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The fall of 2010 marked the 40th anniversary of the annual Luther Colloquy, in which Reformation scholars present the trends and current research on Luther and an array of Reformation topics. We continue to publish presentations and lectures from this extraordinary series that has included scholars such as Roland Bainton, Rosemary Reuther, Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert Jenson, George Lindbeck and many more. We publish here the 40-year brief history and origins of the colloquy by Gerald Christianson, remarks introducing this anniversary event by President Cooper-White, the sermon preached by cofounder Eric Gritsch and two of the presentations from this most recent late October day. — ed.

Forty Years and Thriving: The Institute for Luther Studies (1970-2010)

Gerald Christianson

From its beginning Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg was closely linked with the interpretation of Luther and the Confessions. Every generation since Samuel Simon Schmucker's controversial "Americanism" has made its contribution to this debate, including one that remains to this day, the Holman lectures on the Augsburg Confession initiated in 1855 by Schmucker's successor, J. A. Brown.

A lively and long-lived contribution from the late twentieth century celebrates its fortieth anniversary this year. It was born in the turbulent 1960's and early 1970's when hippies roamed among flowers, students protested the Vietnam War, and Gettysburg and Mount Airy Seminaries were locked in negotiations toward merger in Philadelphia. The presidency of Donald R. Heiges marked a turning point. He was determined to recruit a group of younger, edgier faculty members who were on the thrusting-point of scholarship, favored liturgical renewal, and had a commitment to Confessions and ecumenicity. Not coincidentally, all did their graduate work in the period after the Second World War and experienced the impact of the Luther Renaissance, the "Swedish rediscovery of Luther," and the publication of the American Edition of Luther's Works. Joining Herman Stuempfle, Lawrence Folkemer, and Eric Gritsch were, among others, Leigh Jordahl, Lorenz Nieting, Lloyd Sheneman, Roger Gobbel, Bengt Hoffman, Gerald Christianson and Robert Jenson.

In such a heady mixture, conversations were bound to be lively, especially during weekly lunches at the old Peace Light Inn, and not always of one accord, but the new breed shared several convictions. A weekly communion was among their first achievements. And while Gettysburg

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had always championed the ideal that pastoral ministry is the primary focus of theological education, the Heiges generation wanted to demonstrate that pastoral theology and graduate level standards are not inimical. The very make-up of this faculty indicated that Gettysburg was ready for something new that would combine parish ministry with the best in recent scholarship.

The idea for an "Institute of Luther Studies at Gettysburg Seminary" arose naturally from these same conversations and convictions. It first came to light when Christianson presented an informal proposal to the faculty on February 5, 1970. The Board of Directors approved a more detailed resolution for the Institute on April 3. This envisioned offerings toward an elective credit in the M.Div. curriculum and specialization in the S.T.M. program. And it named Eric Gritsch as its first director.

The seminary catalog spelled out the Institute's purpose and programs: first, "a critical reassessment of Martin Luther in terms of his significance for ecumenical Christianity and for the contemporary world"; and second, "continuing stimulation in Martin Luther's thought and heritage." Six electives were announced, along with the Institute's centerpiece, the Martin Luther Colloquium, "to be held every year on one or more days in the last week in October that would feature prominent Luther scholars and discussions by faculty members, students, and guests."

While, with little fanfare, courses in Luther studies became rooted in the curriculum, the Colloquium premiered in October 1971 on the theme, "Luther and Violence," reflecting the Vietnam era of student protests and peace marches. The Colloquium – shortened to "Colloquy" in recent years – became the undisputed star of the Institute and caught the immediate attention of alumni as an informal homecoming for graduates and an opportunity to expose their confirmation classes to a festive evening Eucharist. A parade of internationally-known speakers and extensive publication of the lectures followed, with many appearing in the *Bulletin* and its successor *The Seminary Ridge Review*, and some collected into separate volumes, entitled *Encounters with Luther*. Students also did their part. In keeping with the homecoming atmosphere, the first-year class adopted the habit of decorating the Luther statue, usually in honor of one of their professors, and more recently selling their "relics."

The character of the early colloquies and their world-wide network of speakers bore the imprint of Eric Gritsch who guided the Institute through its first quarter century. His own teacher, Roland Bainton, was one of the first speakers, and Bainton's presence alone made it clear that the Institute was a force in Luther studies not to be taken lightly.

Upon Gritsch's retirement the Colloquy in 1995 celebrated both the installation of Scott Hendrix as professor of Reformation history and as the

Institute's second director. When Hendrix was called to Princeton University, he was succeeded in 2000 by Kirsi Stjerna, a native of Finland who studied under Tuomo Mannermaa, founder of the "Finnish school" of Luther studies.

The always stimulating Colloquy has been the most obvious benchmark of the Institute over the years, a veritable "Who's Who" in Luther scholarship where nearly everyone of significance in the field has been or will be present. But Luther studies also continue to enliven the curriculum and stimulate community conversation. Several Luther-related courses are offered every semester, including the annual "Luther Seminar" which focuses on a variety of topics — "Luther and the Jews" and "Luther and Genesis" among the most recent.

In addition to the Colloquy and curricular contributions, the Institute can claim some exceptional individual efforts, often tied closely to the Colloquy. First, two standard textbooks on the Confessions were written successively by Institute directors and their colleagues – the first by Gritsch and Jenson and the second by Hendrix and Günther Gassmann.

Second, the Hendrix era also contributed the re-publication of a neglected classic, *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought* by F. Edward Cranz, co-edited by Gerald Christianson with an introduction on the history of Luther studies by Hendrix.

Third, the book *Spirituality: Toward a Twenty-First Century Lutheran Understanding*, co-edited by the Institute's current director, Kirsi Stjerna, and Brooks Schramm, represented a broad spectrum of faculty participants and an equally broad understanding of Lutheran theology in relation to life in the Spirit. Similarly, *The Role of the Bishop: Changing Models for a Global Church*, co-edited by Stjerna and Maria Erling, celebrated Lutheran theology in relation to life in the church.

Fourth, Stjerna's *Women and the Reformation* has been adopted as a text book and signals a new phase in Luther studies at the seminary. Continuing the close relationship between the Institute and the Finnish school of Luther studies, she has also translated two of the most significant books in recent Luther scholarship from Finland, Mannermaa's *Two Kinds of Love* (published just this past summer) and his *Christ Present in Faith*. In addition, her book *No Greater Jewel: Thinking about Baptism with Luther*, which is designed to serve laypersons and pastors as well as academics, signifies a continuing connection between the Institute and issues of pastoral ministry.

Fifth, even in retirement, former directors have remained active with the publication of several works. Those by Gritsch include *Fortress Introduction to Lutheranism*, *Faith in Christ and the Gospel: Selected Spiritual Writings*

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of Martin Luther, and A History of Lutheranism; and a new treatment of the Reformation by Hendrix, Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization.

Sixth, and to bring us back to the beginning, the desire for round table discussions and working sessions led to the founding of a sibling program by Christianson, the International Seminar on Pre-Reformation Theology. The Seminar emphasizes the immediate background to Luther and has held biennial gatherings at the seminary since 1986. These "Gettysburg Conferences" attract scholars from a wide range of denominations and countries, provide students with structured opportunities to dialogue with a variety of scholars, and have produced a large number of publications, most recently *The Church, the Councils, and Reform: Legacy of the Fifteenth Century,* co-edited by Christianson.

Happy Fortieth Birthday, Institute for Luther Studies. May you live long and prosper.¹

Notes

With appreciation to Kirsi Stjerna for recent history and current activities, and – for the story before 1990 – the late Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr., "Luther Studies at Gettysburg: Recollections and Anticipations," *Gettysburg Seminary Bulletin* 75 (1995) 25-32.

Gerald Christianson is Professor Emeritus of Church History at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. His Ph.D. is from University of Chicago. The author and co-editor of several works on Nicholas of Cusa, the fifteenth century theologian and reformer and on the reform councils of that era, Christianson inaugurated the International Seminar on Pre-Reformation Theology which brings students and scholars from around the world to Gettysburg.

Welcome and Tribute: 40th Luther Colloquy

Michael L. Cooper-White

It is indeed a privilege to add my words of welcome to those already expressed by Drs. Stjerna and Christianson.¹ How wonderful to have you all here as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Gettysburg Seminary's internationally acclaimed Luther Colloquy! In particular, we welcome our distinguished lecturers who have come from throughout the country to share their insights on this year's theme, "Luther on Faith, Prayer, and Order."

As indicated in the printed program and schedule for the day, we dedicate this milestone Colloquy in memory of Janet E. Harkins. This afternoon's lectures are sponsored by the Harkins endowment fund. In the course of the past year, Janet Harkins joined her beloved husband and eminent 20th century Lutheran Church leader, the Rev. George F. Harkins, in the larger life of God. We miss her as we gather, and we continue to feel her gentle presence as one of this annual event's chief cheerleaders.

On the occasion of the Luther Colloquy's 40th anniversary, it is a joy to recognize and honor two of my teachers, Drs. Eric Gritsch and Gerald Christianson, who were members of the founding faculty when this annual focus on the Reformer's thought and witness was launched way back in 1970. How many of you remember that year and the momentous events that took place? In 1970, the world's population stood at 3.7 billion persons, a bit more than half today's great global family. Perhaps even more than the previous years at the end of the 1960's, it was a pivotal year in our nation's history. Richard Nixon was in the White House. On May 1st United States troops invaded Cambodia in a massive escalation of the war in Southeast Asia. Three days later, on May 4, 1970, as protests mushroomed throughout the country, four students were gunned down by National Guardsmen at Kent State University in Ohio. The median U.S. household income in 1970 was

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\$8,700. A family could purchase an average-priced home for about \$23,500. In the 1970 World Series, the Baltimore Orioles (remember them?) won over Cincinnati, and the Kansas City Chiefs redeemed their loss to the Green Bay Packers in Super Bowl #1 by beating the Minnesota Vikings 23-7 in Super Bowl #4. The 1970 Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to a previously unknown Russian writer, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. For the first and only time, an X-rated movie, *Midnight Cowboy*, won the Academy Award for best picture; and 1970's most popular song was *Age of Aquarius*, sung by the 5th Dimension.

A pivotal year in our nation's history, 1970 was also a "crossroads moment" here at Gettysburg Seminary. That year, a graduate of this institution, Elizabeth Platz, became the first Lutheran woman ordained in this country. A six-year period of "the joint administration," whereby Gettysburg and Philadelphia Seminaries shared the same president, Dr. Donald Heiges, concluded, and both schools' boards reaffirmed programmatic collaboration that would not include institutional merger. In the course of exploring options to expand the Seminary's educational offerings and establish a kind of urban ecumenical outpost in the nation's capital, LTSG launched the Lutheran House of Studies and became a founding member of the Washington Theological Consortium, which continues to be a vital component of our offer today.

The Seminary's all-male Board of Directors, then chaired by a distinguished alumnus, the Rev. Gordon Folkemer, who also joined the Church Triumphant just over a year ago, met on May 5, the day after the Kent State tragedy. As demonstrations for peace and against the escalating Vietnam War were erupting all across the land, the board took an action unprecedented before or since, urging the faculty and administration to consider "the suspension of classes on Thursday and Friday . . . so that students may participate in a witness for peace," which was promptly affirmed at an emergency special meeting of the all-male faculty (Dr. Bertha Paullsen having already been retired for several years).

In that same season, at one of the Seminary's many crossroads-moments, the faculty and board initiated an "Institute for Luther Studies" and held the first Luther Colloquy on October 27, the very same day on which we are holding Colloquy #40 here in 2010. One Dr. Eric Gritsch was appointed the Institute's first and founding Director. Reflecting the mission to offer "a critical reassessment of Luther and his heritage in terms of their significance for ecumenical Christianity and the contemporary world," the theme for Colloquy #1 was "Luther and Violence." Lecturers that year were Dr. Gritsch, another young Gettysburg theologian named Robert Jenson, and an emerging feminist scholar, Rosemary Radford Ruether. Preacher for the closing Eucharist at Colloquy #1 was the Seminary's professor of the art of preaching, the Rev. Dr. Herman G. Stuempfle, who a year later would become Gettysburg Seminary's second dean.

It seems fitting indeed that the bookends for the first forty years of Luther Colloquia (and as Dr. Stjerna so aptly noted, we look forward to many more decades to come!) are the themes of "Luther and Violence" and "Luther on Faith, Prayer, and Order." Mid-way in the very first lecture offered under the banner of Luther Colloquy, our preacher today, Dr. Eric Gritsch, reflected on the nature of Christian engagement in the public square. His words back then mirror those we have heard in today's first lecture by Dr. Hans Hillerbrand, and we might conclude that the good Dr. Gritsch is still proclaiming the same message today as he did so eloquently forty years ago:

All Christian deeds, then, are the result of a faith aware of the peculiar contrariness of God's action in the world. This is the foundation of Luther's realism in all ethical matters. There is no glory in Christian deeds in the world, since these deeds are born in the turmoil (Anfechtung) of life on earth, in the shadow of the end-time which has begun with the resurrection of Jesus. When God is in charge, no man can pretend to be his own master in either word or deed. The best of faith is only brave sin. This is the cornerstone of Luther's ethics. . . . Christian ethics, therefore, never has any guarantee of being right. It is the activity of faith without security. Christians live in the tension of being simultaneously saints and sinners for as long as they are on earth. Absolute certainty exists only in heaven. All they have on earth is a faith which must let God be God.²

As we conclude this brief reminiscence about the "good old days" in the year 1970, it should be noted that by then these two professors, Dr. Eric Gritsch and Dr. Gerald Christianson, had already been teaching here on the hill for eight and three years respectively. As already mentioned, Dr. Gritsch was the Institute's and Colloquy's first director; Dr. Christianson has served in that role for an interim term on three different occasions, and in Dr. Stjerna's sabbatical time serves as our primary host for this Colloquy #40. What a legacy! And the legacy lives on as both of these scholars continue to be among us, Dr. Gritsch from time to time, and Dr. Christianson on an ongoing basis as he remains resident in Gettysburg and a very active member of the Seminary community. It is a distinct privilege for this former-and-still-student and Seminary alumnus to share a gift which supplements the 40th anniversary tee shirts presented earlier by Dr. Stjerna and two current students. As a small token of the esteem and honor in which we hold the two of you, along with the Harkins and all who have supported the Institute for Luther Studies and this Colloquy during the first forty years, I present you with a replica (with regrets that these cannot be made of solid gold like the original!) of the Gettysburg Seminary presidential medallion.

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Notes

- 1 These remarks were offered mid-day at the 2010 Luther Colloquy by Seminary President Michael Cooper-White. They have been expanded to include the quote from Dr. Gritsch and a few additional details of historical interest.
- 2 Eric W. Gritsch, "Martin Luther and the Revolutionary Tradition of the West," Gettysburg Seminary Bulletin 51/1 (Winter 1971) 7.

Michael L. Cooper-White is the 12th President of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. His most recent books are The Comeback God: A Theological Primer for a Life of Faith and Church Administration: Programs, Process, Purpose. He teaches church administration and he serves on the boards of the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries and Washington Theological Consortium, as well as the National Trust for Historic Gettysburg.

"Christ Has Nothing to do with Politics:" Martin Luther and the Societal Order

Hans J. Hillerbrand

"Christ has nothing to do with politics." Martin Luther said it, perhaps as was his wont at times all too casually, at the dinner table, and one of the student boarders in the Luther household took down the sentence, all too eagerly, as if he were taking down lecture notes in one of Professor Luther's courses. "Christ has nothing to do with politics." Really? Jesus has nothing to do with how we as Christians relate our faith to our daily lives, to our vocations, our professions? What principles should inform the body politic? Surely, Luther did not mean that!

Once again the devil is in the details – all depends on how Luther's comment is interpreted. If it means that the gospel, the good news, is about justification of the sinner by faith, the sentence will stand, for this good news will stand, uninfluenced by whatever may be going on in society. If, on the other hand, the sentence means that the good news of Jesus has no bearing on the body politic, the sentence is precarious; there will be disagreement, especially from Catholics and Calvinists, and comfort only from the Anabaptists. And that, of course, is precisely how the sentence has been interpreted. No wonder, then, that Luther's understanding has been controversial almost from the day he first formulated it. In Germany, the topic triggered extensive scholarly attention especially since the end of the Nazi regime, which put what was understood as Luther's notion to a severe test. Nothing less than the silence of the German Lutheran churches in the face of Nazi totalitarianism and the Holocaust was blamed on Luther's teaching. In this country, deeply influenced as it has been by Calvinist/Reformed notions, it has been seen as an aberration.

The issue has had a rather specific point of departure: Martin Luther and the German peasants' uprising of 1524/25. Scholars have discussed the

reformer's views with particular reference to his writings about secular government and against the peasants. Indeed, his relationship to the insurgent peasants in 1524/25 is tangled up in one of the orthodoxies of Reformation scholarship.² It has argued that the peasants (and the "common man" in the towns) were fatally mistaken when they took Luther's reform ideas as justification for their attempt to redress, on the basis of the Bible, longstanding economic and social grievances. They failed to understand the religious nature of Luther's reform impulses and wrongly took him to be their ally. Despite the extensive use of biblical references in the Twelve Articles, the agenda of the insurgency, and its declaration that the demands should be judged by the Word of God, the peasants misunderstood the connection between Scripture and the world of fishing rights, land use, death taxes. The most recent German biographer of the Wittenberg reformer sees it simply as the peasants' failure to understand Luther's fundamental dictum that the "world cannot be governed with the gospel." This judgment is in keeping with the scholarly consensus that suggested that Luther's views were a consistent unfolding of his understanding of the "two kingdoms," the notion in other words that God relates to creation in two ways, through "orders" inherent in creation, such as family and government, and through revelation.⁴

Luther's literary involvement proved to be a heavy burden (if not a catastrophic turn) for the Reformation movement, for it was in the wake of the failed uprising that an ominous connection between reform and the disruption of law and order was made. Catholic rulers, both secular and ecclesiastical, harped on this connection and insisted that the suppression of the Lutheran heresy and of a future insurgency was one and the same task. Luther's role in the conflagration came in for fierce criticism. Catholic polemicists were satisfied that he had been the cause of it all.⁵

Luther's Catholic nemesis Cochlaeus noted that "many peasants had been slain in the uprising . . . who perhaps would still all live as good Christians had Luther not written." Disappointment also prevailed in the reform camp about Luther's aggressive disengagement from those who meant to follow his lead in the matter of reform. Luther's strident language in the tract *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern* came in for criticism, and his stance led to the end of the Reformation as a popular movement. It may well be, as has been argued, that the distraught surviving peasants succumbed to the appeal of the incipient Anabaptist conventicles and their insistence on the separation of the true Christians from the world. Certainly, the number of pamphlets, the lifeline of the reform movement, dwindled to a trickle after 1525. As one observer wrote, "Dr. Martin has fallen into great disfavor with the common people, also with both

learned and unlearned; his writing is regarded to have been too fickle."¹⁰ Later, Luther, his head bloody but unbowed, insisted that it was the peasants' fault that pope and papacy had not been completely destroyed, adding that he still shuddered at what would have happened had the peasants succeeded in their uprising.¹¹ It surely was not Luther's finest hour.

This paper focuses on Luther's pronouncements on social and political issues between 1519 and 1525.12 It will be (the reader should be forewarned) a bit revisionist. Two preliminary observations must set the stage in order to establish the context of Luther's thought. One is the reminder that, at the time, Luther's 95 Theses were by no means the only expression of reform concerns. Reform, in church and society, was the concern of some, which led partisans of the Reformation ever since to the dictum that everybody in the early sixteenth century was crying out for reform, so that there would have been a Reformation if Martin Luther had died in the cradle. (Those are my own words when I was a young scholar). 13 It is a distorted understanding of the Reformation, no matter how ubiquitously perpetrated in confirmation classes and Sunday School. To be sure, voices pled for reform, but a crucial ingredient was missing: there was no pervasive sense of a crisis in church and society, and it was not until Luther came along that such a pervading sense of crisis surfaced. And in a stunningly short time, there was not merely a trickle but a flood of voices calling for all manner of reform.

Secondly, Luther's own literary activities must be placed into the context of this reform literature, especially that appearing after 1518. Luther got caught up in the maelstrom of what he himself had triggered, namely his conviction that reform had to be put on the front burner. His was a two-pronged concern: he called for a revitalized Christian faith, yet at the same time for reform also in society. Luther's early "religious" or "devotional" pamphlets – which catapulted him to prominence – were devoted to reform concerns, so that each title could have the word "proper" inserted: how one should "properly" confess? How one should "properly" understand the Lord's Prayer? How one should properly prepare for dying? What is a "proper" Christian marriage? 14

At the same time, Luther also addressed topics of societal reform, for the crisis of which he convinced his contemporaries was not confined to matters of faith. In 1519 he published a *Sermon vom Wucher* in which he discussed the most pressing economic-religious issue of the time: the legitimacy of taking interest. Luther's point was simple. Fiscal and business matters were not autonomous forces; their principles had to be related to the gospel. The Golden Rule must dominate the Christians' economic pursuits,

and therefore no interest can be charged for the use of borrowed money. Luther's notions were drawn from the world of medieval reflection; he showed little empathy for the new world of economics that increasingly characterized the early sixteenth century. Luther castigated those who charged "seven, eight, nine, ten percent." 16

The details of Luther's pronouncements are less important than the fact of his engagement in a controversial economic issue. The very fact that he denounced the taking of interest indicates that "the holy gospel of Christ" and "the natural law" offered the grounds on which to make economic judgments; Luther's pamphlet signaled that socio-economic issues were part and parcel of needed reform.

Hardly a year later, Luther published his *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen stantes besserung*, one of the famous "Reformation treatises" of 1520. It was his most popular publication, judging from the two dozen reprints in a strikingly short time. Truly, a best-seller. A masterpiece of rhetoric and polemic, its intention was to solicit support among the "Christian nobility" for the cause of reform. Luther dedicated the treatise to none other than the new German emperor, Charles V, as the foremost representative of the "Christian nobility," who might side with those committed to reform. Luther was aware that the church's deliberations about him were about to be concluded. In this setting, his treatise meant to convince his readers that the church had assumed too much power in society and much was awry, politically, economically, socially, in the body politic, an argument on which Luther could be sure to receive support.

The title of the treatise bore out Luther's strategic objective; it was addressed to the Christian nobility who were to become engaged in the "improvement," "reform," of the "Christian estate," the "Christian people." The title, in other words, expressed that the treatise was about the need for a comprehensive reform in society, including the role of clergy and laity in church affairs. And since the Roman church had failed to provide leadership, the secular authorities had to step in. Luther's appeal for support was not to the "people" but to the "nobility," the ruling elites. Shrewdly, Luther reminded the "Christian nobility" of the restlessness of the common people, because reform in church and society was not forthcoming.

The twofold structure of the treatise unfolded Luther's strategy and program. The first section "tore" down the three "paper" walls of the "Romanists," in effect rejecting the notion of the superiority of the "ecclesiastical" or "spiritual" estate over the laity, perhaps Luther's most revolutionary attack on the Roman church. ¹⁷ Historically, the theological insights of this first section have tended to overshadow the far lengthier second section, where

Luther laid out the reforms necessary in society. In other words, Luther addressed the ramification of the first part – the Christian ruling class was to undertake reform in society. The specifics ranged widely. Point 9 declared that "the Pope has no power over the Emperor" while point 10 demanded "that the kissing of the Pope's feet should also no longer take place." Some of Luther's notions were hardly calculated to receive rousing popular support; point 18, for example, proposed that "one should do away with all festivals and retain Sunday alone" and "that all begging should be done away with throughout Christendom."

Toward the end of the treatise the focus of the argument shifted. Luther listed a number of topics in need of reform that had nothing to do with either church or religion. For example, point 25 noted that "the universities are also in need of a good, strong reformation," perhaps a timeless pronouncement, but here a thinly veiled attack on the centrality of Aristotle and canon law in the university curriculum. Luther bewailed the heavy cost of the import of spices from abroad and painted a gloomy picture of adverse economic consequences. It was as if Luther sought to evoke the "good old days" when he wrote that there also was no reason why enormous amounts of money were expended on silk, velvet, golden ornamentations from abroad, merely to sew ever fancier clothes. ¹⁹ Soberly, he opined that no action was necessary since before too long these extravagant imports will impoverish the nobility and the rich, and the issue will be moot.

In short, the treatise does not allow us to speak of an "apolitical" Luther, therefore, or of a Luther carefully bracketing his opinions on social issues. His concern for societal reform is altogether evident. He understood "reform" broadly so as to include not only matters of theology and ecclesiastical practice but also of society. Luther, the theologian and professor, did not hesitate to offer comments on, and even solutions for, societal issues.

The flood of pamphlets that swept across the German countryside at the time calling for reform differentiated little between reform needed in society and in the church.²⁰ The slogan of "reform" meant comprehensive reform.²¹ Luther shared this presumption, both with his own pamphlets and (just as important) with his failure to oppose those who advocated broad societal reform on the basis of the Bible. Contemporaries, whether nobility or common folk, had to arrive at no other conclusion than that he sided with those who demanded comprehensive societal reform.

Nothing illustrates Luther's stance better than that he returned twice to the topic, which he had written about in 1519, of usury, making it the number one topic of his publications prior to 1525. Within weeks of the "brief" *Sermon on Usury* of 1519, Luther turned to the topic again and

enlarged the treatise, then recycled it four years later by making it part of a new treatise, the tract on *Kaufshandlung und Wucher*.²² Once again Luther pontificated at length about usury, undoubtedly also with his arch nemesis John Eck in mind; Eck after all defended taking interest.²³ The two writings were part of Luther's propaganda strategy to persuade his contemporaries that the state of affairs in society called for reform.²⁴ Luther, in other words, called attention to the crises and to the source of their solution, namely the Word of God.²⁵

Alongside his comments on usury, Luther reflected on economic life in general. What he had to say about *Kaufshandel* (commerce, trade) expressed deep concerns about developments in society. Echoing notions already expressed in his appeal to the Christian nobility, Luther distinguished between proper and improper commerce and trade. Proper commerce dealt with items "which cannot be done without and serve a Christian purpose", such as trade in cattle, butter, milk, wool. Luther rejected trade in luxury items. He castigated those who traded with such places as "Calcutta and India" and imported goods "that only serve for show and serve no purpose." Luther demanded that the governmental authorities should intervene and end the costly imports of useless foreign goods. He was gloomy, however, about the likelihood of governmental intervention and action. He plaintively observed that the problem will take care of itself when we run out of money – when, in other words, European wealth had moved overseas. Luther devented that the problem will take care of itself when we run out of money – when, in other words, European wealth had moved overseas.

The picture then, is of a Martin Luther deeply involved in advocacy of societal reform. It is not, however, the Luther we know. What happened?

The answer takes us to Luther's clandestine visit to Wittenberg from his hiding place on the Wartburg in December 1521.30 At that time, a new theme surfaced which was, in the end, to dominate his views. At issue was not a theological insight, but the awareness that at some places the agitation for reform, even religious reform, was accompanied by disruption of law and order, as for example in Zwickau in May 1521.31 The ugly word Aufruhr (uproar, rioting) made its appearance and increasingly took center stage. It had hovered over the deliberations at Worms and in fact had given Luther breathing room. Back in Wittenberg, he wrote Georg Spalatin, the elector's secretary, that he was pleased by what he had seen there. But that was not the whole story. He had also heard rumors, however, about a growing restlessness among peasants and townspeople. Aufruhr seemed to be around the corner. In January he received word about happenings in Wittenberg that subsequently entered history books as the "Wittenberg Disturbances," riots and agitation, which so the story goes were taking the town to the brink of lawlessness and chaos.³² The actual reality was quite different.

What happened will be familiar to anyone who has been on a college campus after a successful athletic event: students acting disorderly, roaming town in search of action, in the process pushing a priest from the altar as he was celebrating Mass.³³ Luther trembled and got hot under the collar.

Luther clearly became concerned about the connection of reform and the disruption of law and order. Aufruhr seemed to be making the rounds, endangering the gospel. Societal reform could not put religious reform at risk. It is telling that immediately upon learning of public disturbances, Luther informed Spalatin of his intention to write a treatise about *Aufruhr*. He engaged in politicking here, for Spalatin, to whom Luther wrote more letters than to anyone else between 1520 and 1522, would obviously inform Elector Frederick of Luther's disapproval of rioting in support of the gospel.

Luther's treatise appeared in early 1522 and was entitled *A faithful admonition to all Christians to desist from uproar and insurrection.*³⁴ It is not too much to say that the treatise reoriented the movement of reform. In the opening pages Luther observed that numerous misdeeds and tyrannies of the church – of "priest, monk, bishop" – had been brought to the light of day. Anger had found expression in riots and demonstrations which, however, were not directed against secular authorities but against the tyranny of the Roman church. Luther acknowledged that at some places public agitation had accompanied the demand for "evangelical preaching." He went out of his way to explain. It was understandable, he wrote, that some of those who wanted to be faithful to the Word might be tempted to demonstrate publicly in the streets to end the tyranny of the pope and demand reform.

To do so, however, was no longer necessary nor was it prudent. Now that the "pure gospel" had been rediscovered, the tyranny of the Roman pope had also come to an end. It was up to the secular authorities to accept their responsibility and do away with all papal perversion of the gospel. Luther declared himself in sympathy with those who had taken public action, but such was no longer necessary or appropriate. Luther found harsh words for those who failed to understand that things had changed, prompting his colleague Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt to publish a tract in defense of his role in introducing reform in Wittenberg.³⁵

As Luther saw it, reform could only succeed in harmony with the political authorities. Perhaps he saw a parallel between his situation (his own fate hinged on the support of the Saxon elector) and the larger cause of reform (which was impossible without governmental support). To make matters crystal clear, Luther took to the pen again in 1523. His treatise *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei* (Concerning Temporal Authority, to what extent it should be obeyed) arguably offered

the most rigid exegesis of Romans 13 in Christian history.³⁶ Notwithstanding his own grandiose declaration that no one had ever taught as clearly about governmental authority as he had, the treatise was pure St. Augustine. But the real significance of the treatise was found in something else.

At issue was not secular government as such. As the title makes clear, the focus was "in how far one owes it obedience," a pertinent issue since numerous governmental authorities were suppressing the preaching of the gospel. Luther's dedication of the treatise to Duke Johann of Saxony, brother (and co-ruler) of Elector Frederick, surely was to convey that the religious reform movement posed no threat to the political and social order. Johann, who would become the ruler of Ernestine Saxony two years later, was to be assured that Scripture commanded Christians to be obedient to governmental authority. Only when the gospel itself was at stake could Christians refuse obedience.

