7</sup>

When you bring the resurrection word in your communities this Easter, you will look out and see the same faces of blessing and comfort, doubt and despair. The texts for this day bring that whole spectrum to your preaching. When we gather, we do so not in some questionable historical anomaly of death and life, but in the here and now of the presence of a living Savior. At the Eucharist we proclaim *Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again*. The heart of Easter is this fact: the cross and death are our past, risen life is our present, and God holds our future in hope.

### Acts 10:34–43

Although the lectionary allows for an Old Testament reading in this place (Jer 31:1–6), one of the joys of the texts for the preacher in the whole Easter season is the series of first readings from Acts. Over the Great Fifty Days of Easter we hear Luke's narrative of how the first Christians established their communities of risen life and new faith. Hearing these texts (and perhaps preaching the series) brings fresh energy to our life as Christians. As Peter and Paul and all the others find their way in the culture of their day, so they can help us find our way in our day.

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7. James Runcie, *The Shadow of Death* (Bloomsbury, 2012), 206.

This text from chapter 10 comes from the story of Peter's great awakening to the inclusivity of God's grace. Having chosen to return to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius and sit at table with him and his gentile household, Peter exclaims with real joy about the power of the good news of Jesus. Note these verses: 34 – "I truly understand that God shows no partiality;" 36 – "the message [God] sent...preaching peace by Jesus Christ;" 41 – "witnesses...who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." Peter's statement draws a picture of new communities of resurrection, where all eat and drink together just as Jesus did with the disciples and just as Peter has done in the house of Cornelius. This text is a wonderful opportunity to point people to the inclusivity of the meal God sets before us week after week, and how we experience anew the joy of the Easter feast every time we gather around that table.

### Psalms 118:1–2, 14–24

The appointed psalm is the same in all three years. Using the familiar verse 24 as a repeated theme or congregational response throughout the sermon can be effective: "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

### Colossians 3:1–4

This beautiful and mysterious text is part of the liturgical, celebrative style of Colossians and echoes some of the cosmic glory of the great hymn in 1:15–20. Verse 1 of this reading draws us into a remembrance of our baptism: "So if you have been raised with Christ...you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." If you had baptism at the Vigil, or have one on this day, this text provides a particular homiletic entry. This is a present tense text. Although it calls us to *set our minds on things that are above*, it proclaims that

Christ is risen and points us to the future in hope: "When Christ who **is** your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory."

I heard a powerful sermon on this text on Easter Day, 1978. The preacher told five stories about death: his grandfather, father, mother, a brother and his daughter. They were simple, deathbed narratives, stories of joy at the end of long lives, and stories of great sorrow at the untimely deaths of brother and daughter. After he told the stories, he simply read this text. The words in verse 3, "for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God," drew all his hearers into the mystery of the resurrection. And we understood anew that it is *Christ who is our life*. It is the privilege of the parish pastor to sit at the deathbeds of the saints. Your own stories with this text may draw your hearers into a new understanding of the powerful reality of death and new life.

### Matthew 28:1–10

Although the preacher may use the Easter story in John 20:1–18 (and it is always tempting to do so for its poignancy and power), I encourage preaching the resurrection from Matthew. Mark leaves all in fear. Luke has the men disbelieving the women. Matthew draws together fear and joy in the presence of the Risen One.

The story has many of the favorite images that have come down through the tradition: here is the earthquake, the rolling away of the stone in the presence of the women and the guards, the amazing angel who looked like lightning. Another interesting picture here is of the angel sitting on the stone that has been rolled away. It's like an exclamation point on the action—this tomb is empty and there is now no block between death and life.

In verses 5 and 6, the angel tells Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (not the mother of Jesus), "Do not be afraid.... Jesus who was crucified...is not here; for he has been raised." Then the angel sends them with the word that Jesus has been raised and that they will all meet in Galilee. Matthew reports that the women *left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy* and on the way Jesus meets them, simply saying, "*Greetings!*" (The Greek word is *Chairete*, the root of which is to rejoice or be joyful. Jesus gives them joyful greetings!) And, after they fall at his feet, he tells them, as the angel did, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The relationship of Jesus with his disciples is of primary importance for Matthew. The Risen Christ meets the women in joy and speaks of meeting his "brothers." This story of resurrection is the story of new community, new relationships, of sisters and brothers gathered around the family table, the feast of the resurrection. And we come proclaiming the mystery of faith: *Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.*

The nineteenth century English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins has a poem simply titled *Easter*. Its closing stanza is food for preacher and hearers as we gather for the Feast of Feasts: Seek God's house in happy throng; / Crowded let [the] table be; / Mingle praises, prayer, and song, / Singing to the Trinity. Henceforth let your souls alway / Make each morn an Easter Day.