This, then, formed the background for Luther's 1525 involvement in the "revolution of the common man." He had affirmed religious and social reform, even when broadly defined, but had rejected any challenge of divinely ordained governmental authority. But that was, of course, precisely what the peasants and the "common man" in the towns were doing; they pursued reform by force. Then came the *Twelve Articles* which placed the peasants' social, economic, and political demands into the context of Luther's own record of advocating broad understanding of reform. The Behind the heavy dose of biblical citations in the *Twelve Articles* stood the notion expressed by Luther any number of times – that the Word alone must be the yardstick for all of life, both religious and social.

It is easy to see how the *Twelve Articles* posed a challenge for Luther's understanding of how reform could be achieved, and why he became so emotional. The document echoed the quest for the kind of societal reform that he himself had endorsed and seamlessly juxtaposed societal and religious concerns. At the same time, the Articles were not simply an intellectual statement, but a clarion call for support. Luther retreated from his own earlier definition of reform, declared the peasants' grievances to be a matter for legal experts, and denounced the insurrection. When Duke Johann asked Luther if there was not anything positive to say about the Twelve Articles (which included not only the notion of the utter primacy of the Word but also the right of a congregation to elect its minister, both demands taken straight out of Luther's book), Luther disagreed. The disturbance of law and order had rendered everything moot. Theologically, Luther found that the peasants confused the two "kingdoms" or "realms" that he had delineated in his tract on secular government. In other words, Luther refuted his own treatises on

usury and trade as well as his letter to the Christian nobility, while affirming his treatises on avoiding riots and obedience to secular government.

Luther's responded no less than three times to the challenge of the *Twelve Articles*. In principle, he could not find the peasant grievances and demands problematic. Accordingly, the *Admonition to Peace* expressed sympathy for the plight of the peasants and took their side against their lords.³⁸ In the second treatise, however, his position shifted. The peasants had become – as the title of the treatise had it — a horde of disobedient murderers and insurrectionists. The notion of societal reform based on Scripture disappeared and was rejected. Luther now embraced the principle that had been discernible in his treatise on secular government: the world cannot be ruled by the gospel or, "Christ's gospel has nothing to do with politics." Luther's treatise was the last step in the evolution of his position, which became the hallmark of Lutheran social ethics. Society has its own laws; introducing the gospel as criterion for rule and law spells trouble. At the same time, Luther never surrendered the notion that the government must not only allow and support the proclamation of the gospel but must also rule according to "Christian" principles.

In so arguing the case, Luther failed to recall that half a decade earlier he had as a theologian, not as an expert in the law or economics, offered pronouncements and recommendations on societal issues.³⁹ In his letter to the Christian nobility no less than in his tracts on usury and trade, he had put forward stinging critiques of current socio-economic practices. He was not only concerned about spiritual corruption and theological aberration in the Roman church; he also wanted a new society since the present one had strayed from biblical principles. Accordingly, he had confronted established interests and, be they faculties at universities or merchants in South German towns, denounced them for their lack of adherence to biblical values. Luther surely would have embraced the peasants' reform proposals if the demands had remained intellectual pronouncements and had not impinged on the authorities who were making the Reformation possible.

It was the phenomenon of *Aufruhr* (rioting, civic disobedience) that caused the problem and put Luther on the way to negating his earlier concern for a more orderly and just society. He was led on that path by his conviction that any confrontation with the secular authorities would be seen as disruption of law and order that had to be squelched. Luther thus performed a precarious balancing act, extolling a biblical vision of a just society, while placing the realization of this vision solely in the hands of the properly established political authorities.

We misinterpret Luther if we see him as categorically abrogating normative biblical principles for society. His earlier writings indicated that he

did not wish to withhold such principles from society nor fail to acknowledge that there were normative core values that ought to be operative in society. However, in the end Luther was furious with the peasants' acts of civil insurrection and was thereby driven to reject what he understood to be the underlying assumption of the insurgent peasants, namely that the Bible offered guidelines for economic and political issues. In so doing he offered a distorted reading of the Twelve Articles, for a close reading of that document reveals that most demands were not based on the Bible, the rich biblical citations on the margins of the document notwithstanding, but on the law (the "ancient law"). The one article that got knee-deep into theology dealt with the "desire to be free" since, so the commentary, Christ shed his blood and freed all humankind, a reading that Luther promptly labeled "carnal." Clearly, however, the biblical references in the Twelve Articles were not meant to define but to confirm the arguments based on traditional law.

What, then, are our conclusions? First and foremost, Luther's public pronouncements prior to the 1524 insurgency were in keeping with his own declaration that both church and society were in crisis and reform was sorely needed. That he so argued is not surprising. The Christian faith includes also the Christian life, and Luther never grew tired in insisting that the Christian profession has to be lived in the world. The monitor of values and the agent of change was not the individual Christian, however, but government. Luther initially ignored the question as to who was to be the agent of change, assuming it would all fall into place. He was concerned to trumpet to his contemporaries that everything needed renewal. It was precisely his broad call for renewal – in church as well as in society – which turned a narrow focus on the church practice of indulgences into a broad movement of reform.

But Luther's overriding focus came to be the maintenance of public law and order in the process of reform. Luther realized as early as January 1522 that reform – defined as the public establishment of new forms of worship together with the dis-establishment of Catholic institutions, such as monasteries – would not succeed against the will of the political authorities. Accordingly, he gave priority to a concept of reform which had reformers and government proceed hand in hand, a concept even more strikingly exemplified in Zwingli's Zürich or Calvin's Geneva. In Lutheran territories and towns the territorial rulers (or the city councils) became the de facto heads of the church in their jurisdiction, the summepiscopus, the *Notbischof*. It must remain an open question if Luther was driven by his intense reading of Romans 13 (during the Nazi period in Germany a key problem for some of the devout Lutheran Christians who participated in the anti-Nazi resistance) or by the conviction that riots, not to mention insurrection, would alienate

those, who in the final analysis would make possible the implementation of reform. The significance of the peasant uprising in Luther's mind went far beyond the immediate issue of social and economic demands and grievances. The uprising turned him into a staunch believer in the government and the impossibility of mixing the Christian faith and the social order.

It remains a pity, I believe, that Luther's reflections about societal issues faded from the scene in the context of the peasants' uprising. Lutheran commentators ever since have concluded that the one unpardonable sin for Lutherans is to confuse the two "realms" or kingdoms," as was done by the insurgent peasants. "Christ," as we heard from Luther's lips, "has nothing to do with politics." No doubt, Lutheranism's withdrawal from the public square allowed Lutheran social ethics to bracket questions banal and tricky — is there a biblical warrant for the 70 mph speed limit on interstate highways or for determining the marginal tax rate on incomes over \$78,500, or for stem cell research, or for legitimizing gay marriages? However, by withdrawing from the public square Lutheran theology tended to ignore the rich panoply of issues in the realm of social ethics, declaring that the Christian faith has no specific word to offer.

Of course, any pronouncement on a societal issue that requires technical expertise found eminently outside the church is bound to trigger controversy and disagreement. One need only consider the reception of the social statements of the ELCA or other Protestant denominations. They tend to leave some of the faithful bewildered, detached, even angry. And that not only because of disagreement with the conclusions of such statements, but also because the values of the men and women in the pews are frequently derived from Fox News, or MSNBC, or the New York Times, or the Wall Street Journal, Rush Limbaugh or Bill Clinton, and not from their pastors or their teaching theologians.

In the long haul, however, errors of judgment on certain specific societal issues may be less disastrous than silence. But when we reflect on the legacy of Lutheran silence, we do well to contrast it with a courageous reformer who was convinced that biblical principles could and must be brought to bear on the public square and who was willing to speak out in their support. One wonders, of course, what would have happened if Luther had been able to deal with the issue of *Aufruhr* separately from the question of whether the Christian faith has a word for the social and political realm. German history and the history of the church in it would have been different? Certainly Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing in 1933 on the "Jewish Question," would have been pleased to have Luther help him to put a hand on the spoke in the wheel.⁴⁰

Luther's repudiation of the peasants, properly seen, should not be taken as an abrogation of the relevance of the gospel in the public square, though that, of course, is the way Luther allowed himself to be understood. Rather, it was the repudiation of the peasants' ignoring of the plain text of Romans 13. Luther affirmed the relevance of the gospel for the social and political order, a relevance that might well mean the advocacy of change and reform. But Romans 13 constituted for him the limit of what was possible in the face even of injustice and tyranny, for government could not be opposed even if it was blatantly unchristian. Only when government overstepped its legitimate boundaries or hindered the proclamation of the gospel could faithful Christians oppose it. Otherwise, they were bound to accept and even suffer. Luther's distrust of the high and mighty, "die grossen Hansen," the bigshots, the elites, the Caesar Augustus's and Pontius Pilates, the popes and emperors of this world, comes through loud and clear.

This distrust was not incidental to his thought; it lay at the very heart of his understanding of the gospel. Luther never tired of reminding his fellow Christians of Jesus — who had suffered deep agony, had not called upon the legions of angels and archangels but had prayed that his Father's will be done. In the most moving of his writings, written in hours of loneliness on the Wartburg, he laid out with warmth, thoughtfulness, and sensitivity what Mary's Magnificat was all about. He praised Mary for her humility, her willingness to accept what God had chosen. In this respect, she was for Luther a role model for Christians in society — Christians who derive from Scripture the legitimation of a just society, boldly assert it, but who in the end must always take their seat with the lowly, the powerless, the humble. I think it a pity that Luther, his eyes blinded by the peasants' disruption of law and order, was unable to appropriate the powerful dynamic that is the gospel both in the individual believer and in the public square.

Notes

This is a free translation of "Christus kümmert sich nicht um die Politie," as quoted in Walther Köhler, *Dogmengeschichte als Geschichte des Christlichen Selbstbewusstseins: Das Zeitalter der Reformation* (Zürich: M. Niehan, 1951) 64. This essay confines itself deliberately to the (limited) time 1518 to 1525; the broadening of the chronological perspective beyond 1525 would have yielded interesting shifts as well as re-affirmations in Luther's thinking, for example, related to his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount (WA 32:299-544). There is, of course, no doubt but that the topic deserves amplification to encompass all of Luther's writings. However, the period here under consideration surely offers the most incisive segment of Luther's ideas.

The classic statement is by Paul Althaus in his Luthers Haltung im Bauernkrieg (3rd ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969; [1942]). For an extensive evaluation of the scholarly sentiment, now somewhat outdated, see Kyle C. Sessions, "The War over Luther and the Peasants: Old Campaigns and New Strategies," Sixteenth Century Journal 3 (1972) 25-44. See also Heiko A. Oberman, "Gospel of Social Unrest: 450 Years after the so-called German Peasant's War of 1525," Harvard Theological Review 69 (1976) 103-129.

- 3 Volker Leppin, Martin Luther (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006) 221.
- 4 See Franz Lau, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," Lutheran World 12 (1965) 355ff; Per Frostin, Luther's Two Kingdoms Doctrine: A Critical Study (Studia Theologica Lundensia 48; Lund: Almquist and Wiksell, 1994); and the recent study by William J. Wright, Martin Luther's Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). Luther himself appeared to be altogether impatient with those who found this teaching puzzling: in his Sendbrief he seemed exasperated about having to propound his understanding of the two kingdoms once more: WA 18:389. LW 46:70.
- 5 See Johannes Cochlaeus, Antwort auf Luthers Schrift "Wider die r\u00e4uberischen und m\u00f6rderischen Rotten der Bauern;" Ein kurzer Begriff vom Aufruhr der Bauern (Cologne, 1525); Hieronymus Emser's Wie Luther in seinen B\u00fcchern zum Aufruhr getrieben (Dresden, 1525); Johannes Fundling, Anzeigung zweier falschen Zungen Luthers (Landshut, 1526). Support came to Luther from Johannes Poliander's Ein Urteil \u00fcber das harte B\u00fcchlein Martin Luthers (N\u00fcrnberg, 1525).
- Johannes Cochlaeus, Sieben köpffe Martin Luthers, von sieben sachen des Christlichen glaubens (Dresden: W. Stöckel, 1529), bij (v) as quoted in Mark U. Edwards, Jr, Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press) 149.
- 7 Wittenberg, 1525, WA 18:344ff.
- 8 Franz Lau, "Der Bauernkrieg und das angebliche Ende der Reformation als spontaner Volksbewegung," *Luther Jahrbuch* 26 (1959) 109-134, vigorously argued the continuing impact and success of the Reformation movement as evidenced by the towns and territories that turned Protestant in the 1530's. The problem with this view is that it equates the formal introduction of the Reformation in a number of places in the 1530's with an expression of popular sentiment. That, I would argue, is not the way the course of events must be seen. The evidence of widespread disappointment with Luther in 1525 seems overwhelming, focusing on the blatant reality that his third pronouncement, the *Sendbrief von dem harten Büchlein wider die Bauern* (Wittenberg, 1525) revealed a Luther stubbornly reiterating the harshness of his treatise on the murderous and plundering hordes of the peasants.
- 9 See the telling statistics in Edwards, Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther, esp. chap 7.
- 10 Tom Scott and R. W. Scribner, eds., The German Peasants War: A History in Documents (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1990) 322.
- 11 This, of course, is the sentiment of Luther's final pronouncement, the *Sendbrieff von dem harten Büchlein wider die Bauern*.
- 12 Both the chronological and thematic delimitation of this essay is important, even though a chronological expansion of our theme would have yielded important further perspectives. A broad introduction to Luther's advisories to rulers (with ample biblio-

- graphical references) is found in Eric W. Gritsch, "The Use and Abuse of Luther's Political Advice," *Luther Jahrbuch* 57 (1990) 207-219.
- 13 The sentence occurs in my first foray into the world of the Reformation, Hans Hiller-brand, *The Reformation: A Narrative History* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1964) 16.
- 14 I note at random: Kurze Unterweisung, wie man beichten soll; Auslegung deutsch des Vaterunsers für die einfältigen Laien; Ein Sermon von der Betrachung des heiligen Leidens Christi; Ein Sermon von dem ehelichen Stand; Ein Sermon von dem Gebet und Procession in der Kreuzwoche; Ein Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben. Luther's stereotypical use of the word "sermon" in each of his titles must have created anticipation on part of literate readers for additional publications.
- 15 "Ist eyn unchristenlich furnehmen wider das heylig evangelium Christi, ja widder das naturlich gesetz." WA 6:4.
- 16 "Hie wirt das arm gemeyn volck heymlich auss gesogen und schwerlich unter drugckt." WA 6:6.
- 17 "Dan alle Christen sein wahrhaftig geystlichs stands und ist unter yhn kein Unterscheyd, den des Amts halber allein Das macht alles, dass wir eine Tauff, ein Evangelium, eynen Glauben haben und seyn gleiche Christen, denn die Tauff, Evangelium und Glauben, die machen allein geistlich und Christenvolk. Dass aber der bapst oder Bischoff salbet, Platten macht, ordiniert, weyhet, anders dan Leyen kleydet, mag eynen Gleißner und Olgotzen machen, macht aber nymmermehr ein Christen oder geystlichen Menschen. Demnach werden wir allesampt durch die Tauff zu Priestern geweyhet." WA 6:407. LW 44:127. Timothy Wengert's little book *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops: Public Ministry for the Reformation and Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008) reads the sources somewhat idiosyncratically, leading to the conclusion that Luther did not advocate the universal priesthood of all believers.
- 18 It is telling that an on-line study guide to Luther's tract (www.br-online.de/wissen-bildung/collegeradio/medien/geschichte/luther/arbeitsblaetter) focuses exclusively on the first part of the treatise with questions such as "1. Warum und mit welcher Intention wendet sich Luther an den Adel? Was ist sein Anlass? . . . 3. Von welchen drei Mauern spricht Luther? Was prangert er an? 4. Welche Auffassung hat Luther vom Priestertum? Wer ist Priester und wie wird man seiner Meinung nach Priester? 5. Welche Aufgaben und Rechte hat die weltliche Gewalt? 6. Wie äußert sich Luther zum Papsttum?"
- 19 WA 6:462ff. LW 44:212ff.
- 20 Importantly, Bernd Moeller, "Was wurde in der Frühzeit der Reformation in den deutschen Städten gepredigt, Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte 75 (1984) 176-193. Also Bernd Moeller, Städtische Predigt in der Frühzeit der Reformation: eine Untersuchung deutscher Flugschriften der Jahre 1522 bis 1529 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).
- 21 So, e.g., in the *Gesprächsbüchlein*, "Wohlauf, ihr frommen Teutschen nun, Viel Harnisch hab'n wir, und viel Pferd, Viel Helebarden und auch Schwerd, Und so hilft freundlich Warnung nit," *Ulrich von Hutten, Auserlesene Werke* (Leipzig: Georg Reimer, 1822) 351. Ulrich von Hutten plainly challenged the common people to take an active role in bringing about change and reform. Unfortunately, there is no recent biography of Hutten, perhaps the result of a bifurcation of scholarship literary scholars, historians, and theologians having focused on particular aspects of his life and thought. Most useful is Eckhard Bernstein, ed., *Ulrich von Hutten: Mit Selbstzeugnis-*

sen und Bilddokumenten (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1988). A selection of carefully edited pamphlets is found in Adolf Laube et al., eds., Flugschriften der frühen Reformationsbewegung [1518-1524] (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1983).

- 22 In 1540 Luther turned to the topic of usury again in his tract An die Pfarrherrn wider den Wucher zu predigen, WA 15:293ff., LW 45:245ff., an indication of the continuing relevance of the topic for him. We should note that Luther, of course, was not the only theologian who took up the topic of usury, which may well be considered to have been the foremost social issue in the early sixteenth century. An important contributor to the discussion was Jakob Strauss, whose Haubtstuck vnnd Artickel Christlicher leer wider den vnchristlichen Wucher, darumb etlich pfaffen zu Eysnach so gar vnrüwig vnd bemüet seind, marked by the convergence of "Christlicher leer" and a social issue, appeared in Augsburg in 1523.
- 23 See here Eric Kerridge, Usury, Interest, and the Reformation (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002). This monograph includes helpful selections from the writings of the major reformers.
- 24 They are found in WA 6:36ff. and 15:293ff. respectively (=LW 45:245ff).
- 25 In my judgment the case cannot be made strongly enough that Luther's role was not that he put into words what everyone thought at the time, but rather that Luther succeeded in making his contemporaries aware of something that they had not been deeply aware that church and society were in crisis.
- One may surmise that the reference to the "old law," subsequently so prominent in the *Twelve Articles* of the peasants, may well have been derived from the point Luther is making in the usury treatise, that is that in earlier days the workings of society were more just.
- 27 WA 15:293f. LW 45:245f.
- 28 "...alls solch kostlich seyden und golltwerck und wurtze, die nur zur pracht und keynem nutz dienet..." WA 15:294. LW 45:246.
- 29 WA 15:294. LW 45:246f. See here also the remark of Bonifazius Amerbach, the Basel humanist and jurist: "Faxit deus, ut tumultus sedari possit; quod nisi fiat, periimus omnes," in *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, Vol. III: *Die Briefe aus den Jahren 1525-1530* (ed. Alfred Hartmann; Basel: Verlag der Universitätsbibliothek, 1947) 19, 63.
- 30 An interesting contemporary source, probably published in January 1522, was entitled Zeitung aus Wittenberg, but says nothing about public disturbances. Its focus is on the appearance of the so-called Zwickau "prophets." See Nikolaus Müller, Die Wittenberger Bewegung 1521 und 1522 (Leipzig: M. Heinsius, 1911) 151ff.
- 31 The surmise is that the Zwickau events had been influenced by Thomas Müntzer. See Paul Wappler, *Thomas Müntzer in Zwickau und die "Zwickauer Propheten,"* (Gütersloh Mohn, 1966 [1908]) 43.
- 32 For divergent perspectives on what happened, see James S. Preus, Carlstadt's ordinances and Luther's liberty: A Study of the Wittenberg Movement 1521-22 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); Ulrich Bubenheimer, "Luthers Stellung zum Aufruhr in Wittenberg 1520-22 und die frühreformatorischen Wurzeln des landesherrlichen Kirchenregiments," Zeitschrift der Savigny Gesellschaft für Rechtsgeschichte 102 (1985) 148-214.
- 33 While still in Wittenberg Luther wrote Spalatin, "per viam vexatus rumore vario de nostrorum quorundam importunitate." WA, Br 2:410 (December 5, 1521). LW 48:351. Luther mentioned his intention to write against any disruption of law and order in conjunction with the implementation of religious reform.

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- 34 Eyn trew vormanung Martini Luther tzu allen Christen, sich tzu vorhuten fur auffruhr unnd emporung. WA 8:676ff. LW 45:57ff. Interestingly, Luther refers in the introductory paragraphs to both readers and "listeners" of his tract, an indirect reference to the means by which reform notions were propagated.
- 35 Entschuldigung D. Andres Carlstats des falschen namens der auffrür, so jm ist mit vnrecht auffgelegt. Mit ainer vorred D. Mar. Luth (Augsburg, 1525). Before long Carlstadt concluded, however, that reform was not introdruced with appropriate speed and penned another tract, whose title conveyed the timeless passion of all who find themselves impatient with the larger course of events: Ob man gemach faren (1524).
- 36 WA 11:265ff. LW 45:81ff.
- 37 Several years ago I ventured the observation that the overwhelming majority of the local peasant grievance documents recorded only economic and social demands: "The Reformation and the German Peasants' War," in *Social History of the Reformation* (ed. Lawrence P. Buck and Jonathan W. Zophy; Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1972) 106-136. I still believe my notion to have been correct, except that I might have emphasized better that the peasants saw in Luther's theological argumentation the validation of their own economic and social concerns.
- 38 WA 18:291ff. LW 46:17ff.
- 39 Luther's Catholic protagonists promptly called attention to Luther's shift; for example, Johannes Findling, general commissioner of the infamous indulgence proclamation and sale, belabored the point in his Anzaigung zwayer falschen zungen des Luthers, wie er mit der ainen die paurn verfueret, mit der andern sy verdammet hat (Landshut, 1515). Findling repeated the sentiment with his Assercionis Lvtheranae Confutatio centum locorum, In quibus ipse Lutherus sibiipsi contradicit (Augsburg, 1528).
- 40 It was not until the German invasion of Norway in 1940 that the Norwegian Lutheran bishop Eivind Berggrav delineated a new understanding of Romans 13 for the Lutheran tradition. His most important work in English was *Man and State* (trans. George Aus; Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1951).

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Praying Amidst Life's Perils: How Luther Used Biblical Examples to Teach Prayer

Mary Jane Haemig

Luther's reformation of prayer has been relatively neglected in the study of the Reformation. Such neglect is odd, given the importance Luther assigned to prayer. You are all (I assume) familiar with Luther's catechisms. What he terms the "three chief parts," – what a Christian absolutely must know – come first. First in the *Small Catechism* comes God's law, as expressed in the Ten Commandments. The law tells us what God wants life on this earth to look like. Second comes "the faith," as expressed in the Apostles' Creed. Here Luther explains what God has done for us in creation, redemption and sanctification. Third comes our response to these – prayer, as exemplified in the Lord's Prayer. For what do we pray? For "faith and the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments." Prayer is not an optional aspect of Christianity rather it is at the very center of how Luther understands the Christian faith.

Much attention has been devoted to the Lord's Prayer in Luther's *Small* and *Large* Catechisms. Scholars have also shown interest in his *Personal Prayer book* (Betbuechlein) of 1522, seen as a predecessor to the catechisms. Luther's letter to his barber (1535) on how to pray has also attracted attention. But other places and occasions on which Luther taught prayer have received less notice. Talking about prayer and teaching prayer is a consistent theme in Luther's work. Virtually everywhere one looks – in sermons, letters, biblical commentaries, etc., – one encounters Luther's instructions on why and how to pray.

Luther realized the need to teach people how to pray very early in his career as a reformer. In Lent 1517 (before the 95 Theses!), Luther preached a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer.⁸ These became very popular, appearing at least 23 times between 1518 and 1525 in places as diverse as

Basel, Leipzig, Wittenberg, Augsburg, and Hamburg. Indeed, multiple editions of Luther's works on prayer show that they achieved public resonance. His 1519 sermon "On Rogationtide Prayer and Procession" was reprinted 13 times between 1519 and 1523 in Augsburg, Leipzig, Nuremberg, Wittenberg, Strasbourg, and Zurich. Luther's "Betbuechlein" (Personal Prayer book) was printed 17 times between 1522 and 1525 (in Augsburg, Erfurt, Wittenberg, Jena, and Strasbourg) and at least 44 times total by the end of the century. Luther's writing on prayer extended to the end of his career. His "Appeal for Prayer against the Turks," dates from 1541, just five years before his death. Let was reprinted 10 times in 1541-42. For the sake of contrast consider some printing statistics for some other pieces by Luther. His famous treatise on the "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" from 1520 was published 14 times in the sixteenth century. The infamous "On the Jews and Their Lies" (1543) was only printed four times in that century. Clearly, Luther's works on prayer were popular and widespread during his time.

Why did Luther need to devote such extensive effort to teaching prayer? One indication comes from the preface to his *Small Catechism* (1529). There he complained that during his visitations in rural Saxony he had learned:

The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments. ¹⁶

Obviously Luther was distressed! And it was not just that people did not know how to pray. Previous efforts at teaching prayer had given them wrong ideas. In his 1522 *Personal Prayer Book* Luther attacked personal prayer books as among "the many harmful books and doctrines which are misleading and deceiving Christians" and giving rise to "false beliefs." "They drub into the minds of simple people such a wretched counting up of sins and going to confession, such un-Christian tomfoolery about prayers to God and his saints!¹⁷

At least five aspects of medieval prayer practice needed to be reformed: First, Luther emphasized that we pray to God rather than to the Virgin Mary and to the saints. Second Luther emphasized that God hears our prayers because God has commanded us to pray and promised to hear us, rather than because we are worthy to be heard. We are definitely not wor-

thy, but since prayer does not depend on personal worthiness, we can pray. Third, Luther attacked the view that prayer was a good work, and, related to that, he, fourth, complained about the mindless repetitition and babbling that he felt characterized prayer in his day. (If prayer was considered a good work, the number of times it was done became important). Luther commented in 1527: "In the past it has happened to us that we did not know how to pray but knew only how to chatter and to read prayers. God pays no attention to this." Fifth, Luther rejected the idea that prayer should be left to monks and clerics. Repeatedly one sees Luther rejecting these harmful prayer practices and advocating for an evangelical prayer practice.

My focus in this paper is on Luther's use of biblical examples to teach prayer. Luther taught prayer using biblical examples in many kinds of writings. He focused both on the prayers used and on the people praying. Repeatedly he used biblical examples to portray prayer as frank and honest conversation with God. He saw calling upon God as an intimate and necessary part of the human relationship with God. By using Biblical stories, Luther put some real human flesh on his instructions on praying. I have previously examined how Luther used the prayers in Genesis 15-19.19 The prayers of Abram, questioning whether God would fulfill his promise of an heir, showed a questioning human and a God faithful to his promise. The prayer of Abraham, pleading with God not to destroy Sodom for the sake of XXX righteous men, and the prayer of Lot asking to be sent to a town rather than sent up into the hills, illustrated humans daring to argue with God – and a God who was willing to bend to their requests. In these examples, Luther stressed that humans should boldly and forthrightly approach God, posing blunt questions and arguing for a different result than the one presented to them.

In considering now how Luther used Biblical examples to teach prayer, I want particularly to look at prayer in difficult and frustrating, even hopeless situations. What did Luther teach about prayer in the midst of perils, both bodily and spiritual?

Luther was well aware that such use of biblical figures might be frustrating to his audience. Were these examples too high and distant for the ordinary listener/reader in sixteenth century Germany? In his *Appeal for Prayer against the Turks* (1541) Luther reminded his readers that, though they may not be the patriarchs of the Old Testament, nevertheless they can pray just as those figures did.

True enough, we are not a Joshua, who through prayer could command the sun to stand still (Josh 10:12-13). Nor are we a Moses, who through his fervent plea separated the waters of the Red Sea (Exod 14:

15-22). Neither are we an Elijah, who by his prayer called down fire from heaven [2 Kings 1:9-12]. But we are at least the equal of those to whom God gave his word and whom the Holy Spirit has inspired to preach. Yes, we are no different from Moses, Joshua, and Elijah, and all the other saints because we have the same word and Spirit of God that they had. As preachers, ministers, and officials we serve the same God they served, even though they served him more gloriously than we. But they had no greater God than we have and were made of no better flesh and blood than we. They were human just as we are and were created by the same God ...²⁰

So the efficacy of prayer is not dependent on the one praying but rather on the Word and Spirit of God. Luther moved immediately to assure his listeners:

And God must answer our prayer (if I may be so bold to put it that way) just as much as theirs, for we are members of his church, which is the bride of his beloved Son. He cannot ignore the church when it earnestly beseeches him. For that reason it is not impossible for God to accomplish deeds as great or greater through us.²¹

Look at the way Luther lined up examples in order to reach his conclusion. Joshua – Moses – Elijah – and you his church – these are the people whose fervent pleas God answers. We can be assured that God will hear us just as he heard Joshua, Moses, and Elijah. God might even accomplish greater deeds through us than he did through them!

Luther used biblical examples to teach prayer not only in treatises specifically on prayer but also in biblical commentaries and sermons. For example, in his lectures on 1 John from 1527,²² Luther piled up a number of biblical examples when he commented on 1 John 5:14-15. Those verses read:

And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. (NRSV)

Luther used these verses to encourage his listeners toward confidence in the God who hears prayer. He quoted from the Gospel of John, James' epistle, Paul in Philippians 4:6, and even Augustine to arouse such confidence that we will be heard. Then he used a string of biblical examples to teach the

form and content of prayer and remind his listeners that God does indeed answer. First, he cited David and Jeremiah, saying that "... he who desires to pray properly should not pray the canonical hours but should say brief prayers, as David and Jeremiah did, yet in such a way that he is persuaded that he will be heard."²³ Notice how the confidence that God hears us affects even the length of prayer!

Next, Luther used a biblical example of proper content for prayer. Solomon (1 Kgs 3:5-11) asked for an understanding heart. Luther noted: "This prayer pleased God." Because Solomon had prayed according to the will of God, God gave him what he had asked. But Luther hastened to tell his listeners: "it is not seemly to fix the manner and the time." Luther then used Abraham as an example of waiting patiently for the fulfillment of the promise. "We should only wait patiently and diligently. And this suffices for a Christian, because a Christian is content to know that he pleases God. And he is persuaded that his prayer is heard, that it is not neglected, but that it is accepted." Luther admitted that it is not always apparent that we have, as John says, "obtained the requests we have made of him ... Indeed, sometimes the opposite seems to be true."24 God, when he was about to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt, first led them into difficulties. Luther drew the lesson: "Thus we, too, must say: 'Lord, Thou wilt give the where and the when, and in a better way than I shall understand.' The ways of deliverance are not known to us, yet meanwhile we should be sure that we shall be heard, yes, that we have been heard."25

These themes – that we should pray with confidence that we are heard, that we should pray according to the will of God, that we should not prescribe to God the time and manner of answering our prayers and that, indeed, we may perceive that God is doing the opposite of what we need – re-occur in Luther. In his Appeal for Prayer Against the Turks (1541) Luther admonished his readers not to "tempt God, that is, we should not determine the when and where and why, or the ways and means and manner in which God should answer our prayer. Rather, we must in all humility bring our petition before him who will certainly do the right thing in accordance with his unsearchable and divine wisdom." ²⁶ Luther assured his readers that "God hears our prayer, even if it may appear that he does not do so." To support this, he drew on the example of Daniel. "The angel Gabriel says in Daniel 8[:23], 'At the beginning of your supplication, the command went forth,' etc. And Daniel's prayer was answered in much greater measure than he had dared to ask ... This is the way each one of us ought to pray in this present Turkish crisis."28

While Daniel's prayer was answered "in much greater measure" than he had dared to ask, Luther also knew that not all prayers were answered in this

way. And sometimes the seemingly unresponsive God was in fact angry with the one praying. In his lectures on Deuteronomy, first published in 1525, Luther used the story of Moses to teach about prayer that is, seemingly, "not heard" or "not answered." In Deut 3:24-25 we hear Moses' request to the Lord when his people were at the brink of entering the promised land:

O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your might; what god in heaven or on earth can perform deeds and mighty acts like yours? Let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan ... (NRSV)

In Deut 3:26-28 Moses reports that "the Lord was angry with me ... and would not heed me" and that the Lord said to him, "Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again!" God then tells him to go to the top of Pisgah and look over the Jordan but also tells him "you shall not cross over this Jordan." Finally, God tells him to encourage and strengthen Joshua.

Luther asked, "But why is the prayer of Moses not heard, since it is likely that he prayed in the Spirit?" Answer:

This is written for our example and consolation. For even though the Lord does not hear him and this causes Moses to realize that He is angry with him, as he says here, nevertheless He does not desert him; He commands him to climb the mountain and view the land, and to give orders to Joshua. So, since we do not know in what manner we should pray (Rom 8:26), let us not be surprised if we are not heard. At the same time, however, let us in no wise doubt that we are favored by, and dear to God; and let us grasp at the favor beneath the wrath, lest we lose heart.³¹

Notice that, according to Luther, God is angry with Moses and yet does not desert him. God still has things for Moses to do – climb the mountain, view the land, and give orders to Joshua. The message is paradoxical. Moses is not heard, that is, his request is not granted. Yet Luther acknowledged implicitly that Moses is heard and that beneath God's wrath toward Moses lies favor. In the midst of God's rejection of our requests, we are to have confidence that we are favored by God and dear to God. Grasping at the favor beneath the wrath will cause us not to lose heart.

I now want to examine in depth two longer considerations of prayer in the midst of life- threatening perils. One stems from the Old Testament and is found in Luther's lectures on Jonah. The other comes from the New Testament and is found in a sermon of Luther's on Matthew 26 concerning Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In his lectures on Jonah (1525) Luther reflected on this whole matter of experiencing God's wrath while at the same time grasping at the favor beneath the wrath.³² Some of Luther's most powerful language on prayer comes in connection with the Jonah story. Luther lectured on Jonah in February 1525 and a German version of these lectures was published in 1526.³³ Jonah in the belly of the fish, crying out to God, offered Luther ample opportunity to reflect on the occasions and efficacy of prayer, the personal situation of the one praying, and the nature of the God who hears prayer.

Many of Luther's comments come in his discussion of Jonah 2:2 where Jonah states, "I called to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice." (NRSV) Luther says that the first verse of Jonah's prayer teaches "important and necessary lessons." The first lesson is that "we must above all else pray and cry to God in time of adversity and place our wants before Him." Second "we must feel that our crying to God is of a nature that God will answer, that we may glory with Jonah in the knowledge that God answers us when we cry to Him in our necessity."

Jonah is an example of one praying in the midst of great need despite his unworthiness or lack of merit. Luther described Jonah's situation in these words:

For there was nothing else to do in such need of both body and soul but cry out. Our desires, our powers are nothing, just as Jonah here called out in pressing need. No merit was present, for he had sinned very seriously against the Lord. And so the only thing to do was to cry out, to cry out "to the Lord." For the Lord is the only one to whom we must flee as to a sacred anchor and the only safety on those occasions when we think that we are done for.³⁷

Jonah's situation was dire, and he was totally at fault for it. No merit was present. Precisely in this situation the only thing to do was to cry out to God.

Luther's first point was not simply about Jonah's (and our) dire situation. It was also about the nature of God. Luther noted, "For God cannot resist helping him who cries to Him and implores Him. His divine goodness cannot hold aloof; it must help and lend an ear." Because God stands ready to help Luther can say:

All depends on our calling and crying to Him. We dare not keep silent. Turn your gaze upward, raise your folded hands aloft, and pray

forthwith: "come to my aid, God my Lord! Etc., "and you will immediately find relief. If you can cry and supplicate, then there is no longer any reason for worry to abide. Even hell would not be hell or would not remain hell if its occupants could cry and pray to God.³⁹

Luther, as an experienced pastor, knew that the human tendency was not to pray to God but rather to remain sunk in despair and to seek another helper.

It is vain to lament and to bemoan your condition and to fret and to worry about your sad estate and to cast about for a helper. That will not extricate you from your woes; it will only drag you in deeper. Listen and hear what Jonah does.⁴⁰

At this point Luther moved to consider Jonah as a negative example – as someone who delayed seeking help from God. Luther commented:

He, too, consumed himself a long time with his distress before he resorted to prayer...If he had not delayed, he would presumably have been delivered sooner. He also bids and teaches you not to emulate his example in this respect but he immediately states that he prayed and thus was granted deliverance.⁴¹

Luther knew well that it is "hard and difficult" to pray as Jonah did. "To howl and to lament, to tremble and to doubt, and to cringe and to cower are easy for us; prayers, however, will not pass over our lips." Our bad conscience and our sins weigh heavily on us. But these are not the only things that prevent us from praying. Luther knew that our perception of God also prevents us from praying. We feel that God is angry. Together these burdens "outweigh the entire world." Luther continued:

In short, it is impossible for nature alone or for an ungodly person to throw off such impediments and at once to supplicate that same God who is angry and who punishes and to refrain from running to someone else. Thus Isaiah declares (Isa 9:13): "The people did not turn to Him who smote them." Nature is far more adept at fleeing from God when He is angry and when He punishes ... It always seeks help from other sources; it will have nothing of this God and cannot abide Him. Therefore human nature forever flees, and yet it does not escape but must thus remain condemned in wrath, sin, death, and hell. Here you can glimpse a goodly portion of hell; you see how sinners fare after

this life, namely, they flee from God's anger but never elude it, and yet they do not cry to God and implore Him.⁴³

Luther made clear that praying does not come naturally to humans. Calling on God is impossible for us. We would rather flee God's anger – but Luther said we should act contrary to nature and flee *to* God – that is, we should call upon God. But by nature we cannot do it, we cannot conduct ourselves contrary to the way we feel. So when we feel God's anger and punishment, we view God as an angry tyrant:

Nature cannot surmount the obstacle posed by this wrath, it cannot subdue this feeling and make its way to God against God and pray to Him, while regarding Him its enemy. Therefore when Jonah had advanced to the point of entreating God, he had gained the victory.⁴⁴

Did you hear that? Jonah's victory did not come when he was finally spit up from the belly of the fish, rather it came when he prayed. Luther immediately applied the lesson of Jonah to his listeners:

And thus you, too, must be minded; thus you, too must act. Do not cast your eyes down or take to your heels, but stand still, rise above this, and you will discover the truth of the verse (Ps 118:5): "Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me." Take recourse to the Lord, yes, to the Lord, and to no other. Turn to the very One who is angry and punishes, and resort to no other. The Lord's answer consists in this, that you will soon find your situation improved; you will soon perceive the wrath abating and the punishment lightened. God does not let you go unanswered so long as you can call upon Him, even if you can do no more than that. He does not ask about your merits. He is well aware that you are a sinner deserving of His anger. 45

Luther saw a connection between our natural inability to pray and our natural longing to contribute something to our salvation. Just as we think we must do something to justify ourselves before God so also we think that we must do something (or be worthy in some way) before God will hear us. "Nature does not know and does not believe that it suffices to call upon God to appease His wrath, as Jonah teaches us here."

Luther is already into the second lesson that Jonah's prayer teaches us, the lesson of what faithful prayer is. He contrasted this "natural" response (believing that we somehow have to be worthy to pray) to the other re-

sponse – that which cries to God in faith. How can we, as Luther says, "glory with Jonah in the knowledge that God answers us when we cry to Him in our necessity"? That happens when we "cry to God with the heart's true voice of faith; for the head cannot be comforted, nor can we raise our hands in prayer, until the heart is consoled." The heart, said Luther, "finds solace when it hastens to the angry God with the aid of the Holy Spirit and seeks mercy amid the wrath, lets God punish and at the same time dares to find comfort in His goodness." Luther emphasized repeatedly that it is difficult for us to see God's kindness and grace when we experience his anger and punishment. He uses imaginative and striking language:

Take note what sharp eyes the heart must have, for it is surrounded by nothing but tokens of God's anger and punishment and yet beholds and feels no punishment and anger but only kindness and grace; that is, the heart must be so disposed that it does not want to see and feel punishment and anger, though in reality it does see and feel them, and it must be determined to see and feel grace and goodness, even though these are completely hidden from view. Oh, what a difficult task it is to come to God. Penetrating to Him through His wrath, His punishment, and His displeasure is like making your way through a wall of thorns, yes, through nothing but spears and swords. The crying of faith must feel in its heart that it is making contact with God ... One perceives that the spirit's words and works hit their mark and do not miss. ⁵⁰

Consider again how Luther used the story of Jonah to upset the "natural" ideas about prayer in his day. Jonah is dealing with an angry God – and God has good reason to be angry with Jonah. Instead of trying to placate this God with good works and/or proper meritorious existence, humans can simply call on this God. Instead of fleeing from the angry God Luther advocated fleeing to this God and thereby discovering God's help. Humans – like Jonah – do not have to be worthy to call on this God. Rather we have confidence that when we call upon God we will find an attentive God who hears and answers prayer mercifully.

Luther deals with the theme of praying to God when we are in great need and it seems God is angry with us in a sermon on Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane in his House Postil, first published in 1544.⁵¹ (This house postil became very popular in sixteenth century Germany).⁵² Luther discussed prayer extensively under his third point, summarized as "we should pray in all temptation." Jesus is an example in several respects – Jesus prays

in this situation of need, even though God seems angry with him. Jesus called to God as his father and trusts that the father is kindly inclined to him and will not let him suffer need. Further, Jesus, though he asked the father to take this cup from him, also added these words: Not my but thy will be done.

Luther declared that this story is very useful because it teaches us how to conduct ourselves in terror, temptation, and misery (Angst, Anfechtung, und Not). Luther described the situation Jesus faced: it is now the time that Judas will betray him, the Jews capture him, and the Gentiles nail him on a cross. What did Jesus do? Luther answered, "He is downcast and fearful, but he does not leave it at that, he goes ... and prays."⁵³ Luther admonished his hearers to learn this too, not to let the misery so deeply touch their hearts that they forget to pray. It pleases God, when we are in terror and misery that we do not despair but open our hearts to him and seek help from him. Luther cited Ps 91:15, "When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him."

Luther was realistic – he knew that when we face such situations we are disgusted (sauer). We object that God has led us into this situation of terror and misery, is angry with us and will therefore ignore our prayers. Using the example of Jesus, Luther firmly rejected that claim. "And here again you can console yourself ... for if God meant to be angry with us when he let us experience terror and misery, so it would have to follow that he was also angry with his dear son."54 Instead, the opposite is true – as Solomon said, a father disciplines his son out of love. So, Luther counseled, don't let yourself be misled by thoughts that see God as an enemy because he lets you suffer. Rather see here that he lets his only begotten son suffer, feel the pangs of death, and tremble. Remember that you also are God's son and he is your father, even if he lets you suffer. Luther even hinted that we should feel privileged in suffering, asking rhetorically why God would want to deny you what he does not deny his own son. Luther drew the conclusion that we should follow Christ in praying. Just as you suffer terror and misery with him, so learn also to pray with him and do not doubt that God will graciously hear such a prayer.

How does Christ pray? Luther used Christ's prayer in the garden to offer a lesson on the form and content of prayer. Christ prays, "My father, if it is possible, so take this cup from me, but not my will, rather your will be done." This, declared Luther, is the proper form of prayer that we also should use in temptation and misery. We address God as father. Despite the fact that we see only God's anger and death, we still see him as our father who loves us and protects us. For that reason we hope to be delivered from this situation – if possible, take this cup from me, or help me to get out of

this suffering! Just as Christ cries to his father, so also should we. We are, through faith in Christ, also God's children and heirs. "For that reason we should not only use these words in our prayer but also trust with our hearts that he, as a father, is kindly inclined to us and will not let us, his children, suffer want." To doubt this, to carry the thought in our hearts that God is not our father and does not care for us, is to dishonor God and to take his proper name – father – from him.

So, Luther advocated, cry to the Father as Christ cries to the Father. Do it in total confidence that God wants to help his children. But just as Christ asks the Father to take this cup from him, just as Christ expects good things from his Father and yet adds "... not my will, rather your will be done," so also we should humble ourselves and not insist on our will. We should rather leave it to God whether he wants us to remain in misery longer and bear it patiently just as Christ did.

Here Luther made a key distinction between bodily matters and other matters. In matters that are not bodily matters - that God keep us in his word, save us, forgive us our sins, and give us the Holy Spirit and eternal life - in these matters God's will is already known and certain. God wants all humans to be saved, he wants all humans to recognize their sin and believe in forgiveness through Christ. So it is not necessary, when praying for these things, that one leave them to God's will whether he does them or not. We know and believe that he wants to do these. But we cannot have the same certainty as to what God's will is in bodily matters. We do not know whether God wants us to experience sickness, poverty, and other trials and whether those serve God's honor and our salvation. For that reason, ask for God's help but leave it to God's will, whether he wants to help immediately. Prayer in this situation is not in vain for if God does not help immediately he will strengthen the heart and give grace and patience so that one may endure it and finally overcome it – as the example of Christ teaches. God did not take this cup away from Christ but sent him an angel to strengthen him. Luther assured his listeners: "So it will also happen with you, even if God would delay or deny his help."56

Luther concluded this segment on prayer by commenting on the example of the disciples. They show that we learn these lessons slowly. They still had their temptations ahead of them and for that reason Christ admonished his disciples to "watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation." Prayer is the only and the best means to avoid this. But the flesh is lazy and when the need is greatest and praying is most necessary, we slumber and sleep – in other words fear overcomes us so that we think that prayer would be in vain. When this happens, we will deny the Lord, just as the disciples did. Luther, fortunately, did not leave his listeners/readers there but ended

his discussion of prayer with the comment that the gracious and merciful God who promised us help and mercy through his son Christ Jesus wants to help us out of temptation.

Conclusion

Luther used biblical examples to put human flesh on his teaching on prayer. Biblical figures prayed in situations of desperate need and hopeless outlook. They offered useful guidance on the why and how of prayer. What Luther teaches through these examples stands in sharp contrast to medieval prayer practice. Luther emphasized that we should not hesitate to pray to God (rather than the saints or the Virgin Mary). This God is a loving father, not an immoveable being, who hears and answers our prayer. We should pray in all situations of need and temptation and should not be discouraged by our unworthiness. We should even pray when we know that God is angry with us. God will hear our prayer despite our unworthiness and even despite his own anger at us. Prayer is not a good work but rather honest communication with God, forthrightly declaring need and asking for help. Such prayer could be short and to the point! Finally, any Christian – not just the clerical experts – can and should pray in these ways.

In these biblical examples of pray-ers and prayers, we also hear the central themes of Luther's theology. God is a merciful God, justifying sinners while they are yet sinners, not waiting for them to achieve righteousness. For Luther this also means that the merciful God hears the prayers of sinners without regard to their worthiness. We also encounter in these discussions Luther's dialectic between the hidden and the revealed God. God can be angry, his face and his actions hidden. In this situation Luther advocates that we flee to (not from) God in prayer. In prayer we will find the loving Father who responds kindly to our requests, always caring for us, even when he denies our specific request and shows another way.

Luther's reformation of prayer has much to say about his Reformation generally. Luther rediscovered who God is and how God relates to humans. Luther used biblical examples to show us a God who is moved by prayer, who interacts with those praying and responds to their requests. The human relationship to God in prayer is one of confidence, boldness, honesty, intimacy, creativity, and trust. The biblical examples show humans praying – both those who run away from God's will (Jonah) and those ready to let God's will be done (Jesus). The wonder is that God hears and answers the prayer not only of his worthy and beloved son Jesus but also the prayers of people like Jonah, people like you and me.

Notes

- Oswald Bayer has noted the significance of prayer for Luther's theology. Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008) 346. The final chapter, "Promise and Prayer," studies Luther's understanding of prayer.
- 2 The Large Catechism in The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) 440-441.
- For further literature see, e.g., Martin Lehmann, Luther and Prayer (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1985); Frieder Schulz, Die Gebete Luthers: Edition, Bibliographie und Wirkungsgeschichte (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1976); Vilmos Vajta, "Luther als Beter," in Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546, Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag (ed. Helmar Junghans; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1983) 1:279-295; Rudolf Damerau, Luthers Gebetslehre (2 vols; Marburg: Im Selbstverlag, 1975-77); William R. Russell, Praying for Reform: Luther, Prayer, and the Christian Life (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).
- 4 An entire volume of Albrecht Peters' five-volume commentary on the catechisms is devoted to the Lord's Prayer. Albrecht Peters, *Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen*, Vol 3: Das Vaterunser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). Among American sources, see, e.g., Timothy Wengert, "Luther on Prayer in the Large Catechism," in *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Practical Theology* (ed. Timothy J. Wengert; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009) 171-197.
- 5 LW 43:3-45. Betbüchlein, 1522, WA 10/2:375-406 (339).
- 6 A Simple Way to Pray, LW 43:187-211. Eine einfältige Weise zu beten für einen guten Freund, WA 38:358 375 (351). William R. Russell, "Luther, Prayer, and the Reformation," Word & World 22/1 (Winter 2002) 49-54, focuses on the Personal Prayer Book and on A Simple Way to Pray. Russell's book, Praying for Reform, includes texts of the Personal Prayer Book, the Booklet for Laity and Children (1525), and A Simple Way to Pray.
- See, e.g., Luther's suggestion of Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 3) to Prince John Frederick in his letter postscript to his commentary on the Magnificat. WA 7:603,17—604.9. LW 21:358. Christoph Burger, "Luthers Gebetsvorschlag für Herzog Johann Friedrich von Sachsen: Zur Bedeutung des Gebets in christlicher Theologie und zu Luthers Wertschätzung des Gebets," in *Oratio: Das Gebet in patristischer und reformatorischer Sicht* (ed. Emidio Campi et al; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) 185-196.
- 8 An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen. LW 42:15-81. Auslegung deutsch des Vaterunsers. WA 2:80-130 (74).
- 9 Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts [VD 16] (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich; Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel; Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1983-) 12:L4046-4068
- 10 LW 42:83-93. Ein Sermon von dem Gebet und Prozession in der Kreuzwoche. WA 2:175-179 (172). VD 16:L6325–L6339.
- 11 VD 16:L4081-L4124
- 12 LW 43:213-241. Vermahnung zum Gebet wider den Türken. WA 51:585-625 (577).
- 13 VD 16:L1934-1943.

- 14 VD 16:L4185-4198.
- 15 VD 16:L7153-7156.
- 16 Preface to the Small Catechism in The Book of Concord, 347.
- 17 LW 43:11. WA 10/2:375,5-8.
- 18 LW 30:324. WA 20:793,35-36.
- 19 Mary Jane Haemig, "Prayer as Talking back to God in Luther's Genesis Lectures," Lutheran Quarterly 23 (2009) 270-295.
- 20 LW 43:226-227. WA 51:598,16—599,9.
- 21 LW 43:227. WA 51:599,11-16.
- 22 LW 30:221-327. WA 20:599-801.
- 23 LW 30:322. WA 20:791,29-31.
- 24 LW 30:323. WA 30:792,23-35.
- 25 LW 30:323. WA 20:793,27-30.
- 26 LW 43:230-231. WA 51:606,4-9.
- 27 LW 43:231. WA 51:606,9.
- 28 LW 43:241. WA 51:606,9-14.
- 29 LW 9. WA 14:497-744.
- 30 LW 9:42. WA 14:579,26.
- 31 LW 9:42. WA 14:579,27-32.
- 32 LW 19:3-104. WA 13:241-258. WA 19:185-251.
- 33 VD 16, vol. 2, B3891-3893, B3895 are Latin editions; B3903-3915 are German editions.
- 34 LW 19:71. WA 19:222,8-9.
- 35 LW 19:71. WA 19:222,9-10.
- 36 LW 19:73. WA 19:224,8-10.
- 37 LW 19:16-17. WA 13:249,20-26.
- 38 LW 19:71. WA 19:222,11-12.
- 39 LW 19:71. WA 19:222,12-17.
- 40 LW 19:71. WA 19:222,17-20.
- 41 LW 19:71. WA 19:222,20-24.
- 42 LW 19:71. WA 19:222,26-28.
- 43 LW 19:72. WA 19:222,30—223,7.
- 44 LW 19:72. WA 19:223,14-17.
- 45 LW 19:72. WA 19:223,17-25.
- 46 LW 19:73. WA 19:223,26-29.
- 47 LW 19:73. WA 19:224,9-10.
- 48 LW 19:73. WA 19:224,10-13.
- 49 LW 19:73. WA 19:224,13-16.
- 50 LW 19:73-74. WA 19:224,16-26.
- 51 WA 52:734-742.
- 52 VD 16:L4831—L4902. Most of these are editions in German, Latin, and Low German. Dutch, Polish, and Slovenian editions also appeared.
- 53 "Er ist betru(e)bt und engstig, Aber bey dem lest ers nit bleyben, Er gehet hyn, felt auff sein angesicht und bettet." WA 52:739.
- 54 "Aber hie wider kanstu dich mit dem Olberg wider tro(e)sten und solches gedanckens dich erweren, Denn so es Got allweg mit uns bo(e)sz meinete, wenn er uns in angst und not lest kommen, so mu(e)ste folgen, er hette es mit seinem lieben Sun auch bo(e)sz gemeinet." WA 52:739.

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- 55 "Derhalt sollen wir nit allein dise wort in unserm gebet fueren, sonder auch das hertz und das vertrawen haben, Er, als ein Vater, meine es gut mit uns und werde uns, als seinen kindern, keinen mangel lassen." WA 52:740.
- 56 "Also soll es mit dir auch gehen, ob gleych Got mit der hilff verziehen oder auszbleyben wu(e)rde." WA 52:742.

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To Hell (and Back) With Luther: The Dialectic of Anfechtung and Faith

Denis R. Janz

I want to begin this lecture with a short introduction to the way Luther speaks about hell and how he understands it. From there I will turn to the complex theme of *Anfechtung*, in order to show that for Luther, hell at its hottest and *Anfechtung* at its deepest really amount to the same thing. Finally, when all of us are thoroughly depressed, I want to show how Luther speaks of faith as the sole remedy, as the only thing which really has the power to pull us back from the abyss.

First then, hell. The term "hell" occurs hundreds of times in Luther's writings. Sometimes he uses it vehemently to dismiss people he is unhappy with. Thus he says of "the papists," for instance: "Let them go to hell." What he meant by this is precisely what we mean today when we use the phrase. More often in Luther, "hell" is used in combination with terms like sin and death. Thus the triad "sin, death, and hell" recurs with great frequency: it is Luther's formulaic, short-hand way of referring to all that Christians are "saved" from. "Hell" in this context simply means the negative things about human life.

If we look more closely at other ways in which Luther uses this term, the landscape of his hell acquires sharper features. In his 1535-1545 *Lectures on Genesis*, he makes it clear that the conventional Roman Catholic view is unacceptable. This tradition, he says, posited "five places after death": a hell of the damned, a hell for unbaptized infants, purgatory, a limbo for the "fathers" of ancient Israel, and heaven. This schema he dismisses as "foolishness" and "silly ideas." As for unbaptized infants who die, we do not know what happens to them: we simply commend them "to the goodness of God." And as for any kind of "torment by eternal fire," Luther expresses

great hesitation. After pointing out some contradictory biblical passages, he concludes by saying that about this "... I am making no positive statement." About the damned mentioned in Jn 5:29 he adds: "... I am unable to say positively in what state those are who are condemned in the New Testament. I leave this undecided."

Properly speaking, Luther believed, hell is not a place. In his lectures on Jonah from 1524-26 he is explicit on this: "It is not a specific place, but, in Scripture, it is nothingness." For Luther it is an experience, an experience of nothingness. And nothingness, metaphysically speaking, is the opposite of being itself, or God. Thus hell is the experience of the absence of God. Or as Luther puts it, "To be deprived of the vision of God is hell itself."

Essentially, Luther thought, we know nothing about how the absence of God will be experienced after death. But what we do know a great deal about is how the absence of God is experienced in this life, here and now. Thus the only hell we really know about is the one we encounter in our lives. And this is the one Luther speaks about almost exclusively. Thus he describes the experience of *Anfechtung* as hell. Referring to his own "dark night of the soul," he said in 1518, "I myself 'knew a man' [2 Cor 12:2] who claimed that he had often suffered these punishments, in fact over a brief period of time. Yet they were so great and so much like hell that no tongue could adequately express them …" Here "hell" is indeed pain – the ultimate, indescribable, emotional pain.

Hell is also for Luther the terror of death which cripples our lives. In his 1519-21 lectures on the Psalms he said: "I hold that the sorrow of death and of hell are the same thing. Hell is the terror of death, that is, the sense of death, in which the damned have a horrified dread of death and yet cannot escape ..." So too, hell can be described as anxiety: "Those who are anxious seem to enter hell, and therefore, when someone finds himself in the most extreme misery of this kind, this experience is also called the most acute hell ..." And, as a final example, Luther can speak of despair as hell: "The theologian is concerned that man become aware of this nature of his. When this happens, despair follows, casting him into hell." This hell – the experience of *Anfechtung*, or the fear of death, anxiety, despair – this we humans know a great deal about. Ultimately it is the experience of the absence of God, and it is very real.

Here I want to add a brief note on the ancient belief about Christ's "descent into hell." This was a Christian teaching with vague origins in Roman mythology and in certain rather obscure New Testament passages (e.g. 1 Pet 3:19-22; 4:6; Eph 4:8-10). By the mid-fourth century it had found its way into early creedal formulations. In the Middle Ages it provided grist, in a minor way, for the scholastic theological mill. It also fur-

nished a vivid theme for the creative imagination, expressing itself in graphic and dramatic art. Luther accepted the *descensus ad inferos*, as the creeds (Apostles' and Athanasian) called it, as an article of faith. Thus the question of its truth was not at issue. What was open to discussion, of course, was its meaning. Yet, even on this, Luther had surprisingly little to say. Only in a few Easter and Ascension Day sermons, and in a handful of other sources, does Luther express his views.

Luther's understanding of this doctrine seems to have been developing throughout the 1520's. In 1523, for instance, we find him expressing considerable puzzlement over what the primary Scriptural source (1 Pet 3:19-22) could possibly mean. He came back to this passage and Eph 4:8-10 in 1527, in a sermon for Ascension Day. What it means, he emphasized, is that Christ went "down" before he went "up." In fact he went as deep as it is possible to go, to "the devil, death, sin, and hell." Thus the triumphant Christ encompasses all things under his rule, from the very lowest to the highest. 12

By the 1530's Luther's understanding seems to have reached maturity, and he expressed it most fully in his 1532 sermon for Easter Day. The article of faith as he now enunciates it is quite simply that "...[Christ] descended into hell that he might redeem us, who should have lay imprisoned there ..."

But the question is: how should this be understood? Luther begins his sermon with a substantial polemic against those who take articles of faith like this literally, and thus make nonsense out of them. "...[M]any have wanted to grasp these words with their reason and five senses, but without success. They have only been led further from the faith ..."

Without success. They have only been led further from the faith ..."

Obviously, Luther says, "... it did not happen in a physical way, since he indeed remained three days in the grave."

Crude literalism, Luther insists, makes nonsense of this. Indeed it is precisely the devil that tries to make us literalists and thus lead us away from the core truth.

How then did it happen? Luther's answer is frankly agnostic: we really don't know. "... I would simply leave this subject alone since I cannot even grasp everything that pertains to this life ..." What it points to, on the other hand, is "... that Christ destroyed hell's power and took all the devil's power away from him. When I grasp that, then I have the true core and meaning of it, and I should not ask further nor rack my brain about how it happened or how it was possible ..." We could learn much from "children and simple people" and artists, when it comes to expressing these things. They are not literalists, but they use their imaginations – create paintings, tell a story, perform in the children's Easter pageant, and so forth. Luther gives an example of such imaginative "explanation": "... [H]e went to hell with his banner in hand as a victorious hero, and he tore down its gates and charged into the midst of the devils, throwing one through the window and

another out the door."²¹ And we shouldn't be afraid (as literalists tend to be) that such imaginative depictions will ". . . harm or mislead us."²²

Once we have grasped Luther's rejection of the literal, we are in a position to understand his final answer to the question of why Christ descended into hell: to douse the fire! "... [N]either all monastic sanctity nor all the world's power and might can extinguish one spark of the fire of hell. But it so happened that this man went down with his banner, and then all the devils had to flee as if for their lives. And he extinguished all the fires of hell, so that no Christians need to fear it ..." Here we have a new soteriological title: Christ as fireman! The threat of hell hovered ominously over the medieval and Reformation periods and it loomed large on Luther's personal horizon. It was in this context that Luther came to understand the descent into hell as a "powerful" and "useful" article of faith. He was a "powerful" and "useful" article of faith.

With this in mind, I return now to the theme of *Anfechtung* for a closer look. This term, which Luther used throughout his career, has no exact equivalent in English. It refers not to an idea or a belief but to an experience. Literally, it means a kind of assault or attack. The Latin term Luther most often used to refer to the same thing is *tentatio*. But to translate this simply as "temptation," as many have done, is seriously to distort what he meant. In short, the term is problematic.