Nancy L. Winder

## April 27, 2014

### Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 22–32

Psalm 16

1 Peter 1:3–9

John 20:19–31

#### First Reading

On the second Sunday of Easter the lilies and mums are still vibrant in their displays of blossoms, filling our noses with sweet fragrance. Yet, our ears are filled with lifeless statements of doubt declared from Thomas in the Gospel reading. This is the case each and every year. Why must we annually plummet from the heights of the empty tomb joy to the wallowing pit of refusal and unbelief? Look carefully at Thomas' statements—he has stooped lower than mere doubt, he has sunk all the way to actual refusal to believe (20:25). Thomas is no doubter. He's a refuser. He refuses to believe. Tradition has sold Thomas short—doubt is too soft, too mild to convey his obstinate, emphatic rejection.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas is only part of the Fourth Evangelist's resurrection narrative. Mary, the two disciples present at the empty tomb, the disciples behind the locked doors, and Thomas are all part of the whole resurrection chapter (20). Jesus reveals himself, risen and present, throughout this resurrection narrative. The evangelist's purpose is to bring readers to belief and life in Christ through the use of "signs" (20:30–31). The sign in this chapter is the resurrected, glorified Jesus. In the beginning of the resurrection narrative, as the first witnesses to the resurrection come to believe, their initial question of "Where is the Lord?"

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8. Note that *unbelieving* (*apistos*) is the Greek word, not *doubt*.

moves to "How can the risen Lord be experienced?"<sup>9</sup>

These questions provide a thread that is woven in each one of today's appointed readings. Peter's preaching answers the questions as he bears witness to life in the name of the risen Christ. The psalmist declares abundant life in the Lord God that overcomes fear. The new birth of a witnessing community that lives in hope regardless of what ones' senses can grasp spills out of the verses from 1 Peter.

Jesus himself provides the answers to these questions in the Gospel reading. "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (20:17). Next he commissions the post-Easter community, the Spirit empowered and filled ones who are now sent to witness (20:21). The proclamation of the commissioned witnesses is what elicits Thomas' emphatic refusal. He is not content to believe simply based on the conveyed experience of the others. However, he has misunderstood. His belief isn't to be a product of their experience. Instead, their witness points him to encounter the risen Lord. As is evident throughout this gospel, belief is about an abiding relationship in Christ—*life in his name*—not simply an assent to a factual statement, experience or doctrine. Consider the Samaritan woman spreading the news of her encounter with Jesus. She pointed others to Jesus. Yet, ultimately their belief was grounded in their own abiding in him (cf. 4:39–42).

#### Pastoral Reflections

The depth of the evangelist's resurrection narrative allows the lectionary preacher

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9. Sandra Schneiders, "Touching the Risen Jesus: Mary Magdalene and Thomas the Twin in John 20," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, eds., C. Koester and R. Bieringer (Mohr Siebeck: 2008), 165.



multiple ways to give voice to this annual text. A closer look at Thomas is only one way to approach the pericope. In doing so, however, the preacher has an opportunity to override the dominant tradition of “doubting Thomas,” and to redirect the main character focus from Thomas to Jesus.

Thomas’ refusal to believe holds up a mirror for us to see ourselves. The preacher can help uncover ways that we construct our own contingencies:

Unless I see my loved one survive this illness...

Unless I get the job...

Unless I see suffering and disasters in this world cease...

Unless I feel worthy enough...

How often does faith rely on what I get out of it? As Jesus meets Thomas, Jesus offers what Thomas has demanded. The evangelist doesn’t indicate whether or not Thomas put his finger in the mark of the nails or the pierced side of the crucified Son. Perhaps the silence on this critical detail *is* the detail. Thomas’ own demands are no longer the source of his movement from unbelief to belief. Rather, it is his encounter with the Risen One that causes Thomas to gush forth confessing, “My Lord and my God.”

Jesus’ coming to Thomas, just as Jesus’ encounter with Mary at the empty tomb, and the fearful disciples behind the locked door, inaugurate a post-Easter way of seeing and touching the glorified and risen Christ. Jesus fills his followers with his peace and empowers them with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the presence of the Risen Lord is now found in the witnessing community.

Witness is necessary in this new post-Easter era. Each of the followers in this narrative who experience the Risen Jesus are given authority to serve as witnesses through his command and the work of the Holy Spirit within them (20:17–18, 21–23, 27). Their testimony bears witness to the promises of Jesus and the post-Easter new life in his name (cf. John 2:18–22, 14:27, 16:33).

This resurrection narrative calls us to see, touch, and experience faith in ways that are embodied, yet able to transcend our sensate experiences. The community of believers is not simply a gathering; it serves as a witness to the presence of the glorified Christ. The bread and wine are not mere food and drink; they are the means to encounter the Bread of Life (cf. 6:35). The bath and word become a washing with the Living Water (cf. John 4:10–15).

Thomas, the obstinate refusing one, is a witness of faith that gives permission to believe despite questions, challenges, and feelings of abandonment. Thomas reminds us that our demands for faith cannot grasp the scope of what God has in store for us, nor are they the source of an abiding relationship in Christ. The evangelist’s resurrection account proclaims that in the midst of uncertainty, fear, and yes, even unbelief, Jesus enters bringing peace and the fulfillment of the promise of new life in his name.

“Where is the Lord?” “How can the risen Lord be experienced?” They are perennial, ongoing questions that draw us again and again to this resurrection narrative.

*Debbie Boyce*





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