At the same time, it is of major importance. This is because Luther's theology has experience, more precisely religious experience, as its starting point. The subject matter of theology is the human person – his/her guilt and redemption. Theologians try to understand this with the help of revelation. But they are driven to this task in the first place by religious experience - their own and that of others. This is what Luther meant when he said, "... experience alone makes the theologian."25 Of course, human religious experience comes in multiple, almost infinite, varieties. But Luther's analysis categorized all of it into two basic types: the negative and the positive, the experience of our sinfulness and separation from God, on the one hand, and the experience of faith, on the other. Anfechtung is Luther's term for the first type of experience, especially in its more intense forms. This primal religious experience "taught" Luther theology: "I didn't learn my theology all at once. I had to ponder over it ever more deeply, and my Anfechtungen [tentationes] were of help to me in this, for one does not learn anything without experience [sine usu]."26

This provisional definition can give us an initial orientation to the subject, but it must be tested against the many other things Luther said about *Anfechtung*. He was not reluctant to speak and write about this aspect of his personal inner life. It was a recurring experience for him: he felt it in varying degrees of intensity at every stage of his life – as a young monk, as a begin-

ning professor at Wittenberg, at the Wartburg, in the late 1520's, and so on, into old age. Obviously this was not the kind of experience which is finally and decisively overcome once and for all in a dramatic conversion event. Moreover, his many descriptions and definitions vary widely. They leave the distinct impression that mere words are inadequate to define it. We should not be surprised: often people's most deeply felt experiences elude precise delineation in ordinary language.

Luther realized that some of his bouts of *Anfechtung* were related to physical illnesses. They can be, he says, the cause of headaches and stomach problems.²⁷ They can also result from physical ailments which force us to face our mortality.²⁸ But the "... spiritual anguish exceeds bodily suffering by far."²⁹ And *Anfechtung* can strike when we are in perfect health. So too, Luther understood that *Anfechtung* is related to depression.³⁰ Severe depression can be a kind of *Anfechtung*.³¹ But on the other hand, *Anfechtung* is by no means reducible to depression, from his point of view.

Sometimes Luther describes *Anfechtung* as an experience of God's anger – a horrifying anger because it is eternal: "... in this present agony, a person sees nothing but hell, and there seems to be no way out. He feels that what is happening to him/her is endless, for it is not the wrath of a human person but of the eternal God." Elsewhere Luther describes this fear that God's anger is unending in other terms: "My *Anfechtung* [tentatio] is this, that I think I don't have a gracious God ... It is the greatest grief, and, as Paul says, it produces death [2 Cor 7:10]." Even worse, perhaps, is when one senses that he/she faces it alone. "When persons are tormented by *Anfechtungen*, it seems to them that they are alone. God is irreconcilably angry only with them ..."

Sometimes the theme of *human* anger rises to the fore in Luther's discussion. His own early experience of *Anfechtung* in the monastery made him "... angry with God ..."³⁵ The experience can lead to hatred of God, the "... wish that there were no God at all!,"³⁶ and ultimately, blasphemously, to the desire to kill God.³⁷

The person who experiences *Anfechtung*, Luther thought, approaches the gates of hell. "... [T]he entrance of hell ... is near despair." Already in his *Ninety-five Theses* of 1517, Luther had mentioned the "horror of despair." In the following year, in his *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses*, he elaborated on this despair in a passage that was to become his most famous description of *Anfechtung*. Here is the full text of the passage I began to quote earlier:

I myself 'knew a man' [Luther is referring to himself] who claimed that he had often suffered these punishments, in fact over a very brief period of time. Yet they were so great and so much like hell that no

tongue could adequately express them, no pen could describe them, and one who had not himself experienced them could not believe them. And so great were they that, if they had been sustained or had lasted for half an hour, even for one tenth of an hour, he would have perished completely and all of his bones would have been reduced to ashes. At such a time God seems terribly angry, and with him the whole creation. At such a time there is no flight, no comfort, within or without, but all things accuse. At such a time, as the Psalmist mourns, 'I am cut off from thy sight' [cf. Ps 31:22] ... All that remains is the stark naked desire for help and a terrible groaning, but it does not know where to turn for help. In this instance the person is stretched out with Christ so that all his bones may be counted, and every corner of the soul is filled with the greatest bitterness, dread, trembling, and sorrow in such a manner that all these last forever. 40

This "abyss of despair" remained for Luther one of the standard ways of describing what he meant by *Anfechtung*. 41

If despair brings us near to the gates of hell, there is another form of *Anfechtung* that takes us into hell itself. And that is the experience of the silence of God. Sometimes God "... withdraws his anger ..." and disappears. He abandons us: "To be abandoned by God – this is far worse than death." Here is the ultimate anguish, what Luther calls the "most perfect *Anfechtung*," the very worst human experience imaginable – hell itself.

Luther did not think that the experience of *Anfechtung* was universal. Some, such as Staupitz, Luther's early spiritual mentor, did not seem to understand. Sebastian Münster, a Hebraist on whom Luther relied for help in translating the Old Testament, had no such experience, in Luther's opinion. Erasmus and Luther's "sacramentarian" opponents would change their minds if they ever experienced this. The indulgence preachers could never so crassly trivialize the gospel if they felt this. The "reprobate," Luther says, feel no such thing. Then too, "... self-assured, coarse, untested, inexperienced people know and understand nothing about this."

At the same time Luther took comfort in the fact that he wasn't alone: many people *do* in fact experience something similar. And some of these have left us with their attempts to describe it. The book of Job is one example of this.⁵¹ Even more poignant, from Luther's perspective, is the story of Jonah. What greater abandonment could there be than to be "cast into the deep" (Jonah 2:3)?⁵² What greater silence than to be in "the belly of the fish" (Jonah 2:1)? And Jonah's story was Luther's: ". . . I sat with Jonah in the whale where everything seemed to be despair."⁵³ Most eloquent of all in expressing the experience of *Anfechtung*, Luther thought, were the Psalms. In

fact this is what the whole book is about.⁵⁴ From the divine wrath of Psalm 6,⁵⁵ to the "despairing spirit" of Psalm 51,⁵⁶ to the "faint spirit" of Psalm 142,⁵⁷ to "the depths" of Psalm 130 – "... where," Luther asks, "do you find deeper, more sorrowful, more pitiful words of sadness ...? There again you look into the hearts of all the saints, as into death, yes, as into hell itself." Above all, the theme of abandonment is powerfully expressed in Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

With this we come to the supreme sufferer of *Anfechtung*, Jesus himself. Luther often alludes to this, but he addresses it most directly in sermons on the passion. Following Matthew's narrative (Mt 26:36-46), Luther recounts how Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples. There Jesus experienced an anguish (*Angst*) so great he felt he could die from it. Faced with this *Anfechtung*, he prayed "Let this cup pass from me" three times according to Matthew. And the Father's answer? Silence! (In Luke's version, Luther notes, God sends an angel to "strengthen" Jesus. He but still, God's silence is not broken (Lk 22:41-44). No wonder then that shortly thereafter, from the cross, we hear his cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). Silence and abandonment – Jesus experienced "the most perfect *Anfechtung*," or what Luther elsewhere calls "... the high *Anfechtung*, which is called being forsaken by God ...," a "high, spiritual suffering" which is unimaginable.

Horrifying as the experience of *Anfechtung* can be, it can also be salutary. Without this, for instance, one cannot really understand the Scriptures⁶⁵ – not David, nor Jonah, nor Job, nor Christ. Luther wonders whether "... smug people, who have never struggled with any temptation [tentatio/Anfechtung] or true terrors of sin and death ..." can really know what faith is.⁶⁶ Moreover, Luther thought, this experience is essential for theologians. In his 1539 prescription for "a correct way of studying theology," *Anfechtung* plays a major role: "[It] is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's word is, wisdom beyond all wisdom."⁶⁷ Without experiencing the depths, in other words, the immensity of the heights can scarcely be grasped.

There is also a deeper sense in which the experience of *Anfechtung* is beneficial for us. The "broken spirit" which the Psalmist calls "the sacrifice acceptable to God" (Ps 51:17), Luther thinks, is the *Anfechtung* of despair.⁶⁸ In fact, our despair puts us in very close proximity to grace.⁶⁹ God's kindness and love lie hidden beneath his anger, as Jonah discovered.⁷⁰ When we experience the silence and the absence of God, Christ is "with" us: "If . . . you have been three days in hell, this is a sign that Christ is with you and you are with Christ."⁷¹ Resurrection is at hand.

Is there anything that can be done to alleviate or mitigate this experience for oneself and for others? Luther offers a very substantial repertoire of advice in this regard. Some of it is found in short treatises such as his 1521 work, *Comfort for a Person Facing High Anfechtung*.⁷² Even more is found in personal letters to friends and acquaintances. For instance, in 1530 Luther wrote a series of rather substantial letters to one Jerome Weller, who was going through a prolonged period of *Anfechtung*.⁷³ Likewise in 1531 he sent a letter of advice on this theme to Barbara Lisskirchen.⁷⁴ And in 1545 he circulated a letter to pastors, detailing a kind of semi-liturgical procedure for dealing with this very common problem.⁷⁵ References to his own personal bouts of *Anfechtung* and how he dealt with them are found in various writings, but above all throughout his Table Talk. What is notable in all this is the enormous variety. No single piece of advice is appropriate in every case. People differ, and *Anfechtung* manifests itself in a whole range of forms and levels of intensity.

One can easily compile a list of techniques he suggested to one or another sufferer and ones he himself used: 1. private confession to a pastor or friend;⁷⁶ 2. pray, using Psalm 142;⁷⁷ 3. tell the devil, 'Kiss my ass';⁷⁸ 4. flee solitude;⁷⁹ 5. drink heartily (though for some, abstinence is better);⁸⁰ 6. eat sumptuously; 7. think of sex;⁸¹ 8. tell jokes and laugh; 9. commit a sin to spite the devil;⁸² 10. yield to God's will: focus not on 'Let this cup pass from me,' but rather on 'Not my will, but yours.'⁸³ And so on. This list could easily be extended. All of these things, Luther thought, work in certain circumstances.

Yet he also knew that in another sense, none of them work. We can begin to understand this if we focus for the moment solely on the "most perfect" or "high" Anfechtung. Lesser Anfechtungen are really only weaker versions of the same thing. And this high Anfechtung is, as we have seen, the experience of God's silence, his abandonment of us, our God-forsakeness, hell. Luther can also speak of it as our sense that God is not really "for us" but "against us": "My Anfechtung [tentatio] is this, that I think I don't have a gracious God ... It is the greatest grief, and, as Paul says, it produces death (2 Cor 7:10). God hates it, and he comforts us by saying, 'I am your God.' I know his promise, and yet should some thought that isn't worth a fart nevertheless overwhelm me, I have the advantage ... of taking hold of his word once again. God be praised, I grasp the first commandment which declares, 'I am your God (Ex 20:2). I am not going to devour you. I am not going to be poison for you."84 Here we see what is, to Luther's way of thinking, the only real remedy. It is the confidence that God is "for us." This confidence or trust is what Luther called "faith."

There is nothing more fundamental for an understanding of Luther than his concept of faith. For him it was at the same time the profoundest and the most important mystery of human life. In a real sense his theological career was a lifelong struggle to grasp and explain it. At the mid-point of that career, in 1531, he confessed, he had barely made a start: "For in my heart there resides this one doctrine, namely, faith in Christ. From it, through it, and to it all my theological thought flows and returns day and night; yet I am aware that all I have grasped of this wisdom in its height, width, and depth are a few poor and insignificant firstfruits and fragments." By the end of his career he had approached the subject from every conceivable angle, seeing ever new dimensions and implications, explaining it hundreds of times in scores of different ways, searching always for a more adequate language, and finally acknowledging the poverty of the human intellect in the face of this, one of life's ultimate mysteries.

To begin to understand what Luther meant by faith, we must have a firm grasp of definitions he rejected. Trained in scholasticism, he had inherited the dominant medieval understanding of faith as an infused intellectual virtue or habit from which the "act of faith" proceeds. Such an act of faith, then, is essentially the assent of the intellect to propositional truths. Luther's early marginal notes on Augustine and Peter Lombard of 1509/10 indicate his agreement with this traditional view. But already by 1515 he regarded this understanding of "faith as belief" as an impoverished, superficial distortion of what it really means.

Of course, he did not simply make up a new definition. Rather his new understanding emerged from a deeply personal engagement with the text of Scripture, and especially the writings of St. Paul. Here he found a language of faith which, in his view, overturned the traditional one. Simply acknowledging certain events to be true, for instance, falls far short of what St. Paul meant by "faith" in his letter to the Romans: "Faith is not the human notion and dream that some people call faith...[W]hen they hear the gospel, they get busy and by their own power create an idea in their heart which says, 'I believe'; they take this then to be a true faith. But it is a human figment."87 In an academic disputation of 1535, Luther used the example of beliefs about Jesus to illustrate the point. "... [T]he infused faith of the sophists [scholastics], says of Christ: 'I believe that the Son of God suffered and rose again,' and here it stops. But true faith says: 'I certainly believe that the Son of God suffered and rose, but he did this all for me, for my sins, of that I am certain' ... Accordingly, that 'for me' or 'for us', if it is believed, creates that true faith and distinguishes it from all other faith which merely hears the things done. This is the faith that alone justifies us ..."88 Or, as the Augsburg Confession had put it in 1530, faith does indeed acknowledge these events, but then so does the devil. True faith goes beyond this by believing the effect of this history.⁸⁹ Simple belief that these things happened (fides

historica) certainly does not justify: Luther's slogan "justification by faith alone" makes no sense if this is what faith means.

Luther's understanding of faith has rightly been called "existential": knowledge of God or Christ is not real knowledge but rather it remains useless information until we see its implications for us. This is what Luther had in mind when he said in his 1535 *Lectures on Galatians* that "[f]aith is the creator of the Deity, not in the substance of God, but in us." It is in faith that God becomes real for us. In those same lectures, Luther explained that for Christians this happens through Christ. The "doctrine [or content] of faith," he says, "proclaims that Christ alone is the victor over sin, death, and the devil ... "91 Faith itself then ". . . is a sure confidence that takes hold of Christ ..." In other words, faith is the confidence that "sin, death, and the devil" have been overcome for me. It is the subjective appropriation of what has objectively happened; and until there is such a subjective appropriation, what has happened objectively (Christ's victory) does me no good.

This appropriating, or apprehending, or grasping, or accepting is what Luther means by "faith." "Faith apprehends Christ," Luther says, 93 and he means that in faith the entire being of the person recognizes, grasps, and accepts the ultimate import of Christ for him or her. And who is Christ? Most fundamentally for Luther, Christ is "a mirror of the Father's heart." ⁹⁴ To "apprehend Christ" means therefore to grasp that I am the object of the divine love. As the Augsburg Confession put it, faith is the belief that we "... are received into grace [i.e., into divine favor] ...;" it is by faith that "... forgiveness of sins and justification are taken hold of ..."95 Or as Luther says in his 1522 Preface to St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "Faith is a living daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God's grace makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith."96 In the final analysis, faith is for Luther the confidence that, because we are objects of an infinite and unconditional love, the negativities of human existence can have no finality or ultimacy for us: fear, despair, death, and all troubles have been conquered. They are stripped of their power by the conviction that the very deepest of all human longings has been fulfilled. For if we really are loved infinitely and unconditionally by an omnipotent being, nothing can hurt us.

To live one's life with such a trust, according to Luther, makes all the difference in the world. But before describing Luther's view of this "new creature," we must emphasize that for him, faith exists very often in tension with experience. There are "mountaintop" moments in life when humans have a profound sense that all is right with the world. But there are other moments,

Luther knew all too well, when bitter experience suggests that "sin, death, and the devil" (i.e., all the evils that oppress humans) will have the last word. At such times, Luther said, "... faith slinks away and hides." This was the experience of Christ on the cross, and so too is it our experience. Reason, at such moments, interprets experience so as to contradict faith, and only faith can overcome it: "It [reason] can be killed by nothing else but faith, which believes God ... It [faith] does this in spite of the fact that he speaks what seems foolish, absurd, and impossible to reason [namely that he loves us] ... "98 The miracle is that faith, weak as it now may be, persists. Only in the life of the world to come will our experience cease to contradict faith: then what we believe now, that all evil has been overcome, will be apparent.

Faith, this trust that death and all troubles have been conquered, can sometimes seem as self-evident to us as "three plus two equals five." But more often in real life it coexists, in a complex relationship, with doubt. In his Preface to his 1535 *Lectures on Galatians*, Luther warns that we have little hope of understanding St. Paul here unless we too are "miserable Galatians in faith," that is, "troubled, afflicted, vexed, and tempted ..." The presence of doubt does not imply the absence of faith. Faith is a mysterious reality which hides itself beneath doubt and even beneath its absolute opposite, despair. So it is difficult to tell where faith is. "For it happens, indeed it is typical of faith, that often he who claims to believe does not believe at all; and on the other hand, he who doesn't think he believes, but is in despair, has the greatest faith." Faith sometimes "crawls away and hides" beneath doubt and despair, and then it reemerges. And ultimately, Luther thinks, humans do not control this. If they did, faith would be little more than "the power of positive thinking."

It is, Luther insists, a gift. Having true faith is really a divine work¹⁰² which comes to us through the proclamation of the gospel – the good news that God loves us though we are unworthy of that love.¹⁰³ Some – not all – who hear it accept it, and that acceptance is what Christians call the work of the Holy Spirit in us.¹⁰⁴ In other words, when humans receive and accept God's grace, that itself is the result of grace. "For here we work nothing, render nothing to God; we only receive and permit someone else to work in us, namely God."¹⁰⁵ Faith thus comes to us, Luther says, as the dry earth receives the rain, in utter passivity.¹⁰⁶ Human striving cannot induce it to fall, but when it does, new life erupts. And whenever we see signs of this new life, we can be sure that it has fallen: "True faith is not idle. We can, therefore, ascertain and recognize those who have true faith from the effect or from what follows."¹⁰⁷

Luther was explicit in spelling out the consequences of faith for human emotional life, and in this he very directly brought his own experience into

play. As I have shown, throughout his life and fairly frequently he was vigorously assaulted by "Anfechtungen." Luther vividly described his "Anfechtungen" as the experience of hell itself. And ultimately the only answer, he thought, was faith: "... the afflicted conscience has no remedy against despair and eternal death except to take hold of the promise of grace offered in Christ, that is, this righteousness of faith ..." Losing faith means losing Christ as savior, and from this "... sure despair and eternal death follow." Losing faith, in other words, means losing confidence that the source and heart of all reality is an infinite love, and losing trust that we are unconditionally objects of that love. Hence, Luther says, when assaulted by fear and death, "... we must look at no other God than this incarnate and human God ... When you do this, you will see the love, the goodness, and the sweetness of God." Faith alone is what enables us to experience life as sweet, in the deepest sense. It brings peace and happiness – in short, salvation. 111

This topic of faith has brought us to the very heart of Luther's understanding of Christianity. Its meaning, according to him, cannot be exhausted. "... [H]e who has had even a faint taste of it can never write, speak, meditate, or hear enough concerning it." ¹¹² If one were forced to choose a summary statement from Luther, the following one from 1522 may well be the best. And it is noteworthy that it comes not from a theological lecture or academic disputation but from a sermon.

All Christian teaching, works and life can be summed up briefly, clearly, and fully under the two categories of faith and love: humans are placed midway between God and their neighbor, receiving from above [faith] and dispensing below [love], and becoming as it were a vessel or a tube through which the stream of divine benefits flows unceasingly into other people. How clearly those are conformed to God who receive from God everything he has to give, in Christ, and in their turn, as though they were gods to others, give them benefits ... We are children of God through faith, which makes us heirs to all the divine goodness. But we are gods through love, which makes us active in doing good to our neighbor; for the divine nature is nothing other than pure goodness ... and friendliness and kindness, pouring out its good things every day in profusion upon every creature, as we can see. 113

Faith, ultimately, is the ability to understand and accept ourselves as the objects of God's love. This, Luther thought, is the key to finding happiness in life.

If this is what faith really is, then it is also what rescues us from hell. As we have seen, hell at its very hottest is nothing but the ultimate extremity of human dread and despair, the terror of feeling abandoned by God, the horror we feel when *our* cry of dereliction is answered by silence. This is the abyss, and only faith, Luther believed, has the power to drag us back from its edge.

Notes

- 1 LW 34:366.
- 2 LW 4:314-315.
- 3 LW 4:315.
- 4 LW 4:316.
- 5 WA 13:232,19-20.
- 6 LW 4:315.
- 7 LW 31:129.
- 8 WA 5:463,22-25.
- 9 WA 13:232,17-19.
- 10 LW 12:310-311.
- 11 WA 12:367,31-32.
- 12 WA 23:702,12-16.
- 13 WA 37:62,31-32.
- 14 WA 37:62,37—63,2.
- 15 WA 37:62,12-13.
- 16 WA 37:63,36-41.
- 17 WA 37:64,16-19.
- 18 WA 37:63,20-21.
- 19 WA 37:63,31-34.
- 20 WA 37:63,5-13; 64,23.
- 21 WA 37:65,23-25.
- 22 WA 37:65,38-39.
- 23 WA 37:66,29-34.
- 24 WA 37:63,30.
- 25 LW 54:7, #46.
- 26 WA, TR 1:146,12-14, #352.
- 27 LW 54:74, #461.
- 28 LW 14:141.
- 29 LW 54:276, #3799.
- 30 LW 54:17, #122; 54:275, #3798.
- 31 WA, BR 11:112,7-10, #4120.
- 32 WA 5:210,13-16.
- 33 WA, TR 1:200,6-8, #461.
- 34 WA 5:79,14-15.
- 35 LW 34:337.

- 36 LW 22:142.
- 37 WA 5:210,1-2.
- 38 LW 31:130.
- 39 LW 31:27.
- 40 LW 31:129.
- 41 LW 33:190; 54:16-17.
- 42 WA, TR 1:585,3-10, #1179.
- 43 WA 45:237,23.
- 44 WA 5:204,26.
- 45 LW 54:133, #1288.
- 46 WA, TR 3:363,4-6, #3505.
- 47 LW 49:173.
- 48 LW 31:130.
- 49 LW 25:378.
- 50 WA 45:237,23-26.
- 51 WA 5:78,36-37; 45:239,18-19.
- 52 LW 19:18-19.
- 53 WA, TR 3:363,4-6, #3503.
- 54 WA, TR 5:592, 26-27, #6305.
- 55 LW 54:275, #3798.
- 56 LW 25:377.
- 57 LW 42:184-185
- 58 LW 35:256.
- 59 E.g., WA 52:734-742.
- 60 WA 52:734,26-28.
- 61 WA 52:742,8-9.
- 62 WA 5:204,26.
- 63 WA 45:240,26-27.
- 64 WA 45:239,23.
- 65 WA, TR 1:472,22-24, #941.
- 66 LW 26:127.
- 67 LW 34:286.
- 68 LW 25:377.
- 69 LW 33:190.
- 70 LW 19:73; WA, TR 1:585,3-10, #1179.
- 71 LW 10:373.
- 72 WA 7:784-791 = LW 42:183-186.
- 73 WA, BR 5:373-375, #1593; 518-520, #1670; 546-547, #1684.
- 74 WA, BR 12:134-136, #4244a.
- 75 WA, BR 11:111-112, #4120.
- 76 LW 51:98.
- 77 LW 42:184-185.
- 78 WA, TR 1:64,16-17, #144.
- 79 LW 54:277, #3799.
- 80 LW 54:18, #122; WA 40/2:115,14-116, 2; LW 50:48.
- 81 LW 54:18, #122.
- 82 WA, BR 5:519,42-46, #1670.
- 83 LW 42:183.

- 84 LW 54:75, #461.
- 85 LW 27:145.
- 86 E.g., WA 9:92,38-93,7.
- 87 LW 35:370.
- 88 LW 34:110.
- 89 Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000) 57. Hereinafter BC.
- 90 LW 26:227.
- 91 LW 26:224.
- 92 LW 26:348.
- 93 LW 34:153.
- 94 BC 440.
- 95 BC 41.
- 96 LW 35:371.
- 97 WA 17/1:72,17
- 98 LW 26:231.
- 99 WA 10/3:260, 23-261,1.
- 100 LW 27:148.
- 101 LW 40:241.
- 102 WA 12:442,4-9.
- 103 LW 35:368.
- 104 LW 21:299.
- 105 LW 26:4-5.
- 106 LW 26:6.
- 107 LW 34:182.
- 108 LW 26:5-6.
- 109 LW 26:11.
- 110 LW 26:29-30.
- 111 LW 26:11.
- 112 LW 31:343.
- 113 WA 10/1/1:100,8-101,2.

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True Freedom: 40th Luther Colloquy Sermon (John 8:31-36)

Eric W. Gritsch

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When I survived a brief stint as a teenage soldier in 1945, I finished my secondary education and matriculated at the University of Vienna in 1950. Now freedom had become my game. I could live by myself, study without paying tuition, and enjoy opera performances. But what was I to do in the future? I stumbled into a class on psychology taught by a Jewish psychologist who had survived in a death camp; his name was Viktor Frankl. I asked him for advice. Exchanging our stories of survival, mine in the Hitler Youth, he in a death camp, he looked me in the eye and said, "You must become a Christian theologian." The rest is history.

The decade between 1950 and 1960 was the "golden age" of theological education. I experienced it in three countries (Austria, Switzerland, the U.S.), two continents (Europe and North America), and four universities (Vienna, Zürich, Basel, and Yale). I specialized in church history, with an eye on radical left wing reformers who opposed Luther. I wanted to encounter him first through opponents in his own camp. Moreover, encountering the vicissitudes of history curbed my temptation to do systematic theology with its packaged doctrines. But team-teaching the course on the Lutheran Confessions with Robert Jenson for twenty years created a productive dialectic between historical and theological thinking.

The most significant lesson in my career is the discovery of CHRIS-TIAN FREEDOM. It is different from any other freedom because it is the power to overcome the fear of "sin, evil, and death" (as Luther put it) in a SRR SPRING 2011 57

world doomed to end when Christ returns to usher in a new one. This freedom is succinctly described in the gospel for "Reformation Day": "If the Son makes you free, you are free indeed" (Jn 8:36).

Some time ago, a fellow-member at my church in Baltimore asked me after a devastating lecture by the radical social critic Jim Kunstler on the cultural devastation in the country and around the world: "It all seems to be so hopeless. What's your reaction as a pastor and theologian?" he asked. "Relax," I said. "You, I, and the world have had it. All the bad news about this world is in the shadow of the 'good news' about the next one. As Christians we live in the mean, meantime between birth and death, and between the first and second coming. In the interim we must obey two commandments which Jesus called "the greatest" – love of God and love of neighbor."

Luther described Christian freedom as living in Christ and in the neighbor: "A Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor" ("The Freedom of the Christian," 1520). Love of neighbor curbs self-righteousness and egopower. Its radical way is martyrdom; its regular way aims for mutuality, equity, and justice (symbolized by a scale). In this sense, love of neighbor eliminates religious competition. Example: someone who is drowning is saved by three swimmers, a Christian, a Communist, and a Hindu. They proudly credit their religion or ideology for their action. "It makes no difference who saved me," said the survivor. "I just wanted to be pulled from the water."

We will never create a world without sin, evil, and death. Only God will do that after the Last Day. Until then, sin rules, the "original," "inherited" sin of Adam and Eve. They wanted to be in charge of good and evil, in short, "to be like God" (Gen 3:4-5). Jesus said, "striving for his kingdom ... will stem the tide of sin for his little flock" (Lk 12:32). It exists, almost hidden, in the mass of about 220 church bodies with a global membership of about two billion – including about 70 million Lutherans. We know how denominations grow in the American neighborhood. Whenever there is serious disagreement in one, its conservatives walk out and establish a new one. I encountered seminarians who told me that I did not like them because I challenged them to a critical debate. Pious ignorance is often draped in the cloak of orthodoxy opposing any change. A frustrated pastor told me: "When Christ comes at the end of the world, I will hear the last seven words of my parishioners, 'We never did it like this before.'"

Jesus and Thomas Jefferson agree on the caveat that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Jesus defined vigilance as serpentine wisdom. And child-like faith. He told his disciples; "I am sending you out like sheep

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among wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt 10:16). Sheep and wolves are symbols of irrational violence. The serpent is a symbol of healing depicted by the ancient Greek god Asclepios (420 B.C.E.) who had a staff with a serpent curled around it – still a logo of medicine today. In the Bible, the image of the serpent moves from a symbol of temptation (Gen 3) to one of healing like the bronze serpent of Moses (Num 21:9), embodied in Jesus (Jn 3:14). Doves represent child-like faith, naïve, and unprotected. Any fowl hunter knows that they can be shot at close range while cooing and making love. Healing begins with cold-blooded diagnosis, with "serpenthood," as it were. Example: someone failed as a teacher and is told, after psychological counseling, that he had an inferiority complex. He got a second opinion: "You do have an inferiority complex. You *are* inferior!" The diagnosis got him back to teaching; not the best but quite good.

Christian freedom must be guarded by a careful diagnosis of other claims to be free. This is why "the little flock" as "the body of Christ" needs to have an office of the ministry that, like the vocation of the family physician, must try to identify spiritual diseases that threaten Christian freedom. Specialists, "doctors of theology," may have to do surgery to keep the body of Christ on earth sound and well — with a special eye on the tricky, indeed mysterious, deadly, spiritual cancer: the desire to play God. I encountered that cancer as a Pack Leader in the Hitler Youth. I asked my superior, "What should I do when one of my boys disobeys an order?" "Shoot him," the officer said. "There is only unconditional obedience in the German army." I learned an effective lesson on the nature of tyranny and idolatry. When I ordered my boys to desert in the face of the imminent Russian attack, one refused; he was killed.

The German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer opposed the tyranny and idolatry of the Hitler regime as a double agent with the group that tried to assassinate Hitler in 1944. When he was arrested and sentenced to be hanged, he told a friend, "This is not the end but the beginning of life." He encountered the "real presence" of Christ not only in the Eucharist ("a foretaste of the feast to come") but also in the suffering neighbor, the German people. For Jesus told his disciples: "Just as you did it to one of the least of my family, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40).

When evil seems to destroy our freedom for the future with Christ, our eschatological freedom, we can, like soldiers in war, use rations provided by Christ: his "real presence" in the Eucharist and in the suffering neighbor — in the Eucharist as "a foretaste of the feast to come" and in the care for a desperate neighbor ("Just as you did it to one of the least of my family, you did it to me"). Unconditional faith in Christ creates a freedom that allows us to move from fear to cheer. Luther did it in his own particular way —

with a sense of gallows humor. In a "Table-talk" he said: "For one person I have done enough. All that is left is to sink into my grave. I am done for, except for tweaking the pope's nose a little now and then." 1

True freedom, Christian freedom, requires the peculiar combination of "serpenthood" and "dovehood." We must use cold-blooded, serpentine wisdom to dress the wounds of sin; and we must radiate joyous, dove-like innocence to celebrate the wonders of divine love. In this sense, worship and education are the twin pillars of the church "militant" on the way to becoming the church "triumphant." Jesus concluded his mandate for serpenthood and dovehood with a prophecy and a promise: "You will be hated because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt 16:22).

I wish you God's speed on your trek though time in true freedom grounded in the premise that "if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Notes

1 LW 54:343, #4465.

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On Disability and Theology

Mary Fast

Even though education programs are designed to help students and practitioners keep up with the currents in theological education, the summer of 2010 brought Disability and Theology to the forefront in a five-day, multi-track summer institute. The following is a brief report on the event and its scope. You will see an advertisement in the back of this SRR that offers a way to glean some of its content. But educational programs also sometimes change the institutions who offer them. Ten years ago, Gettysburg Seminary would not have been able to offer such a program because of a lack of accessibility in our campus infrastructure. And in response to this program, we invited reflections "To Rot or Not" from Diana York Luscombe (page 62), who is making her way through life and ministry following a severe automobile accident and is helping us hear and see more clearly what disabilities can mean for a church leader.

The Poetry + Theology rubric, beginning on page 111 also has an emphasis on disability, health, and pastoral care. — ed.

The Summer Institute for Ministry 2010 was held at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg from July 12-16. Theological educators, seminary faculty, pastors, professional and lay church leaders, as well as individuals with disabilities gathered on the Gettysburg Seminary campus to participate in a conference on "Disability and Theology." The conference consisted of a one-day event: "New Voices in Disability and Theology: An Introduction" and an over-lapping, week-long event: "The Call and Promise for Pastoral Leadership and Theological Education."

Theologians prominent in the rapidly developing field of disability theology came from around the world to present their work at the Gettysburg conference. This impressive group included Erik Carter, Associate Professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology at the University of Wisconsin;

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Leonard Hummel, Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Care at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary; Bishop Peggy A. Johnson, Bishop of the Philadelphia Area of the United Methodist Church; Hans Reinders, Professor at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam; Thomas Reynolds, Associate Professor of Theology at Emmanuel College, of Victoria University in the University of Toronto; John Swinton, Chair of Practical Theology and Pastoral Care at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland; and Amos Yong, J. Rodman Williams Professor of Theology at Regent University School of Divinity in Virginia Beach, VA.

An equally diverse group of pastors, theologians, and church workers traveled to Gettysburg to participate in the conference. The schedule was carefully woven together with presentations followed by guided discussion groups. These groups were divided into two tracks, a "Pastoral Track" and a "Theological Educator Track." Participants had time for further discussion and networking during coffee breaks and meals served on-campus.

For many of the participants, this was a joyful time of gathering with colleagues who know and understand disability through personal experience — their own or someone that they love and care for. Some simply wanted to learn how to reach out and embrace those members of the body of Christ who live with disability. Most participants felt that they gained far more than they had expected by attending this five-day intensive on disability and theology. As Dr. Ira Frazier, a participant from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reflected: "As a person who is disabled, I had opportunity to interact with persons who didn't feel sorry for me, but wanted to invite me to claim my place at the theological table and were going to help me in the process of accepting my place." For this participant, the opportunity to interact directly with the theologians who are on the cutting edge of this newly emerging field left a lasting impression.

As a result of the Summer Ministry Institute's conference on disability and theology, many of us are more committed to teaching and preaching about disability. Several participants returned home to develop classes for colleges and seminaries on disability theology. Most will be actively working to make their congregations a welcome place for people with disabilities. Almost all of us are more aware of the need to be inclusive of and develop friendships with people who live with disability. More importantly, as a result of this conference, we all know that people with disabilities must be moved from the fringes of the church into the center of the faith community — the place where they rightfully belong.

Mary Schaefer Fast is an ordained Lutheran pastor from Omaha, Nebraska. She and her husband, Doug, have an adult son with a communication disorder. Pastor Fast has an M.Div. from Sioux Falls Seminary, and an M.Th. in systematic theology from Luther Seminary. She is currently a doctoral candidate in theology at Regent University School of Divinity.

To Rot or Not: The Art of Claiming Brokenness

Diana York Luscombe

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the kings horses And all the kings men Couldn't put Humpty together again! - English Nursery Rhyme

As a child I, like many children around the world, learned all sorts of different nursery rhymes. There was *Ring around the Rosie* that had us dancing around and falling on the floor, giggling. There was *Old Mother Hubbard* who tried desperately to feed her poor little dog. We were entertained by mice running up clocks, people going to bed with only one sock, and we were dreamy eyed thinking about twinkling stars. Many of the nursery rhymes we learn as children have deeper, sometimes historical, meanings we do not know about or take the time to consider. As children we tend to focus on the rhyme, the beat and how fast it makes us want to move or how quickly it gets us to laugh.

Until recently, I had never given much thought to the potential deeper meanings behind the plight of dear old Humpty Dumpty. When I think about this particular nursery rhyme some artistic depictions come to mind; the oversized egg dressed in clothes lying broken on the ground, the bewildered looks on the faces of those waiting around, the hopelessness, and sometimes helplessness, expressed on the faces of the Kings horses and men.

I can only imagine how Humpty Dumpty ended up in this predicament in the first place. I picture him out for a stroll one day, the sun shin-

ing, a light breeze in the air, our friend Humpty lost in thought traveling

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across an open field and coming to a wall that might be good for resting. As he sits on the wall pondering the beauty of the day the breeze suddenly turns into a gust of wind, catching Humpty off guard, which pushes him right off the wall.

There he is lying on the ground, broken, apparently beyond repair. What is an egg to do? He is surrounded by people who seem to have a vested interest in putting him back together but find themselves unable to complete the task. It causes me to wonder that if those closest to him are unable to put Humpty Dumpty together again, is all hope lost? Is Humpty destined to lay broken forever?

On June 16, 2007 my life was literally turned upside down when, while driving to a youth event in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, from my home in central Pennsylvania, I lost control of my car which then rolled three times landing on the roof. I was traveling with my 3 1/2 week old son, my 22 month old daughter and my husband. My children and husband went away from the accident with only minor injuries. I, however, broke my neck between the fourth and fifth vertebrae, broke bones in my left hand and suffered from significant head trauma. I was paralyzed from the chest down and initially could only breathe with the help of a ventilator. This event is what I would characterize as my Humpty Dumpty fall. After all, I had been strolling through life when all of a sudden everything changed. After the accident I was left broken in mind, body and spirit, unsure of what each new day would bring.

When I awoke in the hospital a week and a half later after having been in an induced coma, I was hallucinating and truly believed teenagers were trying to take over the hospital and kill me. I refused to take my medications and could only be calmed by close family and friends. Finally, my dear friend Katrina who is a physician's assistant, convinced me that the doctors and nurses were trying to help and that the medication would help me get better.

One of the greatest challenges in the first seven weeks was that my neck was in traction with the use of a titanium halo. What this meant was that I was not able to turn my neck at all; I could only see what was straight in front of me. This increased my fear and anxiety.

I spent four weeks in an intensive care unit struggling to keep breathing and do seemingly simple things like trying to sit upright in a chair. When I finally seemed to have the breathing thing under control I was sent to Magee Rehabilitation Hospital in Philadelphia to begin therapy that would help me learn how to live again. Unfortunately, my first stay at Magee was short-lived when within 24 hours I spiked a 105° fever. After another eight

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days in a local hospital, batteries of tests and lots of antibiotics, I was sent back to Magee where I stayed for the next four and half months.

Magee was a four-hour drive from my children, who I only got to see on the weekends. I was afraid and lonely despite my frequent visitors. As with Humpty Dumpty, I was often surrounded by family, friends, doctors and nurses who wanted to help put me back together, but they could only do so much. It was up to me to figure out how I was going to engage my new state of brokenness and the process of healing. I had to move from asking "Why?" questions, such as, "Why, God, did this happen to me?" to asking "How?" questions, such as, "How, God, can I continue to be a good mother despite all these challenges?"

As with any spinal cord injury, part of the recovery has to do with luck. I am fortunate in that I have an incomplete injury, in other words my spinal cord was not severed. Healthcare professionals do not like to make predictions regarding the recovery of people with spinal cord injuries because each injury is unique. I had doctors whose opinions were across the spectrum, from one saying I would have no quality of life and another saying I would be perfect in two years (my dad thought this was great since I had never been perfect before!).

My function came back slowly. At first I could only move my shoulders, then my elbows and wrists. The fingers on my right hand came back one at a time. I then started noticing that when I was being turned from side to side by a nurse or an aid, I felt like my right leg was helping to push me over. My physical therapists confirmed that there was movement in my leg and they started trying to have me stand.

My therapy sessions were intense. I was learning to feed myself and dress myself, to brush my teeth and my hair. I was working on sitting up without falling over and taking those first steps. I was figuring out how to hold my children. I was learning to be patient with everyone who was trying to help, and learning to be patient with myself. At the end of each day, I was physically and emotionally exhausted.

I began spending time with Lori, an art therapist. She introduced me to the world of painting, which proved to be a really good emotional release as well as really good occupational therapy, offering another avenue for strengthening my arm. I also began attending the nondenominational Sunday morning services. It felt good to be in a community supported by the love of God, although even this raised up another area of brokenness. I have always loved to sing. After having had a tracheotomy I discovered I had lost my singing voice.

In the last three years since leaving Magee I have made great strides in

my recovery. I can take care of myself and my children without the help of others. I can drive a van, do the grocery shopping, clean the house and though I still ambulate primarily with a power wheelchair, I can walk using a walker when someone is around to spot me. My biggest nemesis continues to be cooking. Even with all of these successes I am reminded of my brokenness daily in the things I am unable to do, or am unable to do as well as I could before.

For example, just the other day I was awakened by a bump in the night; it was 1:30 in the morning. It was not a noise I was entirely unfamiliar with for it had happened a few times before. I immediately began the process of sitting up, beginning by throwing the covers off and pushing my legs off the edge of the bed. At about that time I heard the cry I had been expecting, "Mommy, I need you!" Indeed, my 3 1/2-year-old had fallen out of bed. "I'm coming! I need you to hang on! I'll be there as quickly as I can!" These were the only comforts I could offer him in the 2+ minutes it took me to transfer from my bed to my wheelchair from where I could finally get to him.

Two minutes doesn't sound all that long, but if you're a parent with a distressed child two minutes can feel like an eternity. At one time, only three and a half short years ago, that jump out of bed to reach my child would have taken 10 seconds, not two minutes. There are many similar instances throughout any given day in which I am reminded of just how far I fell. My greatest challenge is the daily decision of what to focus on; the distance I fell, or how far I have come.

I have come to realize that an egg is never meant to be just an egg. If it is left unbroken its only possible fate is to rot. In order to become a bird or a reptile or an omelet (depending on how you prefer to think of eggs) an egg must be broken. A creature growing inside an egg must come to a point in its development when it realizes it needs to break free from its shell in order to keep growing. So perhaps the question for Humpty Dumpty, and for those of us suffering from brokenness, should not be, "can I be put back together again?" but rather, "how can I use this experience of brokenness to grow into something new?"

Perhaps, as is the case with eggs, it is only after times of being broken that we are able to grow. The music group Rascal Flatts, in their song "Stand," describes moments of despair and hardship and yet remind us that when we look inside ourselves we can find the strength we need to keep going, as single pieces begin falling back into place. They help us to focus on the fact that it is in our moments of brokenness that growth happens at all and that if we are willing to get up and keep trying we just might find out something new about ourselves.

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When I wake up, I must choose how I am going to face the challenges of each and every day. I wish I could say I always choose well, but I am only human and in the frailty of my humanness there are days, or parts of days, when I would like to crawl in my shell and hide from all the struggles. I am broken, but I am alive, and in my brokenness I have found strength I didn't know I had, a desire to live I didn't know I needed, and the will to push forward.

Notes

For the lyrics of "Stand" by Rascal Flatts, visit www.rascalflatts.com/lyrics/ discography/me_and_my_gang#1

Diana York Luscombe has an M.A.M.S. from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. She lives in upstate New York where she fulfills her number one calling as the proud mother of Hannah (5) and Cole (3) Luscombe. She is also a rostered Diaconal Minister serving part-time as the Director of Youth and Family Ministries at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Camillus. Diana continues to engage in physical therapy twice a week where she persists in regaining the skills and strength necessary to complete all tasks of daily living, and to be able to walk and play on the floor.

Sermon for Epiphany 7: With A Toothbrush in Your Pocket

Gilson Waldkoenig

I really like the picture in Lev. 19: 9-10.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien; I am the Lord your God.

If you would go out the doors of the chapel, turn left and walk two miles south on Seminary Ridge/Confederate Avenue, you'd come to a metal tower on the battlefield. And if you'd climb its many flights of stairs, you'd get a panoramic view of the land. From up there, you can see the outlines of what the rural farm fields were like, about 150 years ago, because you'd be looking at the park which keeps the land something like it was in 1863. The fields were smaller than they are now. They had boundaries. There used to be hedgerows, or edge areas, with trees and shrubs, vines and often a waterway or wetland through those borders. In Amish country the fields are still today set into strips and smaller patches, usually rectangular but sometimes oddly shaped to fit the contour of the land.

But most of the productive farm fields aren't like that today. In the 1950s and 60s, when the big machinery came along, at the same time that petrochemical fertilizers and bold new hybrid crops were on the rise, American farmers began to plant hedgerow to hedgerow. The edges were disappearing. Then, in the 1970s, the Agriculture Secretary mounted a campaign: "Get big or get out," he advised. That advice led, among other things, to larger fields. And fewer and fewer farmers work more and more land. Now, there are no hedgerows at all. The big machines cover huge dis-

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tances, rolling over the old boundaries. The whole story was told by author Wendell Berry in his classic *The Unsettling of America*.

Leviticus 19 stands in stark contrast. Leviticus 19 seems to be from a different world.

A New Kind of Mining

That author I just mentioned, Wendell Berry, was in the news recently. About 10 days ago, he left home to go visit the Governor's office in Kentucky where he lives. He put a toothbrush in the inside breast pocket of his sport coat, because he didn't know for sure if he'd be coming back home that evening, or if he'd have to spend the night in jail. He and thirteen others weren't planning any sort of a crime, except that they were not going to leave the governor's office until he would talk to them. You see, they wanted to discuss their concerns about coal mining in Kentucky. They had tried all the regular means: they wrote letters to their representatives, they mounted public campaigns, they tried to influence legislation, but none of those efforts stopped the abusive kind of mining that was tearing apart the mountains.

You see, there is a new kind of mining, which rolls over huge areas. With massive machines and with explosives, operators scrape off miles of rock and topsoil to expose coal seams that everybody used to think were impossible to get, because they were up inside the tops of the mountains. When they scrape off the tops of the mountains, the "debris," as they call it, is simply plowed over the sides. That technique is called "valley fill." Streams are clogged, and floods ensue. Mountaintop removal mining respects no natural boundaries. It plows over the former edges. Nature's high and low places are little obstacle against today's technological might. Reseeded in grass like golf courses, the plateaued heights of Kentucky, West Virginia and other places have lost their forests, their biotic communities, their waterways. The people who live there are suffering ill health, contaminated water and shattered culture.

And so Wendell Berry went with his toothbrush to the governor's office, with thirteen others. They ended up staying three nights. They did talk to the governor, who is convinced that taking the tops off mountains to haul coal away does not damage the land and does not hurt the people. It is Kentucky's best hope for economic prosperity he says. We might say the governor prefers a different kind of margin than the real, physical margin at the edges of the mountains.

Well, then, Leviticus 19 stands in stark contrast to the governor's politics.

Margins are good places. In the fields that Leviticus 19 describes, the

margins are places that the poor could find food, and the alien could get along. Modern ecologists tell us, too, that the edges are where interesting things happen. The old hedgerows, the old tree stands along waterways at the edges of fields, are great places for species diversity. The mountainsides and valleys with their streambeds are also great places for species diversity.

We recently got a little survey of the natural life on our campus here at Gettysburg Seminary, and nearby. There are over 10 species of concern living here – from a certain kind of little yellow warbler, to some different butterflies, to Shumard Oaks and Shellbark Hickories, and even one species that is of such concern that conservationists have advised us not to publicize it. We're discussing how the campus could be a kind of an edge or margin that could help those species and others survive. It helps your species, too, O humans!, to have a healthy community around you.

The Holiness Code of Leviticus had something to say about living with margins. In the margins strangers get hospitality; aliens get some rights. And in our day we can add that in margins more species will survive, and maybe even human greed could be reined in at least a little bit? Leviticus is clear that people are to live simple, decent lives, and not take too much. The land is to be cared for. When the land was abused, Lev. 18 says, the land "vomited" the people out. And it very well may do so again, the Holiness Code says, in a rather prescient ecological insight.

Leviticus 19:9-10 at times seems to be from another world, but I don't think it is all done with us.... not just yet. It's not that we'd ever go back to the world of the Priestly writers who drew out the old Holiness Code. No, but I believe that God Almighty is yet working an order of justice and righteousness in and for this earth. You see, the roar of the machines breaking the margins of the land, and governors and tycoons screaming about their spreadsheet margins, are not the only voices out there. I've heard mountaineers who got blasted off their mountains, say, "I still love this land, and this is where I belong." I've seen the poor, gleaning from the edges of the modern food system, share the bounty better than the affluent. And I've read about toothbrush-toting dreamers who wear out their welcome in the governor's office, and then obstinately write and speak and proclaim that there could be another way.

And I've seen something else. I've seen a table that was first set in the last hours before a generous person named Jesus was betrayed and taken away to die. At that table, Jesus welcomed the marginal, the Nobodys and aliens of this world who had no real power or place. The people with Jesus were the downstream, down-valley types, the type who get valley fill dumped on their heads, or get their homes ripped out from under them. The people with Jesus, at the table he spread, were the type that fish all

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night and catch nothing. The people of Jesus were the type that the Caesars and Herods and Pilates knew only as slaves or servants in their designs of power and wealth.

But God prefers margins. And so Jesus went to an edge called Golgotha, and laid down his blessing upon the margin. He dipped his hand with the one who betrayed him, but still fed the marginal ones, whom he loved.

You are only footsteps from the table that he alone sets. His table is the margin of the Lord's field. Come and glean, and then go out with new eyes to see all the margins and edges that are still there, where God is still working love and forgiveness and righteousness, and hospitality to strangers, and reforestation for species of concern, and even – I daresay! – a chance for those who might climb down off their roaring machines, and lift their eyes to behold the real margins, that they thought they'd pushed away.

But, for the time being, keep your toothbrush in your pocket.

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A Taste of the Church: Recipes for Following Jesus

Robin J. Steinke

Sermon on the 40th Anniversary of Ordination and 45th Anniversary of Service in Campus Ministry of The Rev. Elizabeth Platz, November 14, 2010. Texts: Isaiah 42:5-9, Psalm 95:1-7a, 1 Cor. 4: 1-2, John 21:15-17

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the name of the Triune God. The scene is this: a synod meeting was taking place here at Hope Lutheran. This was a day-long meeting so naturally lunch needed to be provided. When the group arrived mid-morning, freshly brewed coffee and homemade breakfast delights awaited. By lunch time the aroma of delicious items, savory and sweet wafted over the meeting thus ensuring an on time break for lunch. This was how I first came to know Rev. Platz, over a meal at the Metro DC Synod Candidacy committee meeting in January of 1999. I had no idea of her place in the history of the church. She was unassuming, wore an apron over her clerical collared blouse and was working alongside a group of college students from the Campus Ministry Program to help with the meal. That was my introduction to Rev. Platz's "Taste of the Church: with recipes for following Jesus."

What a joy, privilege, honor and delight to be with you today to celebrate God's Spirit at work in the whole church through extending the ministry of word and sacrament to women. This is the 40th anniversary of that remarkable work of the spirit and the 45th anniversary of Rev. Platz's leadership in campus ministry of the University of Maryland. Thank you Pastor Vigen for the invitation and privilege of joining with you to mark this day.

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There has been a lot written about that historic ordination day, November 22nd, 1970 held in the University of Maryland Chapel. The Gettysburg Seminary President, Dr. Donald Heiges was the preacher that day. The seminary organist and choir were also there along with University representatives, students who had been involved in campus ministry under Rev. Platz's leadership and Dr. Paul Orso who served as the President (whom we would now call bishop) of the Maryland Synod ordained her and other churchwide representatives were present as well. What is this "taste of the church, with recipes for following Jesus that has so marked Rev. Platz's ministry?

A Taste of the Church: a Recipe for Following Jesus

How appropriate that the Gospel text in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women includes the familiar refrain: feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my lambs. Jesus responds to Peter three times with these imperatives to action: feed, tend, feed. I wonder how many of us gathered here today have been introduced to the church or gotten to know Jesus over a meal with Pastor Beth? She has introduced hundreds if not thousands of people to a taste of the church, with a recipe for following Jesus. It seems to me that her ministry has been woven throughout with good food and good conversation. Her ministry has been more than that-it has been a taste of the church with recipes for following Jesus.

This theme of tasting and eating was even mentioned in response to the Lutheran Church in America's historic vote to ordain women. It was reported that the Rev. Dr. Robert Marshall president of the LCA was quoted in response to the historic vote that, "The proof of the pudding will be in the eating."

In what ways does our Gospel text inform this taste of the church with a recipe for following Jesus? I want to suggest a few ways this text fills out some of these recipes.

Extend Invitations to Others – Eat Together

This Gospel reading follows Jesus' breakfast by the sea. The Gospel writers frequently describe Jesus eating together with folks. Eating together was an occasion for experiencing the presence of Christ. Eating *together* encouraged faith for living in the face of enormous obstacles. So perhaps the first recipe from our text is *extend invitations to others and eat together*.

Robert Capon, an Anglican Priest, writes in a book titled *Party Time* that extending an invitation to dinner is an act of faith. It is an action that trusts in the promise and possibility that may ensue when those invited re-

spond to the invitation. He talks about how hosting a meal is like walking backward through time. Meaning that one can only see in retrospect what the outcome of all the intensive preparations, the invitations and the hosting might be. In many ways that is the way Christians go through life-walking backwards.

One of my former teachers described this process of reading the last chapter of murder mysteries novel first. When others asked him about this practice he gave several reasons. One is that you don't get emotionally invested in any character who will not be around at the end of the story. But more importantly, it changes the way you read the story. As Christians we have been let in on the end of the story. The end of the story that says because Jesus is risen, God will have the last word. Despair, violence, poverty, environmental degradation, injustice, broken relationships and even death are all penultimate. God says you are worth looking after, the earth is worth tending, the church is worth feeding. Despite the difficulties you face, the unemployment, the poverty, the economy, loneliness, eat together. This first taste of the church and recipe for following Jesus is *eat together*.

Jesus' question, "Do you love me?" is a question about relationship. Relationship that has expression in obedience and in caring for others. Eating together is not just eating with people we know and like-it is also a call to be with those whom we may rather avoid.

Create Open Space - Walk With an Open Heart

This past week I attended the National Council of Churches General Assembly in New Orleans. The General Assembly had the theme: Edinburgh 1910 to New Orleans 2010: You Are witnesses of These Things. The international ecumenical movement launched in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910 was brought about in large measure by students in the Student Christian Movement. They were deeply involved in calling for this gathering and helping to make it happen. Students don't underestimate your call and power to contribute to the recipes for following Jesus.

Dr. Olav Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches addressed the assembly last week and shared that the challenge for our time is to walk with an open heart. God creates new times and new seasons. Dr. Tveit shared that the ecumenical movement is concerned with the rediscovery of the true taste of the church. God is opening new doors of justice, peace, reconciliation and care of the earth, what is the taste of our local church? What are the recipe's for following Jesus that are lively in your congregations?

The closing worship service for the National Council of Churches included a great feast at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New Orleans. The 74 ROBIN J. STEINKE SRR SPRING 2011 75

congregation prepared the finest Greek delicacies from wonderful Greek salad, stuffed grape leaves, spinach and cheese in delicate pastry, Greek lasagna, homemade rolls, fresh feta cheese all topped off with the best baklava I have ever tasted. There we were, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Episcopalians, Baptists, African Methodist Episcopal all eating a feast together. I wonder if some of our deep differences in the church could be better addressed if we just ate together a little more often? What a recipe for following Jesus.

As we soon lean into the week of celebration and thanksgiving I am reminded of the kind of family feasting that is such a part of this holiday. If we only needed to eat together for the presence of God to enliven our relationships and connections then I suspect our thanksgiving feasts would not be so difficult at times. Where some are at a lonely table, where some are experiencing such alienation in families that whatever football games are on become a refuge from real conversation and connection, if the meal happens at all.

New Beginnings

The gospel call is about more than a call to mealtime, it is about repentance and forgiveness which creates new beginnings. John's gospel never uses the word for gospel. In this text Jesus' instruction to Peter, the one who earlier in this story denied him three times, opens the way for Peter to begin anew as a follower of Jesus, despite his earlier treachery. Are you in need of a new beginning? Do you need a chance to start over? Are there things for which you are in desperate hope for a do over? Jesus creates open space for you to start fresh, no matter how ill equipped or undeserving you think you may be. God may yet have some surprises in store for you as you walk with an open heart. Walking with an open heart means being open to how God's spirit may be at work in new ways.

Stories of Connection

In some of my travels this last month I have wondered about the courageous lay leaders in this congregation who had the foresight to be so prophetic, who were walking with an open heart. I haven't found many references or comments on the people of this congregation who were part of this historic move, so I had to go looking. I wanted to imagine visionaries who long plotted and planned for this historic event. Then I learned that some of the lay leadership here were just simply being faithful church folks, walking with an open heart. The President of the congregation at the time,

Dr. Richard Lawrence, who is here with his spouse Kris, were doing the ordinary work of ministry and faithfulness to following Jesus in this place. Ordinary, faithful leadership in the midst of extraordinary times, simply walking with an open heart.

As part of the ELCA delegation, I learned something about Pastor Beth in New Orleans. It turns out that one of the young ELCA pastors who was part of the delegation, Rev. Nathan Allen currently serving at Joy Lutheran Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma noticed a familiar face in the photo of Pastor Platz's ordination that recently appeared on the website of the ELCA. He phoned his father and received confirmation that indeed, the familiar faces of members of Hope in College Park included Merwyn and Dorothy Allen, his grandparents. It turns out that his grandmother was delighted in this new pastor for whom it seemed so natural that she be ordained. After all, she had been doing this ministry for five years already at the University of Maryland. She had demonstrated her gifts over the five years of her ministry with students, staff and faculty at the University of Maryland that everyone agreed it just seemed natural to do. What a marvelous testimony of lay people walking with an open heart as a recipe for following Jesus.

Another story of a lay person, though not connected directly with this congregation, but deeply connected with the event, came from Dr. Ruth Kath, Professor of German at Luther College in Decorah Iowa. She is a Roman Catholic Lay leader who with tears in her eyes said to me earlier this week that the ordination of women in the ELCA continues to giver her hope that her own tradition may one day invite the fullness of women's gifts to ordained ministry, as she has throughout her life felt called to be a priest but unable to respond to that call. She continues to walk with an open heart despite the obstacles.

New Life for the Journey

Perhaps you sense that you are not a very good cook with all these recipes for following Jesus. Perhaps you have a sense that this really doesn't make a difference for you in your life circumstances or difficulties. When all your spiritual searching leaves you with just emptiness or a fast food diet of spiritual longing.

The final stanza in our hymn of the day reads, I fear in the dark and the doubt of my journey, but courage will come with the sound of your steps by my side. And with all of the family you saved by your love, we'll sing to your dawn at the end of our journey." Both the text and the music emerge out of the L'Arche community, founded by John Vanier. This community, now with sites worldwide, serves a taste of the church with a recipe for fol-

lowing Jesus alongside those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. When all the façades we construct about who we are, are stripped away what is left is to walk with Jesus. The Good News message in our text today is that the repentance and forgiveness creates new human beings. New life is offered to you with real substance.

Well known theologian, teacher, and ethicist Joseph Sittler wrote in a little gem of a book *Gravity and Grace: Reflections and Provocations*, He quotes Luther about how real substance intersects with ordinary experience, "The fodder must be put down where the sheep can nibble." But it must be real fodder (Sittler p. 51, 67)

We are called upon to make real decisions and responsible judgments in the midst of new moral situations when there is no clear law to follow. The offertory of the church is that turning point in the service when we have heard the word, praised, celebrated the hearing of the word and then we make our own offering, not simply of money but our judgments about what are the right and moral actions we must take. The Eucharistic prayer from the SBH stated "not as we ought but as we are able." Is it not possible that this phrase may point to a way of acting spiritually but not absolutely, a way of offering a judgment without being judgmental and certain of one's own righteousness?"

There is one final taste of the church with a recipe for following Jesus that I want to share. In a few minutes you will be invited to come and gather round this table with Christ himself as the host. Where Christ has promised to be present and to give you a meal for the journey of following Jesus. Come, gather round and eat together, come with an open heart and bring your hopes and your fears, come with your disappointments and sorrows, assured in the promises that you are made new again. Come and taste, be filled with Christ himself. Now that is a recipe for following Jesus. Amen!

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction

Jack R. Lundbom (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010) Reviewed by Rodney R. Hutton

Lundbom has dedicated his scholarly career principally to the study of the book of Jeremiah. As a student of James Muilenburg in the late '60s and early '70s he was bound to focus on the nature of Hebrew rhetoric, masterfully displayed in his early *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (1973). He is more well-known for his three-volume commentary on Jeremiah in the Anchor Bible series (1999, 2004) as well as for his smaller volume on the question of Jeremiah's early career (*The Early Career of the Prophet Jeremiah*, Mellen Press, 1993). Lundbom turns his attention in this volume to a general introduction to prophecy in ancient Israel, demonstrating his capacity for grasping critical issues in the debate as well as rehearsing his interest in historical construction and rhetorical investigation.

Lundbom's study is comprised of two parts. In part one he considers the "marks [ch. 1], messages [ch. 2], and measures of authenticity [ch. 3]" of Israel's prophets. In the shorter part two, revisiting his earlier study of ancient Hebrew rhetoric, he discusses the "poetry/prose [ch. 4], rhetoric [ch. 5], and symbolism [ch. 6]" of the prophetic literature. The meat of the study is in part one, but part two does have a nice catalogue of rhetorical features for those unfamiliar with the jargon of rhetorical criticism. The discussion of symbolism (i.e., prophetic symbolic actions) found in ch. 6 could easily have been incorporated into his discussion of the authenticity of prophecy in ch. 3, since he considers "prophetic acts" in that section as well (pp. 140-142).

Lundbom's study is not your typical introductory volume to Israel's prophetic literature. The closest material to such a standard introduction is that presented in the lengthy ch. 2, in which he summarizes the historical context and the central message of each of Israel's prophets, presenting them

in chronological rather than canonical order. This lengthy chapter (pp. 32-137) is a challenge to read because it moves quickly from one prophet to the next, engaging in relatively detailed discussions of texts but with little to assist the reader in organizing broad concepts or overall themes. The lack of section headings forces the reader to slug it out through an entire prophet with little opportunity to order or organize thoughts. The treatment of each prophet presents excellent reportage but little in the way of critical analysis. Some of Lundbom's moves are unexpected, as when he subsumes 'prophecy' under the general heading of 'messenger' (mal'ak) so completely that he includes figures such as the angelic visitors to Abraham and Hagar in his conversation. His contention that these figures could be "religious itinerants" (p. 13; also pp. 37-38, 145) who "rove about in Canaan" during Abraham's day (p. 208) is difficult to imagine, given the narrative clues involved in the stories themselves. In fact, one concern is that the polemical and narrative interests of the biblical authors are minimized in what feels to be a more historicist exercise that takes the texts as valid sources for historical reconstruction too much at face value.

One reason for this may be the classical sources from which Lundbom draws and with which he seems to be comfortable. He indicates in the preface that the volume steeped in his study for many years and had its genesis in a series of lectures presented in 1976. It is clear that Lundbom's discussion partners are the classical studies of that era, updated by some studies of the eighties and nineties. He cites classical works by Skinner, Albright, Pfeiffer, Haldar, Rowley, Heschel, A.R. Johnson and authors of the early and mid twentieth century much more than he does any contemporary scholars. The book reflects a world of scholarship from the days of the 'Biblical Theology' movement, complete with the uncritical assumption of distinctions between Greek and Hebrew or Canaanite and Hebrew thought (e.g., pp. 21, 139) and the sharp contrast drawn between Israelite prophets (critical of their establishment) and foreign prophets (uncritical agents of the throne, p. 19). Lundbom's study would be stronger had it addressed matters related to current studies in anthropology, sociology and literary studies.

He presents the reader with brief glimpses of cross-cultural studies from his experience in Africa (e.g., pp. 24-25), but does not mine them for significant detail. Comments such as that it was the prophet who prayed in Israel and that "Rarely do we read in the Bible about others praying" (pp. 30-31) gives the reader a desire for more cautious investigation and a more nuanced conversation. The contention that Adam's disobedience is cited in Hos 6:7 (p. 49) is glaring, given that no critical commentator would take the reference to Adam to be anything other than a reference to the geographical site on the Jordan mentioned in Josh 3:16. The assumption that Isaiah 6 pres-

ents Isaiah's 'call narrative' is accepted (p. 63) with no conversation regarding other alternatives. The inclusion of Huldah in Lundbom's presentation is a very nice and strategic move. Her oracle, contained in 2 Kgs 22:15-20, is massively larger than is that of Jonah. Yet Lundbom gives only three sentences to discuss her oracle whereas he allows over three pages to discuss the one-liner of Jonah. Lundbom exercises due caution with regard to naïvely assuming that 'false prophets' were essentially corrupt. Nonetheless, the assumption that "False prophets lack divine knowledge and inner certainty" (p. 153) or that "true prophets lived by a much higher standard of morality than the prophets they judged to be false" (p. 156) begs for a more nuanced awareness of the polemic of prophetic claims and the vested interests and ideological tactics used by biblical authors.

Lundbom's study will be a valuable addition to the reading list of those studying Israel's prophetic literature, particularly the section on rhetoric. It should be prominent on the bibliography of courses relating to Israel's prophets. However, it will not replace the standard 'Introductions' commonly in use.

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Healing in the Bible: Theological Insight for Christian Ministry

Frederick J. Gaiser (Grand Rapids: Baker Press, 2010) Reviewed by Leonard M. Hummel

This is an inspiring book. In part, that is so because it derives its inspiration from the Bible. But this book's reliance on scripture is not the only reason for its spiritual power. Through his careful study of Biblical texts, his empathy for the contemporary circumstances of the church and the world, and his exploration of the theological complexities of the human condition, Frederick Gaiser has demonstrated many ways in which the Bible may speak to questions of health and salvation. In doing so, Gaiser has offered up a book that will offer guidance and sustenance – if not healing insights – to those who read it carefully.

Gaiser summarizes the aim of his book this way:

The goal of this book is to explore the ways in which the Bible amplifies the claims and promises of both Testaments – "I am the Lord, your healer" (Exod. 15:26); "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and sickness among the people" (Matt. 4:23) – and then to think about all of this in our own cultural perspective (page five).

Accordingly, sixteen of the eighteen chapters of Gaiser's book consist of his exegesis of and reflections on a variety of Biblical texts in order to derive from the "cases" described therein understandings of healing the Bible and healing in our world. The periscopes that Gaisesr includes, indeed, have been carefully selected from both Testaments, with over half from Hebrew Scriptures. As the second half of Gaiser's title indicates, ministers are the primary audience of this book and that audience will find riches here not only for sermon preparation but for grappling with issues of health and healing in all aspects of their pastoral work.

There are several pluses to this work and some of them are found in the

first and last chapters of the book. In the first chapter, Gaiser clearly articulates a theme that he will sound out in all of his chapters of scriptural analysis: his belief that God may heal through both physical and spiritual means since God is the Lord of both. In his final chapter, offers a summary on the following themes: Healing in the Biblical World, The God of Healing, Illness in the Bible, Biblical Healing, and Healing in Worship and Community. He offers an even more precise summary through a series of numbered propositions that cover these themes in the Bible: "Creation, Illness and Death," "Healing as God's Work," and "Healing and the Community of Faith." Other pluses include a "Subject Index" that is actually both a subject and author index, and extensive use of footnotes throughout the text. Also included is a bibliography of works, most of which are dated before the year 2000 but are relevant for issues of health and salvation in this century.

Readers of this book will be inspired not only by what the author has written but that he has written such a fine and thoughtful book about an important matter – health and salvation and what the two have to do with one another.

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Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology

David Kelsey (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009, Two vols.) Reviewed by Eric Crump

"A Modest, But Audacious, Systematically Unsystematic Proposal"

David Kelsey's magisterial, and lengthy, opus presents a theological anthropology that structurally departs from construals of the human that have informed pre-modern and modern theological anthropologies alike, especially the traditional understanding of the human as the imago Dei, whether articulated in the binary structure of a nature-grace or law-gospel model. For Kelsey, properly speaking, the canonical narrative identity descriptions of Jesus of Nazareth present Jesus as the finite living mystery in his created, resurrected, and reconciling body that images the triune living mystery. The finite living mystery of Jesus is the image of God, and as such, in his created, resurrected, and reconciling body, for the Christian faith, Jesus "is paradigmatic of who all actual living human bodies are, as he is paradigmatic of what they are and how they are to be." Actual living human bodies, inasmuch as they image the imager in who, what, and how they are to be, are likewise finite mysteries "imaging the image of the triune infinite mystery" [1050]. They are constituted as complex, finite mysteries in virtue of the triune God relating to them in creative blessing, eschatological blessing, and "as structurally reconciled to God as they are in Christ." [1051]. And, as the triune God, Jesus, and all actual living human personal bodies are related mysteries, all three are correlatively ontologically and epistemically mysterious. Divinity and humanity are both, for Kelsey, inexhaustive and inexplicable "in one coherent and comprehensive set of propositions" [1051]. Hence, "[a]n account of the logic of Christian anthropological beliefs aiming to exhibit them as a 'system'" necessarily turns out to be a systematically distorted account of human being. A Christian theological anthropology, that is not systematically distorted and distorting in exhibiting the logic of Christian beliefs concerning the human, must be "a project in systematically unsystematic secondary theology" [45]. What precisely is such a proposed project?

The 'what,' 'how,' and 'who' questions about ourselves are universally raised, not only in the limit situations of death and birth, but also in the quotidian practices of everyday life "because the way we live our lives is deeply shaped by our explicit or implicit answers to them" [2]. Kelsey's project addresses itself to two concrete types of people who ask anthropological questions framed by the boundaries of their respective concrete specificity. First and foremost, there are "those who identify themselves with Christian communities and their traditions of thought and practice" that both shape the manner in which its questions are framed and reasons grounded in those traditions given for its proposals concerning those questions. And, in addition, there are those "who are for any reason interested in what Christians propose as answers to anthropological questions, and why they say such things" [3]. For Kelsey, there is "no common-denominator location comprising both types of audience as a single "we," no actual generic "us" that asks generic anthropological questions" [3]. And the emphasis on particularity in its concrete specificities further requires that "[g]eneralizations about the Christian point of view on anthropological questions that abstract from the particularities of the traditions' own ambiguities will not do, even if they facilitate intertradition conversation" [4]. The reasoned articulation of a theological proposal concerning Christian point of view "entails stressing its internal conflictual seams and stark breaks [or "cracks and seams, contradictions and stark breaks"] quite as much as its ordering "inner logic" [4]. Kelsey even suggests or intimates the possibility that it is "[b]etter then, perhaps, to speak of Christian traditions than those of the Christian tradition" [4].

A further consequence of this emphasis on the specificity of the situatedness of anthropological questions is that one must attend to the "background beliefs" informing and shaping those traditions of thought and practice that are the common life of communities of Christian faith. "We who ask anthropological questions always ask them in a conceptual context provided by such background beliefs" [4]. Two types of beliefs are the requisite background for any anthropology and its questions. For Kelsey, they are the "proximate contexts" of our lives (the physical and social worlds in which we live) and the "ultimate context in which we live, the context that is most fundamental and decisive regarding what, how, and who we are" [4]. Parenthetically, even though, Kelsey speaks of "background beliefs" as well as "background of beliefs," the two expressions are synonymous, underscoring the emphasis on 'beliefs' and the avoidance of and/or suspicion concerning possible metaphysical or transcendental suppositions of there being a purportedly 'neutral' background to the plurality of competing ultimate

'background beliefs' necessarily presupposed by the very nature of beliefs as such.

Kelsey underscores the complexity of those Christian background beliefs and the cracks, seams, and contradictions among the array of its beliefs. In a Trinitarian manner, God relates to all that is not God is three "complexly interrelated but distinct ways: relating to create, to draw to eschatological consummation, and, in light of alienation from God, to reconcile. As Kelsey will argue at great length, "it will not do to abstract from this array a generalized reference to "God acting" as the single salient theological background belief" [5]. The rule *Deus non est in genere* applies even to the construal of the relations of God to all that is not God – and it will entail considerable consequences.

This particularity of the locality of anthropological questions has a further consequence for a anthropological project in light of the fact "that Christians' beliefs about their proximate physical, social, and cultural contexts tend to overlap extensively with beliefs about the same matters held by their neighbors in their host culture who do not share their beliefs about the ultimate context of life" and there may possible be areas of overlap in background beliefs about the ultimate context of life [6]. It is a consequence that distinctively shapes Kelsey's proposal, namely, "for all of its being framed from the outset in Christian-tradition-specific ways, the internal logic of a Christian theological anthropology requires it to be open to conversation with and learning from atheological wisdom about what it is to be human" [6]. Kelsey notes that a Christian theological anthropology might be articulated in a different voice, one that, "[w]hile affirming its specifically Christian roots, ... might be constructed as a conversation with anthropological wisdom, not only from other religious traditions, but also from several relevant sciences. Perhaps it might be thought of as an exercise in conceptual bridge-building" [6]. Pannenberg's Anthropology from a Theological Perspective and Edward Farley's Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition might serve as examples of such an exercise. However, it is a project that Kelsey acknowledges he himself once set out to do, but "eventually abandoned":

Simply put, a bridge requires two abutments, and I was clearer about the content of the abutment consisting of the anthropological wisdom of certain atheological conversation partners than I was about the content of the abutment consisting of specifically Christian anthropological wisdom. The historical evidence seemed to be that Christians in every age have largely appropriated the best anthropological wisdom

of their host culture. Their theological anthropologies mostly came from the other abutment, but they were selective about what they appropriated, and the ways in which they used what they appropriated bent it conceptually. However, it was not at all clear to me what the principles of selection were and where the conceptual gravity came from that bent what was borrowed. I realized that before I could undertake the bridge-building project, I needed to formulate the theological end of the bridge. My question became, "Does the Christian faith bring with it any convictions about human being that are so rock bottom for it that they are, so to speak, nonnegotiable in intellectual exchange with anthropologies shaped by other traditions? [6]

It should be noted that his stated 'abandonment' of that possible construal of theological anthropology does not mean that such a possibility is illegitimate, but that "[b]efore venturing very far out onto the bridge from the side of his or her own traditions [be they theological or atheological], that person [whether Christian or not, but especially if Christian] ought to want to know where the Christians are coming from" [6]. The methodological import is that such a project necessarily presupposes the project of a "Christianly particularist anthropology" that Kelsey seeks to articulate not because theological anthropology's nonnegotiable background beliefs concerning proximate and ultimate contexts generates all of the content of a theological anthropology, but rather because it "provide[s] the criteria of selection regulating what anthropological wisdom is borrowed from Christian communities' current host cultures" [8].

The project to articulate the nonnegotiable claims of Christian anthropological wisdom is reminiscent of Calvin's affirmation, that Kelsey quotes as the epigraph to his opening chapter: In the famous opening to Institutes of the Christian Religion, quoted as the epigraph to this chapter, John Calvin points out: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by any bonds, which one precedes and which brings forth the other is not easy to discern." Yet, whereas Calvin began with questions concerning knowledge of God, Kelsey does not, but rather follows Calvin in subordinating anthropological claims to claims concerning God:

... the root question to which this Christian theological anthropology proposes answers is this: What is implied about human being by the claim that God actively relates to us to create us, to draw us to eschatological consummation, and to reconcile us when we have become estranged

from God?² Correlatively, the three perennial anthropological questions, "What are we?" "Who we are?" and "How ought we to be?" should be reframed in ways shaped by Christian background beliefs about our ultimate and background contexts [8].

A Christian theological anthropology must be theocentrically constructed in light of the background beliefs that are rooted in the common life of Christian communities. For Kelsey, the common life of Christian communities of faith is comprised of "sets of social practices whose enactments express appropriate responses to God's ways of relating to all else" [9].

The self-involving character of those communal and public practices involves as one of those practices the practice of self-examination of the 'appropriateness' of the communities' practices as appropriate responses to God's ways of relating to all else, especially in relation to the accounts given in canonical Christian Holy Scripture of the ways God relates to all else, as the source and norms of what counts as appropriate. It has two levels, the practices of 'primary' and 'secondary' theologies. Primary theology is "usually ad hoc critique of current concrete enactments of communal practices that employs received conceptualizations and formulations (creeds, confessions, and traditional locutions) as criteria," whereas the practice of secondary theology arises "when the adequacy or appropriateness of the received conceptualizations and formulations themselves comes into question" [10]. Kelsey's proposal is an enactment of secondary theology reexamining the adequacy of theological formulations employed in current primary theology. It is most definitely not an enactment of the practice of primary theology, while yet being dependent on and inseparable from that practice. While not normed by the practice of primary theology, its proposals "are analytical and critical, offered to the end of developing more adequate, and hence revisionary, formulations of some of the received or traditional standards - that is, the doctrines to which all parties to disagreements about anthropological issues appeal in the course of doing primary theology" [22].

As a proposal of secondary theology, its tone of voice is a modest one, one not adopting a dogmatic tone of voice, for its practice is epistemically fallible. While similar to dogmatic theology, "it does not meet the definition of that kind of theology" [22]. Its proposals are articulated in a tone "more hypothetical than assertory, as though to say. "If you in fact believe such and such about God, God's ways of relating to all that is not God, and all else in relation to God, then should you not in all consistency adopt the following proposals about how to formulate your claims about what and who human beings are and how they ought to be" [22]. It seeks to promote and provoke further exploration of the issues and further discussion, rather than "assert

conversation-stopper pronouncements of what Christians must say on a given topic" [9]. Even the reasons given for its modest proposals must modestly be subject to the formal standards of excellence "to which all forms of reasoned reflection are subject" (e.g., conceptual clarity, internal consistency, and consistency with related proposals). When and where the practice of secondary theology utilizes arguments from other argument-making disciplinary practices (e.g., history, literary criticism, philology, and metaphysics), Kelsey contends "the standards of what counts as a good argument must be those of the practice from which the argument is appropriated and not necessarily the standards of what counts as a good argument in secondary theology" [23].³

The idiomatic character of Kelsey's modest proposals, however, is to be found in the characterization of the focal question that informs and delimits those theological proposals, distinguishing them from other projects of secondary theology. He distinguishes three such questions that individually or in combination have undergirded most of those projects, though noting that they are not necessarily exhaustive of the possible range of questions:

- 1 What is the logic of the *beliefs* that inform the practices composing the common life of communities of Christian faith?
- 2 What is the logic of *coming to belief* or of coming to faith in God so that one joins with companions in enacting the practices that compose the common life of ecclesial communities?
- 3 What is the logic of the *life of Christian believing* or the life of Christian faith [27]?

For Kelsey, while all "are perfectly valid questions to guide such projects" of secondary theology, his project is concerned solely with the first question. By "logic" in the first question, he understands "the formal logical relations among the claims [beliefs] that are made, explicitly and implicitly, in the course of enacting the practices that constitute the common life of communities of Christian faith." The anthropological claims concerning beliefs about the human, then, are concerned with the logical relations and order of those beliefs as "implied by, derived from, and conceptually dependent upon more basic beliefs about God and God's ways of relating to all that is not God" [29]. The first question assumes (a) claims concerning God, God's ways of relating to all else, and all else in relation to God and (b) that members of those communities believe the claims they make are true. For Kelsey, the methodological import of the first question for secondary theology is that it is a mistake, and one often committed, to confuse or conflate a project of secondary theology undertaken modestly within the parameters of

the first question with projects of secondary theology guided and structured by either the second or third question.

The radical systematic import of this methodological focus on the question of the logic of beliefs can be seen in Kelsey's greater affinity with the structure of premodern secondary theological anthropology and his critique of the structural "turn to subjectivity" in modern theology. What is instructive about premodern secondary theologies, for Kelsey, is that anthropological questions did not constitute a locus in their own right, but rather were dispersed amongst treatment of the theocentric topics in the doctrine of God relating to creation, redemption, eschatological consummation, and making God known. Claims concerning revelation in the topic of making God known were "not so much a locus in its own right as an aspect of each of the other three, a revelatory aspect of God relating to all else, respectively, to create it, to save it, and to consummate it eschatologically" [40]. This will inform Kelsey's later prudential moves bracketing treatment of the topic of "revelation" on the basis of his focus on the 'logic of beliefs' rather than on the 'logic of coming to belief.' Negatively, certain problematic features of premodern theological anthropological proposals will present desiderata for revisionary proposals, those features being, e.g., an anthropology relying on a "substance-operations" scheme, reciprocally contrastive definitions of "rational soul" and "body," beliefs about sin and salvation dependent on affirmations of the historicity of Adam, Eve, a paradisial state, and the fall (see 29-41). Yet the revisions will be undertaken by explicitly treating theological anthropology as a locus in its own right, but one subordinate to God and God's ways of relating in creating, drawing to eschatological consummation, and reconciling.

Yet, though he finds many instructive features in premodern secondary theology, the very understanding of secondary theology as "faith seeking understanding" undergoes modification. The modification, Kelsey suggests, contributes greatly in framing anthropological proposals that realize many of the things desired to be accomplished in a revisionary contemporary secondary theology. It is also a modification that is idiomatically peculiar in contrast to customary or familiar theological construals of the nature of 'faith.' Fundamentally, faith is not construed by Kelsey as naming a set of beliefs affirmed and taught by communities of faith (i.e., dogmas) nor, as in many modern and contemporary theologies that understand themselves to be in an Anselmian mode (veiled reference to Schleiermacher et al.), as a subjective or existential condition (as in Tillich's famous construal of faith as "ultimate concern), but rather as designating "a complex of conceptually formed practices that make up much of the common life of the communities of Chris-

tian faith, practices that deeply define the communal identities and the personal identities of the communities' members who enact the practices" [42]. This construal of faith, resulting from exclusively attending to the first question ("What is the logic of the beliefs that inform the practices composing the common life of communities of Christian faith?"), is a strategic move that presents, for Kelsey, several interrelated consequential advantages. Firstly, such a move "avoid[s] systematically interiorizing them ["faith" and "understanding"] by defining them exclusively in privatizing categories, while at the same time it avoids de-subjectivizing or objectivizing them" [42]. Secondly, as the enactment of practices conceptually formed, they involve both acting and believing. "They are not the practices of systematically elusive soul, spirits, subjectivities (not even intersubjectivites), minds, or interiorities. Rather, their enactments are at the least partly conscious and intentional human actions, in which bodied human beings interact with one another in public spaces, both the public space constituted by the immediate community itself, and public spaces constituted by their larger host societies" [42-3]. In addition, it represents a move to avoid the individualization of faith and understanding, since as "socially established human interactivites" they define dialectically both communal and personal identities. Furthermore, understanding both faith and understanding as practices constituting the common life of communities of Christian faith gives to those communities "a certain unity, but they do not necessarily require uniformity of practice in order for the communities to count as communities of Christian faith" [44]. But, most importantly, the modifying proposal is a strategic move for avoiding the de-historicizing of faith, for faith understood as a set of practices "are always located in concrete social and cultural contexts at particular times and places in history" [44]. And, finally, it represents the move to avoid the temptation of the "undue systematization of the logic of Christian beliefs, and the logic of anthropological beliefs in particular." Kelsey is wary of exhibiting the logic of Christian anthropological beliefs as a systemic unity that "may turn out itself to be a systematically distorted account of human being, hence, he designates his own project as an exercise or practice in "systematically unsystematic secondary theology" [45].

Yet, whereas Kelsey's proposal for secondary theology was like, but also critically not like that of premodern theology, in presenting a theological anthropology in its own right properly construed, he declares that his project is in the odd situation of being at one with modern theological anthropologies in contrast to premodern ones. Broadly speaking, Kelsey identifies the fundamental distinctiveness of modern secondary theology's anthropological proposals as follows:

..., where premodern theological anthropologies construe human being in substantialist categories as something given, a gift fully actualized, anthropologies that make the turn to the subject construe human being as a project, a process of self-constitution, a project of self-actualization that begins in mere possibility or potentiality and is only fully actual at the end [84].

Typologically, he delineates several familiar varieties of the modern theological anthropological project: (1) "subjectivity constituted by self-relating in an act of self-affirmation," whether morally (e.g., Kant and Ritschl) [86-92] or religiously (e.g., Schleiermacher) [92-100]; (2) "subjectivity constituted by self-relating in an act of self-recognition" (e.g., Hegel) [100-108]; and, finally, (3) "subjectivity constituted by self-relating in an act of self-choosing" (e.g., Kierkegaard) [108-110]. Further combinations, permutations, and modifications of these types of analyses of the structural and dynamic constitution of subjectivity have been historically influential in the modern period (e.g., Reinhold Niebuhr, Brunner, Tillich, Rahner, and Bultmann). But Kelsey categorically rejects what he sees as the assumption purporting to warrant the unity of anthropological questions as a distinct locus, specifically, "that there is something systematically inherent in human being, considered quite apart from any religious or theological commitments, that grounds the logic of coming to belief or coming to faith, unifies theological anthropological proposals into a single locus, and is a rational justification of the very project of making proposals about any [theological] topic" [81]. For Kelsey, this systemic assumption is a systematic temptation to be resisted.

Despite its many positive insights and contributions, the fundamental error in the manifold modern theological anthropological project is methodologically conflating treatment of the questions concerning the 'logic of coming to belief or faith' with treatment of the question concerning the logic of Christian beliefs, "as though answers to questions about the logic of coming to faith or of living the life of faith therewith also answer the question about the logic of Christian beliefs" [80]. And this methodological confusion or conflation of these questions has theologically substantive and pernicious tendential consequences

or at least four theologically undesirable emphases: utilitarian and functionalist trivialization of understandings of God and God's ways of relating to human beings, quasi-Manichean theological assessment of nonhuman creatures, anthropocentric and instrumentalist theological views of human beings' proper relations to nonhuman creatures,

and an anthropocentric moralizing of accounts of Christian beliefs about human beings [113].

The fundamental consequence of conflating the logic of coming to faith with the logic of beliefs is the dominating construal of the central structure of theological anthropologies as a "grace/sin" or "sin/grace" model, according to which, the chief topic of theology becomes the explication of God relating to reconcile and save fallen and sinful human beings. Systematically, the modes of God relating to create and draw to eschatological consummation are marginalized and/or neglected by being assigned the logical status of background beliefs to disjointing concentration upon God relating to reconcile. Correlatively, God's relating to reconcile becomes in turn systematically construed in terms of an anthropological problematic, thereby threatening anthropocentrically to distort God's relating to humans in utilitarian and functionalist ways, even the divine relating to reconcile.

For Kelsey, the basis for a theocentric corrective to such undue systematization, resulting from the conflation of the question of the logic of coming to faith and the logic of Christian beliefs, and its tendential consequences is provided in a properly Trinitarian understanding of God. Succinctly put,

[f]unctionalist and instrumentalist understandings of God are ruled out by Trinitarian understandings of God because they understand God's living reality to be constituted by the relations of free giving and receiving in communion among the triune "persons," relations whose reality is logically independent of God's "functioning" in any fashion relative to reality other than God [116].

Correlatively, the trinitarian character of the logic of Christian beliefs should safeguard Christian anthropological beliefs concerning the human, implied by, derived from, and conceptually dependent upon more basic beliefs about the triune God and God's ways of relating to all that is not God, from systematic distortion. Kelsey's theological project, is addressing itself only to the question of the logic of Christian beliefs, is properly modest as an exercise in 'systematically unsystematic secondary theology.'

The unity for his systematically unsystematic secondary theology lies in the answer to the question "Who or what is God?" that arises from the root question concerning what is implied about human being by the claim that God relates to all else in creation, eschatological consummation, and reconciliation. The unity for a systematically unsystematic secondary theology is the mystery of the triunity of God, the immanent communion of the Trin-

ity at the root of the 'economies' or modes of divine relating. The mystery of the triune life of God is "the interdependence of its glory, incomprehensibility, and holiness" [77]. Kelsey brilliantly explicates the Trinitarian character of the divine relating as follows: "the Father creates through the Son in the power of the Spirit," "the Spirit, sent by the Father through the Son, draws creatures to eschatological consummation," and "the Son, sent by the Father in the power of the Spirit, reconciles creatures." The mystery of the triune God and that God's manifold relating is the basis for the proper recognition of the mystery of theocentric human being, "and it is only as we begin to grasp the mystery of theocentric human being that we can begin to grasp the profundity of human being's distortion in the human condition" [116]. And, if the ways in which the triune God relates are irreducibly threefold and distinct, proper theocentric accounts of human beings will likewise, Kelsey maintains, be irreducibly threefold, such that there cannot be a Christian metatheory concerning human being and acting "that can systematically synthesize all relevant true claims about the human being, Christian theological claims and otherwise" [131]. This will also require the use of different linguistic categorizations for God's threefold relating (with corresponding implications for the different explications of "what," "how," and "who" we are in relation to the divine relating, especially in the use of body, action, and agency languages).7

A properly Trinitarian understanding of God and the modes of divine relating has both methodological and substantive implications. Methodologically, the movement to properly Trinitarian understandings is rooted in Christian communities' practice, fundamental to their common life, of interpreting biblical stories about God relating to humankind. The movement to properly Trinitarian understanding of God rested on the recognition that God relating to all that is not God to create it, relating to draw it to eschatological consummation, and relating to reconcile it are logically and ontologically distinct ways of relating. For Kelsey, this is reflected in the irreducible plurality of different narrative logics in the biblical stories that inform and shape the practices of the communities of Christian faith. This will have major, even quite potentially devastating critical consequences for the relation between the unity of canonical Christian Holy Scripture and construals of the structure of secondary theology. Substantively, it is important, for Kelsey, that the movement to properly Trinitarian understandings of God was rooted in Christian communities' practices of worship that "make up the communities' ways of relating to God in appropriate response to God's ways of relating to them" [78], enabling answers to the anthropological questions "Who we are?" and "How ought we to be?"

Yet undue systematization can also be tempting in relation to construals of the canonical Christian Holy Scripture that informs, guides, and shapes the practices of the communities of the Christian faith, that a modest systematically unsystematic theology must guard against. Conceptual confusion can also arise, according to Kelsey, in failing to differentiate properly between diverse things. To minimize such possible confusion in relation to the canonical Scriptures, Kelsey proposes various stipulations for the meanings of the diverse terms "bible," "Scripture," "Holy Scripture," and "canonical Holy Scripture." These stipulations proffered do not "pretend to untangle debates about these terms, much less to solve the theological problems involved in those debates" [133]. The stipulations seek to reflect the fact that the study of texts as a practice is always governed by some type of interest(s) in the texts being studied, that different types of interests construe the same texts as different types of things, and that there are distinctive ways of disciplining the study of texts, depending on the type of interest and the type of texts being construed. For reasons of expediency, we shall focus on his treatment of possible confusions in relation to the "wholeness" of 'Christian canonical Holy Scripture' in relation to its authority, and encourage readers to investigate further the remainder of his brilliant exposition.

Kelsey proposes the following stipulation of 'Christian canonical Holy Scriptures; "Let "canonical Christian Holy Scripture" be used to designate the collection of the very same texts (the Christian Bible) when they are explicitly acknowledged (Christian Holy Scripture) by certain communities of Christian faith to be a determinate set of texts whose employment by the community in many practices that constitute their common life is the medium in, thorough, and under which God works to call the community into being; nurture and sustain it; and, when necessary, correct and reform the ways they seek in their common life to respond appropriately to God's ways of relating to them" [147-8]. First of all, 'canonical' is a qualifier of an authoritative collection of texts rather than a collection of authoritative texts [148]. Secondly, 'holy' does not designate an intrinsic property of the texts, but rather their dependence on and derivation from the holiness of God, who is self-committed to work through the communities' ways of living with these texts, and their de jure functional authority as they are lived with in the practices composing the common life of communities of faith.

The authority of these texts for secondary theology is derivative from the primary authority they exercise in the practices constituting the common life of ecclesial communities of faith. But the authority of canonical Holy Scripture as a whole does not imply that all the texts within the canon

are equally important, nor does it entail that theological proposals "ought to be accountable equally to each and every text of Holy Scripture" [153]. And, especially in relation to the practice of secondary theology, acknowledgment of the formal wholeness of canonical Holy Scripture does not dictate a particular theological construal of the texts of Holy Scripture. No polyphonic harmonization of the canonical Holy Scripture into one monolithic story can be told about the triune God's irreducibly threefold relating to us: "God's mystery eludes that, which means that there can be no monolithic theological story to tell about what and who we are and how we ought to be" [130].

But temptations of undue systematization have been a persistent convention in the practice of secondary theology in the drive to elaborate in an imaginative judgment an overall canon-unifying narrative logic. Construing the canonical Holy Scripture in terms of a canon-unifying story operates upon a judgment of the overall sequential movement of the 'narrative' of canonical Holy Scripture:

They share the judgment that the narrative opens with a story of God relating creatively to all else, is interrupted by a story of a calamity that deforms all that is not God and threatens its ultimate disintegration, and then resumes with stories of God relating in two additional ways – namely, to save all that is not God from the consequences of the calamity and to draw all else to an eschatological consummation that, beyond merely restoring creation following the calamity, enhances it [461].

But temptation(s) lurks in questions concerning the order of theological importance and primacy to be attributed to the possible permutations of the patterns of interrelations (between the component parts) taken to be paradigmatic of the more complex overall narrative [see pp. 462-468 for a masterful typological synopsis of the variants that have been articulated in the history of Christian theology]. Inevitably systematization(s) of the proposals of secondary theology concerning the ways in which God relates to all else that is not God gives rise to theological models that (1) privilege or emphasize one of the ways of divine relating to the expense of the other two ways or (2) preserve the distinction between two distinct sets of narrative stories as stories of two different ways in which God relates to all else, thereby, consistently affirming the difference between, on the one hand, stories of God relating creatively and, on the other hand, stories of God in the person of Jesus, "either to save, or to draw to eschatological consummation, or to be

an incarnate companion of human beings in communion" [468]. In the latter, the preservation of a distinction between the plots of the different sets of stories gives rise to what Kelsey terms the "conventional binary structures of secondary theology" usually organized around a thematic contrast. Two widely influential variants of the canon-unifying narrative reflected abstractly in binary thematic, conceptual structures of conventional secondary theological construals of the ways in which God relates are the schemes of "nature and grace" and "law and gospel."

Kelsey's modest theological proposal, resulting from the practice of systematically unsystematic secondary theology, is an amazing and audacious counterproposal to the major construals of the movement of the canon-unifying narrative as traditionally plotted and refracted in conventional binary structures of secondary theology, whether "nature and grace" or "law and gospel," that have been dominant and influential in the history of Christian theology. Kelsey states his project thusly:

... this project proceeds on the basis of a construal of the movement of the canon-unifying narrative as plotted by three distinct but complexly and inseparably related plots of stories of, respectively, God relating creatively, to draw to eschatological consummation, and to reconcile. The interrelations among the three can be imaged as a triple helix: stories of God relating to consummate eschatologically and to reconcile are distinct from each other and cannot be absorbed into each other, but because in Christian canonical Holy Scripture both sets of stories have Jesus of Nazareth as their central figure, they are inseparably wound around each other like a helix. In addition, the pair of them is wound helixlike around a story of God relating creatively, from which they are inseparable because they necessarily presuppose it, but into which they cannot be absorbed. The logic of relations among these three plots, each with a distinctive narrative logic that cannot be absorbed into or conflated with that of either of the other two, makes it impossible to relate them to one another in a simple linear fashion, as a sequence of different stories of three different ways in which God successively relates to all that is not God. It is to canonical Holy Scripture whose wholeness is grounded in a narrative complexly plotted in just this concurrently triple way that this theological project's anthropological proposals are held accountable [476].

A further consequence will be a proposed revision of the overall structure in secondary theology's explication of the logic of Christian beliefs concerning

human beings that in turn will provide, Kelsey contends, revisionary proposals not only great in scope, but unconventional in their concrete and novel articulation of the mystery of theocentric being humans as imagers of "the" image of the triune mystery, the *imago Dei*, Jesus Christ.⁸ Those revisionary theological anthropological proposals will avoid systematic distortions through systematically unsystematic accounts of theocentric human existence as an open-ended triple [cylindrical, not conical] helix that resists closure, but is eccentrically open to the mystery of God.

If Kelsey's magisterial proposal is read in a in an ad hoc, piecemeal fashion, one will miss the systematically audacious import of his work. One should not underestimate either the audacious theological significance of his modest proposals in systematically unsystematic secondary theology or the challenge and difficulty they present to critical theological counterproposals in turn when they cannot presuppose the background validity of theological systematizations that Kelsey has bracketed. One will have to begin with the re-examination of the three different questions and the nature of their interrelations in order to critique the "purism" of the logic of Christian beliefs.

Notes

- 1 All bracketed numeration refers to pagination in the consecutive pagination of the two volumes. Given the focus of these remarks on the import of the "systematically unsystematic" character of his proposals, a detailed presentation of the Table of Contents, including section headings and epigraphs, has been appended to this essay in order to see its range, the principal Scriptural resources, and contents than the printed Table of Contents offers to readers. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the other members of the *Kelsey Lesekreis* Maria Erling, John Spangler, Kathleen and Stephen Reed, and Donald Wilcox for ad hoc spirited discussions of the book in convivial settings, rich in foods and appropriate beverages and spirits for bodily well-being and flourishing. Whatever faults and shortcomings the essay bears, responsibility for them should be ascribed solely to the author.
- 2 Nota bene, it appears that the adverbial characterization "actively" qualifying the three modes of divine relating might be inconsistent with his claim that "it will not do to abstract from this array a generalized reference to "God acting" as the single salient theological background belief."
- 3 Kelsey illustrates this modesty in relation to the example of the argument-making practice of history: "..., when a proposal in secondary theology is defended as a historical proposal (say, "Jesus of Nazareth was crucified by the Romans"), the arguments advanced in support of the proposal must count as good arguments in the practice of history (e.g., arguments based on what counts as good evidence in the practice of history). Simply meeting the standards of excellence to which the practice of secondary theology is subject is not sufficient (say, e.g., that Christianly recognized authorities,

such as Scripture and tradition, testify that Jesus was crucified and that the Roman authorities were responsible). The fact that the argument plays a role in an enactment of the practice of secondary theology does not excuse the argument from having to meet the standards of excellence to which the practice of history is subject. To continue with the example: What in fact count as good arguments in, respectively, the practice of history and the practice of secondary theology are defined by the two practices' respective substantive standards of excellence, not merely by their formal standards. But the requirement that, say, a historical argument mounted in the course of a theological argument must meet the substantive standards of excellence of the practice of history, and not the substantive standards of excellence of the practice of secondary theology, is itself a formal standard of excellence to which the practice of secondary theology is subject."

- Though Kelsey notes that sometimes the formal order of relations among beliefs has been likened to 'grammar' rather than their 'logic' (as perhaps in Paul Holmer and George Lindbeck), he regards them in this context as "largely interchangeable." Yet, since secondary theology fulfills more than a descriptive account, the two terms cannot be synonymous: "..., answers proposed to the question of the "logic" of these beliefs go beyond description of those beliefs to ask what the beliefs imply, and what blocks those apparent implications – that is, why some apparent implications do not follow. They ask how these claims may be related to claims that are well-warranted by practices of inquiry, such as the natural and social sciences, that lie outside the practices constituting the communities' common life. They ask whether received – that is, traditional - formulations of those beliefs can be readily understood in the current cultural context or are widely misunderstood, if not be found to be incomprehensible. They ask what theological considerations warrant communities' acceptance of proposals of fresh – that is, revisionary – articulations of such beliefs. They then venture some such proposals" [28]. 'Logic' implies more than 'grammar.' This might be what partly distinguishes Kelsey's project from those of his colleagues at Yale and the socalled 'Yale school' of theology.
- The structural order of topics in the logic of Christian beliefs, according to Kelsey, will be consistently followed in each part of his theological anthropology: Each of these three parts will have the same *ordo* reflecting the progression from divine relating to the anthropological ("what," "how," and "who") to "sins" (distorted "hows") and, then, sin in the singular:
 - An account of human being's ultimate context entailed by the way in which God relates that is under consideration.
 - An account of human beings' proximate contexts (i.e., lived worlds) entailed by the way in which God relates that is under consideration.
 - An address to the anthropological "What?" question.
 - An address to the anthropological "How?" question.
 - An address to the anthropological "Who?" question.
 - Exploration of ways in which human "existential hows" may be distorted and human flourishing compromised (i.e., "sins" in the plural") and how such distortion is possible.

Exploration of ways in which human personal identities (who they are) may be in bondage to living deaths and their flourishing obscured (i.e., "sin in the singular") [10-11].

6 It should be noted that Kelsey's critique of modern theological anthropologies focuses

solely on the conflation of the question of the logic of coming to faith with that of the logic of beliefs, he "would contend that pretty much the same things happen when analysis of the logic of Christian anthropological beliefs is oriented by the question, "What is the logic of the life of Christian belief or the life of Christian faith?" However, that analysis is not undertaken" [82] in his book.

- For example, Kelsey notes differences in the three major parts of the book relative to central Christian claims about the triune God's ways of relating to us: Part 1 took the triune god's relating to create to be a metaphysical relation, a relation in being that could be clarified by modest, ad hoc, and highly qualified use of metaphysical categories. Part 2 took God's drawing creation to eschatological consummation to be a social-historical relation best clarified by analyses of social roles using the social and cultural conventions of ordinary language. Here [Part 3], however, I have suggested that the triune God's relating to reconcile is best likened to an interpersonal and social relation most adequately characterized by the way in which human living bodies' unsubstitutable personal identities are best characterized both by accounts of the interplay between their intentional actions and their circumstances, including other personal bodies with whom they interact, and by accounts of their unique identities' continuing across time in diverse social and physical contexts" [624].
- 8 One has to pay close attention to avoiding studiously the mistake in reading into Kelsey's many idiomatic formulations understandings that have been framed in theological frameworks informed by questions concerning the logics of coming to faith and of the life of Christian faith, mistakes that lead to being uncomfortably perplexed, baffled, or puzzled.

Appendix – Detailed Outline, with Epigraphs, of Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology

Volume I

About Introductions

John Calvin — "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and which brings forth the other is not easy to discern."

Chapter IA: The Questions

Who's Asking?
How Tradition-Particularism Shapes the Questions
Why Christian Particularism?
The Root Question
The Tone of Voice and Structure of the Project

Kierkegaard: "Existence is not a system."

Chapter IB: What Kind of Project Is This?

Theology as Ecclesial Practice

Communal Practices and Communal Identity

Practices, Concepts and Beliefs

Public Practices, The Common Life of Communities of Christian Faith,

and Primary Theology

Secondary Theology and Its End

Secondary Theology and Its Standards of Excellence

Practices and Traditions

Desiderata for A Secondary Theological Anthropology

Secondary Theology as "Faith Seeking Understanding"

Chapter 2A: The One With Whom We Have To Do

Doxological and Personal Identity

The Economy of Salvation and Personal Identity

Creedal Formulations

From Historical Economy to Immanent Communion

Paul Lehmann – "All theology is anthropology as a reflex of Christology."

Chapter 2B – "The Kinds of Projects This Isn't

Theological Anthropology and the Logic of Coming to Faith Subjectivity Constituted by Self-Relating in an Act of Self-Affirmation Subjectivity Constituted by Self-Relating in an Act of Self-Recognition Subjectivity Constituted by Self-Relating in an Act of Self-Choosing This Entire Set of Nested relations is the Structure of "Spirit" Against Conflating the Questions

Chapter 3A – "The One Who Has To Do With Us"

Shifting Patterns

The Triune God Relating to Create

The Triune God Relating to Consummate Eschatologically

The Triune God Relating to Reconcile the Estranged

Stephen Ford – "For Christians, scriptural interpretation should shape and be shaped by the convictions, practices, and concerns of Christian communities as part of their ongoing struggle to live and worship faithfully before God."

Chapter 3B – "The Concept of Christian Canonical Holy Scripture"

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Holy Scripture

Canonical Holy Scripture

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Chapter 4A – "The Ultimate Context into Which We Are Born"

Wisdom and Creation The Creator's Relations to Creatures Sprit, Son, and Wisdom

Walther Zimmerli – "Wisdom thinks resolutely within the framework of a theology of creation."

Chapter 4B – "Why Wisdom? A One-Sided Conversation with

Claus Westermann

Exegetical Arguments against Traditional Use of Genesis 1-3

Theological Reasons for Not Privileging Genesis 1-3

Reasons to Privilege Canonical Wisdom Literature

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 – "There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?"

Chapter 5A – "Our Proximate Contexts as Created"

Our Proximate Contexts as Created

The Quotidian, Practices and the Human Vocation

Excursus: Problematic Anthropocentrism?

The Quotidian as Finite and Human Perfection

The Quotidian and Evil

Summary: The Quotidian as Gracious Gift

Roland E. Murphy – "We must move into theological anthropology if we are to do justice to the wisdom literature."

Chapter 5B – "Theological Reflections on Proverbs

Canonical Editing of Proverbs

The "Wholeness" of Proverbs

Tropes in Proverbs for the Creator's Relation to Creation

Pedagogical Tropes for How God Relates in Creating

Wisdom: Well-Being and Order in Creation

Dietrich Bonhoeffer – "It is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith.

One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be as saint, or a converted sinner, or a churchman... By this worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God."

Chapter 6 – To Be and To Have A Living Body: Meditations on Job 10

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Job Created as a Living Body

Job Created as One Given a Living Body

Chapter 7 – Personal Bodies: Meditations on Job 10

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Personal Bodies

Actual and Perfect Personal Bodies

Job 10 Heard in Contrast to Genesis 1 and 2

Genesis 1 and 2 Heard Against the Background of Job 10

Personal Bodies and Other Creatures

Terminal Individuals

Irenaeus of Lyon – "Gloria Dei vivens homo. The glory of God is human beings made fully alive. [Adv. Haer. 4.20.7]"

Chapter 8 – "Faith: Flourishing on Borrowed Breath"

Expressing the Glory of God

Our Ultimate Context as the Glory of God

Flourishing as Dying Life

Personal Bodies as the Glory of God

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Flourishing as Having Borrowed Living bodies

Flourishing in Wise Action for the Quotidian's Sake

Flourishing in Action

For the Well-Being of the quotidian

For Its Own Sake

Flourishing in Faith

"Flourishing in Faith ... through the Son"

"Flourishing in Faith in ... the Power of the Spirit"

Cardinal Emmanuel Celestin Subard – "To be a witness ... means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist."

Chapter 9A – "Doxological Gratitude: Who We Are and How We Are

To Be as Faithful Creatures"

Senses of Personal Identity

Who We Are as God's Creatures

Faith, Doxological Gratitude, and Existential Hows

Flourishing in Faith: How We Are to Be on Borrowed Breath

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Chapter 9B – "Base Unsubstitutable Personal Identity

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Excursus: The Power and Inadequacy of the Modern Concept of Person

"Base Personal Identity"

Excursus: Describing Personal Identities

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Unsubstitutable Personal Identities and Individualism

Proverbs 30:7-9 – "Two things I ask of you: do not deny them to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need or I shall be full and deny you, and say, "Who is the Lord?" or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God."

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Sin: Folly, Distorted Faith, and Living Death

Distorted Faithful Existential Hows

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Chapter 11 – "Living Death: Sin as Distortion of Trust in God"

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Bound in a Distorted Identity: Trusting in the Quotidian

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Bound in a Distorted Identity: Trusting in and Loyal to Oneself Alone

Bound Identities and Obscured Creaturely Glory

PART TWO: Consummated: Living on Borrowed Time

R. P. C. Hanson – "The Holy Spirit ... in the New testament ... is the form ion which, or in whom, God appears to reign over his people in the Last time."

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Chapter 12A – "Our Ultimate Context: The Spirit Sent by the Father with the Son"

The Circumambient Spirit: Living on Borrowed Time

By the Father: Freely Blessing With the Son: Advent of Promise Two Aspects of Our Ultimate Context

Chapter 12B – "The Unity of Canonical Holy Scripture and the Structure of Secondary Theology"

The Conventional Wholeness of Canonical Holy Scripture

The Conventional Binary Structure of Secondary Theology

A Counterproposal

Chapter 13 – "Our Proximate Context: Living on Borrowed Time"

Living on Borrowed time

A Public Missio Dei

Doubly Ambiguous Proximate Contexts

Relativized Social Structures

Promising Proximate Contexts

Augustine of Hippo – Faith tells us only that God is. Love tells us that God is good. But hope tells us that God wil work God's will. And hope has two lovely daughters: anger and courage.

Anger so that what cannot be, may not be. And courage, so that what must be, will be."

Chapter 14 – "Hope: Flourishing on Borrowed Time"

Eccentric Hope

Hope for Glory

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Flourishing in Hope: How We Are to Be in Borrowed Time

Robert Farrar Capon — To be raised up into the new creation, we don't need to be good, holy, smart, accountable, or even faithful. We need only be dead."

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Luke

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Samuel Crossman – "My song is love unknown, my Savior's love to me, Love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be."

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Coda: Eccentric Existence as Imaging the Image of God

What Human Beings Are as Eccentric Existence
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A Theological Cartload before Its Theological Horse: The Unsystematic Absurdity
Who Human Beings Are as Eccentric Existence

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POETRY + THEOLOGY

Metaphors, Medicine and More

Katy Giebenhain

What does poetry have to do with medicine, disability, theology and pastoral care?

For one thing, this issue's Poetry + Theology rubric is inspired by the 2010 Summer Institute on Disability and Theology, which was jointly sponsored by Gettysburg Seminary and The Faith Community Leadership Project of the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council. Please see the reflections from Mary Fast on page 60, the essay from Diana York Luscombe on page 62 and the ad from The Bogg's Center, which offers audio files from Summer Institute faculty presentations. Prior to the event, we were interested to find that the topic of disability and theology is one that many church leaders don't want to touch. In our churches, places of inclusivity and grace, there are still stereotypes. There is still insecurity (despite good intentions) when it comes to issues of disability and congregational life.

For another thing, in a time of hotly contested national health care legislation, we are reminded that we are all vulnerable: the healthiest of us, the strongest of us, the wealthiest of us, and the most faithful. Nothing reminds us of our precarious status like our own failing bodies. Just as unsettling is the changing health of those we love and who depend on us. The "us" is personal, of course. But for *Seminary Ridge Review* readers it is also professional.

So, in this issue, the poetry rubric includes conversations with three veterans of places where poetry, medicine and ministry intersect. They generously share their insights with us. The Rev. Paul Steinke, an ACPE Supervisor and the Director of Pastoral Care at Bellevue Hospital Center in Manhattan integrates poetry and literature in his curriculum. Barbara Crooker is an award-winning poet, the mother of an adult son with Autism

and a member of an ELCA congregation in Pennsylvania. Dr. Deirdre Neilen teaches in the medical humanities department at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, N.Y. She is editor of the literary journal *The Healing Muse*.

The interviews are followed by two book recommendations, an essay on faith and metaphor by former U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser, and a selection of poems grappling with either faith or health or both. Featured poets include John Graber, writing from the banks of the Mississippi River in western Wisconsin; George Ella Lyon, one of our foremost Appalachian authors; Raza Ali Hasan, who currently teaches at University of Colorado at Boulder; Steven Schroeder, from Chicago and China; Pennsylvania-based theologian and poet Mary Anne Morefield, Patricia Kirkpatrick, poetry editor of *Water-Stone Review* and a survivor of brain cancer surgery; British poet and nurse Maureen Jivani; and Gettysburg College's Will Lane, who is also one of our area's key activists for health care reform.

And what about the word "more?" It keeps jumping out at me, not only because it is the title of Barbara Crooker's recent (and wonderful) poetry collection. It jumps out when Paul Steinke says that hospital chaplains should be *more* than friendly visitors. It jumps out when Deirdre Neilen says people are actually *more* interested in what pastors and pastoral care givers do. It jumps out when all three interviewees say we should read *more* poetry. It jumps out when we see that disabilities and church life need *more* attention. Fruitful, realistic attention. And, when Steinke speaks from his many years of teaching pastoral care, as a supervisor who loves literature, and as a theologian, he says nothing "can teach you *more* about death than reading *The Death of Ivan Ilyich.*"

An Interview with Deirdre Neilen

Deirdre Neilen is an associate professor at the Center for Bioethics and Humanities, a department in Upstate Medical University's College of Medicine. Her work includes teaching humanities electives and bioethics to medical students and nursing students. She is the editor of the university's literary journal The Healing Muse.

SRR: *Tell us what you seek to do in your work as editor of* The Healing Muse and in the courses you teach in bioethics and the humanities.

DN: I see important connections in my responsibilities as professor and editor: in the classroom, I wish to encourage medical students to incorporate reflection and writing in their clinical practices, and in the journal, I wish to encourage our writers to explore their experiences with illness and healing in their work. Both groups have much to teach and to learn from each other. The journal wants to be a place where conversations can occur between clinicians and caregivers, between patients and families. The electives that I teach (AIDS in American Literature, Death and Dying in Literature, Medicine in Film and Literature, for example) encourage students to find common ground with those who suffer, to truly think about how we as a society show true compassion or fail to do so. The journal also gives readers a chance to go beyond a diagnosis or an illness into a real awareness of how life even though changed does go on. Many of our writers and artists create work that examines society's and medicine's responses to their medical conditions. They remind us that such a response can be limiting and wrong.

SRR: You mention poet/physician Rafael Campo in "My Story, Your Attention, Our Connection" on a Literature, Arts and Medicine blog commentary. (I love Campo's poetry, and his reading presence.) You quote something he says about what good writing can do in the midst of bad outcomes. It can "make empathy for human suffering, if not entirely comprehensible, then at least clearly and palpably evident." This emphasis on making things palpably evident is one of the reasons excellent pastoral care demands good language. How do you think reading, writing and using language and metaphors that go beyond clinical language improve communication and "seeing" another individual?

DN: Medical education is an intense experience for students; the first two years they are primarily focused on the sciences, learning how the human

body can be divided into organ systems, components of exquisite detail and complicated workings. They are mastering the biomedical culture which divides in order to analyze. The emphasis is on learning what can go wrong and what we can then do to make the body better. This work of biochemistry and anatomy and physiology is essential for a physician to know, yet it contributes to what we call "detached concern." This is supposedly the armor that a physician must assume so that he or she is not consumed by the patient's suffering.

But I think medicine has come to understand that such detachment does not really help either the physician or the patient. Such detachment can lead a physician to tell the medical student to go check on "the diabetic in Room 2012." What literature, poetry, and stories can do is to remind us of the individual, that unique person who in Room 2012 is suffering from diabetes complications and who wants a physician who recognizes that. Poetry can "deliver" a powerful portrait of that person in a very few lines and images. What the best literature does is to shake the reader up a bit, take us out of ourselves and into another's world.

For medicine, this seems essential to me. Medicine is an area where suffering lives; health professionals take oaths and enter their various professions committed to alleviating suffering, but it is too easy to get caught in the system's needs, to find oneself exhausted by paperwork and time constraints. All of this leads us astray from what the medical encounter should be: a meeting of individuals. If we truly sit with a person and listen to the story that person tells us, we have a much better chance of "seeing" him or her in the wider context. I would imagine that it is similar in pastoral care; the person you visit, whether in the home or in the hospital, is desperate to be seen as who he or she was before the diagnosis, the depression, the cancer. If our language stays only within our own specialty, it may not allow the other to be revealed to us. What a missed opportunity that is for both clinicians and pastors.

SRR: Can you recommend some poets or books in particular regarding medicine and poetry to SRR readers? Regarding disability and poetry, for example?

DN: There are so many good books being written which incorporate poetry and medicine. Rafael Campo, of course, has tried to show other clinicians and patients why he sees poetry as a true part of his clinical practice. I would recommend his books *The Healing Art* and *The Desire to Heal* which discuss how he uses poetry with his patients. His own poetry books *What the Body Told, Diva*, and *The Enemy,* for example, show him working at his craft of poetry and reveal beautiful portraits of healing and forgiveness

which are such a part of medicine and life. Two poetry collections edited by Dr. Jack Coulehan and Angela Belli, Blood and Bone and Primary Care show physicians revisiting medical decisions and examining their own behaviors with patients as well as their own families. The emotions they have felt but not expressed during the clinical hours come forth in blazing images or verses that enable the reader to identify with medicine's sometimes-messy contradictions. A book I love is by the poet Donald Hall, Without, which recounts the last year of his wife's life as together they faced her leukemia diagnosis and treatments. It is poignant and powerful and wrenching. It describes medicine from the perspective of a layperson as we try to navigate the system and preserve ourselves in the face of treatment and its many side effects. Hall's wife, Jane Kenyon, was also a poet so we experience the added tragedy of the writer growing weaker yet still trying to finish her final manuscript. Hall later wrote, The Best Day, The Worst Day, which takes us through these same events but this time in prose. It is fascinating to read them side-by-side; we can really see poetry's ability to compress story, action, emotion, and image.

And, of course, Mary Oliver's book *Thirst* which she wrote after the death of her lover is a wonderful collection of poems seeking a way out of loss and sorrow and finding one in a renewal of the spiritual and the natural world. Many poets have written about their HIV status; a body of amazing work has emerged from this disease. I would recommend *HIV, Mon Amour* and *Black Milk* by Tori Dent. There was a collection called *Poets for Life* edited by Michael Klein that contains some beautiful work by people living with AIDS. And of course I will put a plug here for *The Healing Muse*, which has many works written by people living with a disability and writing about it.

SRR: I don't want to overreach in comparing professions here, but the notion of vocation is often talked about for clergy and for doctors and nurses. A vocation seems linked to expectations of their abilities to say the right thing at the right time and in the right way. How, in your opinion, can literature and poetry be useful for professionals of whom so much is expected?

DN: A vocation implies that one has been called to service; I'm not sure that it means we expect our clergy or physicians and nurses always to be able to say the right thing so much as we want them to be *present* for us at the times we need them. This is a huge expectation of course, but in medicine each patient comes to the physician with a story that is unique. If the physician truly listens and is open to that patient's story, a relationship begins. I think literature and poetry can help those in the healing professions by re-

minding them of the connections that link us. When we are fatigued or discouraged, we can find in the words of a poem or a story the courage to keep going or the energy to become engaged again. Poetry can soothe; it can stimulate, irritate, or help us transcend our current state of mind. I would think it refreshes the healers.

If the healers also write about their feelings and experiences, they can gain what many patients who write gain: the sense that they can take some control over what has seemed beyond their control. Living with illness is not often easy or pretty; illness turns our world upside down and makes us feel as though we've become somewhat invisible as an individual. All people seem to see is the diagnosis, particularly our physicians and other health professionals who may in their haste to get the diagnosis right forget that we are so much more than a list of symptoms. Poetry and literature are the ways writers leave their marks; they write to share, yes, but they also write to insist on their presence. There is a wonderful book of short stories called Fourteen Stories by physician writer Jay Baruch; I use it with first year medical students who have not yet been given the privilege and responsibility of treating patients. Baruch takes us into the world of emergency medicine, and he is unsparing in his depiction of its failures, the times when healers stop seeing patients as people and instead find them too often irritants or poorly behaved beggars. He also has many positive portraits too, physicians who care deeply for their patients and their families and are trying to do the right thing all the time. Baruch has said that writing keeps him centered in his professional responsibilities. Reading his work has reminded me of mine as well. This is what is so wonderful about literature: it takes us out of our own worlds, introduces us to someone else's, and then forges a connection between us that seems to deepen our appreciation for each other.

SRR: Is there an example from your own education or earlier work experience which first peaked your interest in this kind of cross-disciplinary focus?

DN: Teaching itself seems to foster an interest in people. I walked into my first classroom as a graduate teaching assistant when I was 22 years old, and I just loved it. I thought my students were wonderful, interesting, and funny; I'm well over three decades into this and I still walk into the classroom and think how fortunate I am to meet these people. I love hearing them tell their stories. When I first began working in bioethics and medicine, my world expanded even further. We have the privilege of working with people who take care of people; we can hear their stories and sometimes help them talk about the problems they are having and engender new ways to approach those dilemmas.

People often say to me how odd they think it is that a literature professor ended up in a medical university, but now I find it the perfect match between two professions that want to deepen their understanding of the human condition. Both professions have to watch their tendency to speak only in the jargon each profession employs; that language can separate us from the layperson. In medicine, the layperson is the patient and his or her family, surely the people we most want to be open with and to.

In my own personal experience, medicine and literature careened into each other in 2002 when my partner was diagnosed with a brain tumor. She was – and this will sound like a cliché but I assure you it is the truth – a brilliant teacher, scholar, and poet. To witness her diagnosis, then subsequent treatments (neurosurgery, chemotherapy, radiation) was to understand intimately how medicine in its attempt to save can ironically and callously seem to ignore the person and personality and character of the patient. I was a vocal and insistent reminder that everyone who entered her room understood they were in the presence of loveliness. I had her poetry, her articles; I had my history with her, and I was tireless. And it worked: that is to say, I felt our caregivers were careful and respectful of her, came to know and understand why those of us who loved her were so protective and devastated and resolute. I was teaching the death and dying course while she was in treatment and when we learned there were no more treatments to offer. It was a cross-disciplinary focus that has never left me.

SRR: Clergy and health care providers grapple with their own health problems and family tragedies. Would you like to say anything about how poetry can be personally helpful, not just professionally?

DN: I guess I would return here to my earlier thoughts on how poetry can take us out of ourselves. For clergy and health care providers, there is always the danger in being so consumed by the needs (the suffering) of others that they don't take care of themselves. Poetry would be a good place to rekindle one's spirits. In a poem, the reader is taken to another's world, which may or may not seem familiar, but in a good poem even the unfamiliar makes space for us. We sit for a while just imagining that new place. We connect to the speaker of the poem or the characters in the poem. We begin realizing that we too have felt that way or we too have wished to be that brave or even that we too have been that weak. That can be a humbling experience, but even so, it seems to me to stretch me in good ways, like a spiritual yoga session perhaps! Perhaps even like prayer, if we take the time to read some poetry, we have taken the time to be still. Such stillness brings its own rewards. For those whose professions are about service and serving others, stillness is usually a rarity.

Poetry and literature provide a good reason for the stillness that we need. One of my favorite parts of the Old Testament is in Kings when Elijah has gone into the wilderness, exhausted and afraid, and he experiences the mighty wind, the earthquake, the fire and none of them does to him what "the still small voice" does, which was the divine. Poetry can provide that still moment from which we can hear all kinds of revelations. Poetry can lift us up to face the tasks we have been called to do. Poetry reminds us of our connections to each other which transcend race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, class, disability, and poverty. I would recommend that clergy and caregivers think about reading others' work and writing their own stories in poetry or prose just to see what happens. I think they would be pleasantly surprised by the results.

SRR: What would you most like to say to these readers? What parting advice can you give them?

DN: I would first say thank you to the clergy and health care clinicians and caregivers. Their calling is honorable and difficult but simply and absolutely essential to any notion of true community. I would remind them that people do want to know more about what they do and how they think about it; writing their experiences can be not only personally rewarding but professionally enriching and valuable. To write is to make clear; it is to share on a deep level what we have in common, how we navigate life's hardest paths. I would not presume to give advice, only to ask them to take care of themselves even as they take care of the rest of us, and perhaps make a little room for poetry.

Visit *The Healing Muse: A Journal of Visual and Literary Arts:* www.upstate.edu/bioethics/thehealingmuse/.

A Conversation with Paul Steinke at Bellevue Hospital, December 2010

Founded in 1736 before the Revolutionary War, Bellevue Hospital is the oldest public hospital in the United States. It is academically affiliated with the New York University School of Medicine, and it serves as the medical facility for dignitaries and UN diplomats visiting New York City. Its CPE program is a program of the Bellevue Hospital Center, in cooperation with Lutheran Disaster Response of New York and the Atlantic District – LCMS. Chapel Hall in the old hospital's administration building, has a synagogue, a Catholic chapel, a Protestant chapel and a Muslim prayer room.

Paul Steinke served for ten years in a parish, three years in upstate New York and seven years in Southington Connecticut, before beginning his career in clinical pastoral education (CPE). He is certified by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE), a multicultural, multifaith organization for clinical and academic training in pastoral care.

SRR: Describe how you became interested in CPE.

PS: I'd never really heard of CPE until I met Clarence Bruninga, [one of the "first generation" of CPE supervisors.] He was the speaker at a Lutheran conference. He talked about CPE and I thought, "yea – that sounds interesting." So, I eventually went to Norwich State Hospital for a year, and then I went to Philadelphia State Hospital for two years.

SRR: Were those residencies?

PS: Yes. At Norwich I was a resident. In those days you went for the first level of certification in the region. We used to call it an "Acting Supervisor." Now we call it "Associate Supervisor." It's now done at the national level. Once I became an Acting Supervisor, I could get a job. At that time there were about five job offers in the CPE newsletter. Two were in California. Two were in Columbia, S.C. I forget where the other one was. I interviewed at the two in Columbia. Also, I had heard about this new community mental health center in Roanoke, VA. I interviewed in Roanoke and he offered me the job on the spot, so I took it. I enjoyed that immensely – working with people from other disciplines, and a big education department.

SRR: What was the name of the hospital in Roanoke?

PS: Mental Health Services of the Roanoke Valley. It was kind of the flagship community mental health center for the state of Virginia. I stayed there for ten years. Then I came to NYU via HealthCare Chaplaincy. Then, I came to Bellevue. I'm in my sixth year here. Every student gets a psych unit, which is unusual, as well as working in surgical and medical wards. I love Bellevue. It's a great place.

SRR: One thing that I'm interested in is what you talk about in your "Black Milk" article (Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling) about the use of language in clinical settings. What can you say about how helpful it can be to use metaphors and a greater vocabulary to more accurately describe something... to have more of an arsenal of language at your fingertips? Tell us something about your interest in this.

PS: I was already interested in poetry and literature, and I have a master's degree from while I was in the parish (an M.A. in literature from Wesleyan University in Connecticut). It was a great school. I studied mostly 19th century American Literature. I then got into CPE training. The training is really just about establishing the basics. I think one value of CPE is that you use *your* experience and who *you* are at work, as a pastoral educator. Writing poetry was important to me. Literature was important to me. So, I started to incorporate it into CPE.

SRR: You did that pretty early on?

PS: Yes, I did. And every single evaluation I write ends with a poem of some kind [selected especially for that student or resident]. In the CPE process we read a lot of short stories. In one unit we read "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" when the theme of the unit is death and dying. We've read "The Secret Sharer" by Conrad, for example, when talking about vocation.

Poetry can say it so much better than clinical shorthand. I got interested in the psalms, and the psalms of lament. I introduced them to my students so that they'll use those instead of the 23^{rd} psalm, which is kind of a cliché. I think the metaphoric language of the psalms is very helpful in CPE. The only scripture I want my students to use are the laments. I don't want them to use any other text. Everybody can accept the psalms [different religions]. They're poems. I do believe that language — what a clergy person says — is

important. We know it's important in terms of writing a sermon, but I think it is also important in pastoral care. I definitely teach my students about using a language of compassion that would match the poignancy of what the patient is telling us. The favorite CPE word for beginning students is "difficult." They're always saying "that must be hard" or "that must be difficult," which says nothing. These patients are pouring their hearts out, and they deserve better language than that.

SRR: And I think use of language has something to do with feeling heard, because if the response to a patient is more individual, then patients are more likely to feel like they are being listened to.

PS: I want my students – my basic students when they are coming in – to learn how to hear differently than they've heard before. Hear the emotion that is packed into every sentence. And the second thing I want them to learn is how to improve their language. There are 287 words in the English language that express emotion. We can go way beyond [what you automatically use]. And then metaphor itself, if you take seriously Paul Ricœur, the French philosopher, he believes that a metaphor is not just pretty language, that it actually changes the situation in which it is focused. There is a big difference between saying "you seem to be depressed" or "you seem to be drowning."

SRR: How do students respond to this? Are they resistant, or are they eager? Is it a new thing for some of them, talking about metaphors?

PS: It is a new thing for a lot of them, but you can't really argue with the fact that the chaplain's response needs to be as poignant as what the patient has said. And the other thing is, like I tell my students, there are different responses to everything a patient says. Some are better than others. So, there is no sense being defensive about all this, you know? There may be a better way to respond. During orientation week, last week, one of our students, (an actor, a Roman Catholic lay person), was visiting a patient yesterday and he said at one point to the patient, "you are really at a crossroads" and the patient stopped and said "that's it!" Good metaphor. So I think once they start to use metaphors and practice, what they get back from the patients is really rich, especially if it's an open-ended statement instead of a question.

I do think the psalms can teach us a lot of metaphors. It is fun to use what you like and what you know in CPE.

When my daughter [novelist Darcey Steinke] was in high school in Virginia – she now teaches creative writing at Columbia University – they had a poet who graduated from the Hollins College creative writing program, Rebekah Woodie. I can still remember her name. I remember being thrilled to have this special young person there. My daughter said "dad, why don't you send her some of your poetry?" and so I sent her some of my poetry and I ended up meeting her. At that moment, the Women's Poetry Collective, which was supported by a Federal grant, opened the women's poetry collective to men when the grant ended. And this other guy and I were the first two men that joined. It was a poetry workshop, which was very much like IPR (Interpersonal Relationships Seminar)! We met every week, or every other week. We met often. Those women taught me everything I know about poetry.

SRR: That's a very interesting comparison to IPR. There are certainly parallels in the attentiveness and brutal honesty required in poetry workshops.

PS: Yea – I remember the occasional back-and-forth of "You need to get rid of that line" and, "well, why should I?" Eventually, if you defended the line too much, someone would say "use it as the title."

SRR: You have very diverse units here, don't you? Not only because they are multi-faith, but the students and residents come from all over?

PS: Yes. We just started a Muslim Imam as an SIT (Supervisor in Training). I don't think we have any Muslim Imams who are CPE Supervisors yet. So, he has done four units of CPE. This is his first supervisory unit. My previous SIT was from Slovakia. Her husband has a Slovak church about ten blocks from here. She's an ordained Lutheran minister from Slovakia. She just got her papers passed, so she's on her way.

Bellevue is the immigrant's hospital. After English and Spanish, the third most spoken language is Mandarin. After Mandarin is Polish, after Polish is Cantonese. After Cantonese is Russian. And the people that work here start to represent these nationalities, too. As nurses aids, etc. There are more and more from Asia. We have one whole psych unit which has Asian patients and Asian staff. And we have one whole psych unit with Spanish-speaking patients and staff. I have interesting students. I'm enjoying this group because most of the people are basic students, starting out. I do have a 2nd and a 3rd year student as well. During the year you have more mature types [in the extended unit]. We've got a former Brooklyn District Attorney right now, a lay person.

SRR: Is there some advice that you have for SRR readers, this group of current students, faculty, graduates in various phases of their calls?

PS: Read books other than theological books. I think that's important. Reading novels can teach you a lot. There is no novel that can teach you more about death than *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. There's nothing else. Let's face it. Where are you going to learn the inner workings of that whole business? He's the one who has it all.

So, I think reading is important. Poetry can be difficult. A lot of modern poetry, like Ashberry, is really written for Ashberryites... Billy Collins would be more my style. His humor and everything is fabulous. It's more accessible. And the guy from Nebraska, Ted Kooser. He's great. Of course Mary Oliver is great and Emily Dickinson is still great. Another poet I really like is a West Coast poet, Jane Hirschfield. She's excellent, and her book about poetry is excellent. Of course Wendell Berry, you know he's a very spiritual guy. There is a book written by Princeton Seminary's Donald Capps about two poets, *The Poet's Gift: Toward the Renewal of Pastoral Care.* Of course Bruggeman, the Old Testament scholar, wrote *Finally Comes the Poet.*

You know, if you define pastoral care very basically as crying out with someone in their suffering, which is what the word care basically means (it's from the Hochdeutsch [old high German] actually, *chara* [lament] "to cry out with") well, then I think you need to find a language that allows you to be *with* the patient, not above the patient. With. And questions can be sensitively posed.

On the other hand, we know who in society asks questions: teachers, policemen and so forth. It puts one in a power relationship above a person. Whereas, one can find, in metaphor, a language that puts you *next* to the person, which is where I think you want to be. Hopefully, chaplains are more than friendly visitors and we can learn another language, a more powerful language to meet patients where they are instead of being in a position of power over them.

I took this class about three years ago called bioethics in the medical humanities through the NYU School of Nursing. It was a one-year class that met for four hours every Wednesday evening and it had two retreats. The readings were just incredible. It was team-taught by a philosopher, a lawyer, etc. There were all kinds of people in the class, from all walks of life. One of the instructors would begin every class with a short story that had been assigned. It was just terrific.

In the book of short stories, where most of the stories were from, I found a short story about a year ago by Hemmingway. It's about a page and a half.

A very short story called "Hills Like White Elephants." The entire story is a dialog between a man and a woman at a bar. So, it's like a verbatim. And in the story it quickly becomes pretty clear that what they are discussing is whether she should have an abortion or not. And he exerts his male dominant power over her, and she keeps trying to please him and it ends with her kind of half-heartedly agreeing, even though she's the most creative person in the story. She's the one who says, "oh, those hills are like white elephants." The story is the dialog, the dialog is a story. Like I said, it's like a verbatim. A verbatim is a story of the patient's interaction with the pastor.

So, I do think that literature has a lot to offer. Critical language is shorthand. It has to be. It is important that it is. But theological language doesn't have to be shorthand. For instance, we don't talk about forgiveness, a theological idea, unless at the same time we talk about effects that teach us about forgiveness, like a parable or something.

SRR: Yes, and parables are effective for that very reason.

PS: Yes. They're stories. There are lots of stories in the hospital, many more than just medical stories. Those are the stories I want my pastoral students to get at. It's kind of like when I first went to NYU and started the CPE program, I was wondering whether we should wear white coats or not, you know how some chaplains wear coats? And I was asking this doctor who was on the pastoral care committee, "do you think we should wear clinical coats?" and he said, "oh God, no. We've got enough white coats around here. We don't need any more white coats. We need pastors." The white coat – it's kind of like a parable for what pastors are in hospitals. They are *in* the hospital but not *of* the hospital.

SRR: That's a good way to put it.

PS: And, this is amazing, Bellevue is connected to NYU next door. We have the same doctors treating poor people and the upper-middle class and rich people at NYU. They have a medical humanities program that puts out a literary review.

SRR: *Yes, of course* – Bellevue Literary Review.

PS: And they started a publishing arm, Bellevue Literary Press. The second novel they published won the Pulitzer Prize. It's called *Tinkers*, by Paul Harding. It's an incredibly poetic book, a very interesting book.

They should read Marilynne Robinson, they should read this book *Tinkers*, they should read Wally Lamb, the Connecticut writer who teaches creative writing at York Correctional Institution. He wrote this incredible book, about two teachers' reaction to Columbine and those two students killing everybody. It's incredible. A little rambling, but still incredible. They should read John Casey and Madison Smart Bell. Bell is married to the poet, Elizabeth Spires. I also recommend *Poetry as Survival* – a great book – by Gregory Orr. I love Gregory Orr.

The readings I go to now are my daughter's readings. She has her coterie of young women in black leather jackets... It's great. The support of each other in the writing community is pretty fabulous, and southern writers seem even more supportive of each other. But they are all very supportive of each other. It's a nice feature. My niece, René Steinke...

SRR: René Steinke? I didn't know she was your niece. Wow. She just gave a wonderful reading, in Decorah, IA, at the Lutheran Festival of Writing. She was the fiction keynote. Robert Cording, from College of the Holy Cross, was the poetry keynote. They were both super.

PS: The magazine *Image* is also good, and the Glen Workshop. I remember I went to the Wesleyan Writers Workshop, right in the middle of CPE. Geez, that was hard to do, to get out of CPE for a week.

SRR: Oh man, your head must have been about to explode. CPE and the intensity of a poetry workshop?

PS: It was so much fun. Robert Siegel was one of the poetry teachers. I tell you, he started every morning with a student's poem. He took one of my poems and it was, like, one of the biggest thrills of my life. It was incredible. But you know who else was there was Andre Dubus, who wrote a lot of short stories. He was also very heroic for what he did on the Massachusetts Turnpike tragedy...when he was disabled by a drunk driver. Dubus was a great writer. He wrote a lot about priests among other things. And Robert Parker, who is my all-time favorite mystery writer, he was there too. All the novelists were at his workshops because they wanted to know how to plot, and this guy could plot like crazy. And then there was William Manchester who wrote the autobiography of Kennedy. He was there. It was great, it was so much fun. Wesleyan was a good experience. Well, there was a week of complete concentration, reading, writing, and you got a taste of so many different people.

[We ended our lunch conversation to get back to work, but Rev. Steinke took the time to show me the chapels and the office space for CPE residents. It was very interesting just to have a glance at a corner of the bustling world that is Bellevue Hospital. — ed]

Visit Bellevue Hospital Center: http://bellevuecpe.wordpress.com/ Visit the Bellevue Literary Review: http://blr.med.nyu.edu/ Visit the Bellevue Literary Press: www.blpbooks.org/

An Interview with Barbara Crooker

Barbara Crooker's poems have been on NPR's The Writer's Almanac 18 times. She has published more than 600 poems in journals and anthologies and has received 26 Pushcart Prize nominations. Her books include Line Dance, More and Radiance. She has received numerous awards, and creative writing fellowships. When I asked her to describe herself she said "While I'd primarily describe myself as a writer (poet, essayist, reviewer – all relating to poetry) I also do editing jobs and private tutorials, also on poetry, and I am a teacher. I've taught as an adjunct at six colleges, but now only teach at retreats, conferences, festivals and the like. My main job is as caregiver for our son with autism, who is nearly 27."

SRR: Tell us about some things that are misunderstood or assumed about living in a household with an autistic adult. (I'm thinking of assumptions you present so effectively in "One Word" from "The Mother Suite," for example.)

BC: I think it's assumed that, somehow, we get help (because, to the outside world, it's too awful to think of being in this sort of situation without help). But we don't; it's just the two of us, filling in for each other.

When my husband was working (he's retired now), I juggled caring for our two daughters plus our son, which included driving them to dance lessons, etc. and driving him to his various therapies. And we took in three young adults, at separate times. My husband was Director of Research for a large multinational company, and travelled a lot. I kept writing, but my ability to travel and give readings and workshops was pretty limited. Now we've flipped, and he's doing the primary care stuff, driving Dave to and from work, to karate, to doctor appointments, and to choir, and I'm travelling. I still do the food preparations — we've had Dave on a gluten-free (no wheat, oats, barley, or rye) and casein-free (no dairy) diet since he was eight. This involves a lot of planning. I don't want him to feel deprived or left out, so I make sure he has parallel foods to what we're having. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner, seven days a week.

We run a constant behavior modification system, and try not to let his stimming and his anxieties get out of hand. I'm the one in charge of making sure he gets his supplements and meds; my husband's in charge of ordering them. One of us has to be here with Dave, 24-7. I often think, if I worked in a group home, I'd only have to do an 8-hour shift. Then the rest of the

day could be mine. But that's not going to happen, not in post-George Bush America. Group homes still exist, but no one new is getting funded. Most people think Dave's still living with us by choice, but really, there's no alternative. If we were to throw up our hands and say this is too much, we're aging out, please find him a placement, he'd end up either in a homeless shelter or in adult foster care (I get a clipping service, and the probability of abuse in foster care is high).

I will confess, in the winter, after reading all the holiday newsletters, especially the ones from our retired contemporaries who are spending their golden years golfing and traveling, it's a little hard. Yet we're luckier than many of our fellow caregivers, in that our son is not significantly "involved" behavior-wise, and we can go out for an evening as long as we have the cell phone on. Many of them are, quite frankly, prisoners in their own homes. Forgive me for going on about this, but because of the current political climate, every time I hear a politician pledge to not raise taxes, I shudder. There are, on estimate, half a million young adults with autism whose parents are aging, and the elephant in the room is, nothing is being done to look ahead and plan for their care. I've been asked, by acquaintances of "the other political persuasion," why we don't just pay for group home care. The answer is simple. The average cost of a group home is \$40,000 per year, around the same as Assisted Living. Except that Dave is likely to live at least 60 more years, bringing the price tag to, oh, 2.4 million dollars.

Another assumption is that because our family seems to function, no one thinks we need any help (it would be lovely if someone gave us a break now and then). One of my writing friends said once, "Gosh, I don't know how you do this." And I said to him, "Hmmm. What makes you think I have a choice?"

SRR: Can you recommend some books regarding faith and poetry to SRR readers? Regarding disability and poetry?

BC: This is an incomplete list, but here's what comes to mind: On faith and poetry, journals include *Image, Christianity & Literature, Sojourners, Tiferet, The Christian Century, The Cresset, America, Windhover, Ruminate, Perspectives, Rock & Sling* and Radix. Books: Cries of the Spirit (Beacon Press), Claiming the Spirit Within (Beacon Press), Women in Praise of the Sacred (Harper Perennial), American Zen (Bottom Dog), Odd Angles of Heaven (Harold Shaw), Beloved_on the Earth: 150 Poems of Grief and Gratitude (Holy Cow! Press), Just Breathe: 101 Contemporary Odes (C&R Press), Looking for God in All the Right Places (Loyola Press), Heal Your Soul, Heal the

World (Andrews McMeel), Hunger Enough: Living Spiritually in a Consumer Society (Pudding House Publications), Poets on the Psalms (Trinity University Press), Summer: A Spiritual Biography of the Season and Spring: A Spiritual Biography of the Season (SkyLights Paths Publishers). I recommend anything by Anne Lamott, Mary Gordon, Kathleen Norris, as well as Mary Oliver, Jane Kenyon, Janet McCann, Jeanne Murray Walker, Fleda Brown, Gray Jacobik, Robert Cording, Julie Spicher, Larry Thomas, Angela O'Donnell, Alan Berecka, Marjorie Maddox, Tanya Runyan, Susanna Childress, Jill Pelaéz Baumgaertner, Mary Crockett Hill, Julie L. Moore, Anne McCrady, Ann Hostetler, Rod Jellema, Gary Finke, Cary Waterman and Cass Dalgliesh.

Disability and poetry books: *Gravity Pulls You In* (Woodbine House) *Love You to Pieces* (Beacon Press) journals: *Kaleidoscope, Wordgathering, Mindprints*; writers: Anjie Kokan, Vicki Foreman, Sheila Black, Kyra Anderson, Suzanne Kamata, Brett Lott, Grey Brown, Rebecca Foust and Anne Barnhill (fiction and memoir).

SRR: What do you wish pastors, chaplains, and church leaders were more aware of in their communication with disabled persons and their families?

BC: Tolerance and compassion. One of the children Dave was in Project Connect with (a preschool for disabled children) went through classes for his First Holy Communion. When the big day came, he was told by the priest that he could take his first communion before or after the main service, but not with his class, so as "not to spoil it" for the other children and their families. Of course, those parents walked out the door, and never came back. We've come a long way, but not quite far enough, from the days when special education students were segregated and put in separate classrooms, often a broom closet or a basement. With the Inclusion model, our children are finally receiving FAPEs (Free and Appropriate Public Educations) side by side with their non-disabled peers.

Our little church (St. John's, Fogelsville, ELCA) did fully include Dave in Sunday School, etc. One Sunday, they'd invited a black gospel choir from Reading, PA, to be our guest musicians. The choir brought along family and friends, and it was a lot of fun to see our quiet Pennsylvania German congregation respond to the shout-outs during the sermon ("Tell it!" "Oh, yes, Lord"). When they were leaving, the entourage went through the congregation, shaking hands and greeting everyone. I was concerned that Dave would appear to be rude, so I mentioned to the man clasping my hand that he loved the music, but he didn't talk. The man's immediate response was,

"That's all right, sister, Jesus loves him anyway." At that point in our journey, Dave was still in an IU segregated class, and I was fighting to get him returned to our home district. Those words were exactly what I needed to hear, and they kept me going, a long, long time. This kind of affirmation is surely something pastors etc. could easily provide.

When Dave was a senior in high school, he wanted to go to the prom, along with a group of kids from his learning support home room. His teaching assistant volunteered to go with him (giving up a Saturday night), just in case he needed prompting or re-directing. Instead, when we picked him up, she said, "I really wasn't needed." The other kids, with no teacher prodding them, no one's mom directing them, came over and asked him to dance. All night long. Some of them, I know, were in Sunday School with him. If this wasn't the Gospel in action, then I don't know what is. . . .

Now, as a young adult, he continues to be odd. He marches to a different drum, but he sings in the church choir and participates in church life. Yes, he sometimes answers the pastor's rhetorical questions (she's a good sport about this), and yes, he's sometimes inappropriate, but if anyone ever exemplified the pure in heart, he'd be it. He's one of the few in the congregation who faithfully uses the World Hunger envelope on the first of every month. We started to tell him he didn't make enough money to do this, but then we thought again. . .

Another answer to this question would be treat parishioners with disabilities like everyone else, while at the same time, being sensitive to their differences. I'm also a mother who has lost a child, and one of the things that keeps coming up in the literature is to not forget. When well-meaning outsiders (pastors, neighbors, etc.), out of kindness, refrain from mentioning the deceased child, it's like losing her twice. The intent is to try and smooth over a painful memory, but we never forget, and we don't want to forget. When people act as if they never existed, then they truly are gone.

SRR: When you write about loss and shock and the chronic inconveniences some of us deal with on a daily basis, do you decide to have a certain attitude before you start? Please say something about your writing process. (I'm thinking about how pastors approach sermon writing in the midst of tragedy, <u>or</u> in the opposite direction, when they choose to tackle difficult yet undramatic issues.) Your powerful, matter-of-fact "Firstborn" comes to mind for the first part of the question; "In the Middle" does for the second part of the question in the way it tackles the knowledge of one's place in the world. Lack of drama carries its own consequences.

BC: I think first of all, I never *try* and write about anything. In other words, I'm not steering the sled. I try and let the poem itself choose its path. Robert Frost said, "If you know where a poem is going, start there," and I think he's right. I also think you need distance, when dealing with tragedy, with things where there is no resolution, no easy answers. I had maybe 35 years to process my experience before writing this poem. It's not the first one that I've done on that great loss, and it probably isn't the last.

One of poetry's tasks, I think, is that of bearing witness, and so part of my aim, in writing about this, is to say to other women, "I lived through this. I can't tell you how you're going to do this, only that it's possible." Sometimes, knowing that we are not alone, that others have suffered equally, helps make the unbearable bearable.

Back to the genesis of the poem – I was in a peer writing workshop with 5 or 6 other women. We'd done this several times, knew each other's work, and life stories. We were each taking turns leading prompts, and this one was to take something in our possession and put it in the center of the circle, after we told a story about why it was significant. The ring that Wanda took off her finger belonged to her son, who was a college student and a good swimmer, but who somehow drowned swimming laps one night at school. I immediately knew I had to take it, and write about it, even though the little voice in the back of my head (the one we writing teachers try to banish from the classroom) was saying, "You've written about this before, you need to write about something different." Looking at the ring took me to round images, like the sun, but also to circles and zeroes.

Firstborn 2-2-70

The sun came up, as it always does, the next morning, its pale gold yolk bleeding into the white room.

I remember how cold I was, and how young, so thin, my wedding ring rattled on my finger. How the tea the nurse brought broke in waves on the rim of the cup, spilled over in the saucer; how nothing could contain my tears.

Three days later, I left in a wheelchair, with nothing in my arms. The center of this gold ring is a zero. The horizon, where the sun broke through, is no longer a straight line, but a circle. It all comes back to you.

First published in Calyx; reprinted with permission of the author.

I could never have imagined the ending of this poem before I wrote it. I thought (oh, so foolishly) that I had achieved "closure." Instead, the poem reminded me that "it all comes back / to you," (my lost child) and that there is a circle that is, indeed, unbroken. That she's not a forgotten part of my life. And that there are others who might read my words and also have someone in their life who's always missing. The ring is both a solid circle, and the emptiness within.

But *choosing* the matter-of-fact voice? No. It chose me. One thing I'm sure I was considering was that the subject is a dangerous one, in poetry, in that it could be seen as sentimental. So I hope that with the restrained voice you get a sense of the great grief behind it, one that's being reined in.

As far as "In the Middle" goes, I don't remember what got me started, but you've definitely got your finger on its pulse, "the knowledge of one's place in the world." It might have been something as simple as realizing how wonderful it was/is to simply be, to lie in the hammock (which we bought as a therapeutic tool for our son – lying in a hammock helps to straighten out the proprioceptor system – but which became a wonderful therapeutic tool for us, as well). Then I started noticing other nets, webs, connections. Again, I let the poem lead me on. One other thing I'd like to say about this poem is its word choice. To create a graceful line, I had to, um, kill off my mother ahead of time. (She read the poem, and laughed when I apologized.) To say "Our children almost grown, / three-quarters of our parents gone" or "your parents and my father gone," would have thrown off the rhythm, and been overly wordy.

Less is always more, I tell my writing students, and this could be applied to sermon writing, too. Just think of me, the parishioner in the back, with my red pencil waving, "Cut, cut, cut!" Poetry attempts to do the most with the least words possible, so think about using brevity and compression as prose tools, too.

SRR: Thank you for saying this! I couldn't agree more. Do you have any observations or opinions about how the use of language matters for caregivers? For those who are ill themselves? Reading poetry, creative nonfiction and fiction does open us up to a larger vocabulary, and useful metaphors. (I'm reaching back to the conversation with Paul Steinke here.) Would you agree with this? Why do you think it is beneficial for chaplains and pastors and those in social ministry organizations to read poetry?

BC: My observation on the use of language is that there's a strong preference for "people-first" language – ie., a person with autism, rather than an autistic person (although it doesn't bother me as much as it does others). Certainly a woman with breast cancer (I have a chapbook of poems on this) wants to be, first and foremost, herself, a woman, not someone defined by her cancer. There's a feeling in the disability community that words like "handicapped" (with its connotations of begging, going "cap in hand") and "retarded" (the "r" word) should be retired, and I do agree with that. I think we all want and need to be careful of labels, and how they can be used to create "the other."

I would absolutely agree that poetry, creative nonfiction and fiction open us up to the power of metaphor and the beauty of words. All of the parables are, of course, metaphors. My scientist husband will often say, after reading some poems, "Why can't people just say what they mean," but I think when you do that, readers don't absorb the lesson. You need a dialogue, which metaphor creates; you need to involve your listeners/audience. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor," but that washed over everyone's head. When He told the parable about the Good Samaritan, then we "got it." (Although sometimes I wonder about this right now, where we have such hatred coming out of the religious right against our gay neighbors, our neighbors who don't hold the right papers (immigrants), and yes, our neighbors with disabilities, too. This latter part comes in the form of sneering about "entitlement programs." If we don't keep in mind these words from Matthew, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me," then where are we, as a people? Too bad the double negative makes this a bit hard to understand; Jesus is saying, if you take away health care from those who can't afford, you're turning me away, too.)

Finally (going back to the main question), I believe it's beneficial for *everyone* to read more poetry, especially for those on life's spiritual paths. I can think of nothing that makes me happier than to hear, after a reading, "Gee, I just came out because so-and-so dragged me. I didn't think I liked poetry. But that was terrific. It really spoke to me"

SRR: Has poetry influenced the way you articulate questions about and experiences of faith?

BC: I think, first of all, most of us would agree that expressing the ineffable is difficult. So poetry gives me both a medium to work in, and a vocabulary to work with. For me, the act of creation is its own kind of holiness. Many writers talk about "the muse" as their source; I think we can give it another name: The Holy Spirit. It's the voice I try to listen to, when I can quiet the chatter of my own monkey mind, and although I can only approximate where it comes from, it's the deeper well from which I'm drawing cool water. I'm also very much searching for ways to find the sacred in the diurnal, the every day. The poem "Sanctus," I hope, illustrates this.

Sanctus

A goldfinch, bright as a grace note, has landed on a branch across the creek that mutters and murmurs to itself as it rushes on, always in a hurry.

The *ee oh lay* of a wood thrush echoes from deep in the forest, someplace green. In paintings, the Holy Ghost usually takes the form of a stylized dove, its whiteness a blaze of purity. But what if it's really a mourning dove, ordinary as daylight in its old coat, nothing you'd ever notice.

When he rises from the creek and the light flares behind, his tail is edged in white scallops, shining. And when he opens his beak, isn't he calling your name, sweet and low, *You*, *you*, *you*, *you*?

First published in *Rock & Sling*, where it was a finalist for the Virginia Brendemuehl Prize. Both "Sanctus" and "Firstborn" appear in Crooker's collection *More* by C&R Press.

SRR: What parting, poetry-related advice can you give us?

BC: That sometimes I, too, dislike it, religious poetry, that is (to misquote Marianne Moore). I dislike it for the same reason some sermons put me to sleep, that they simply retell scripture, albeit in slightly different words. What I'm looking for in contemporary spiritual poetry is work that looks at the familiar words or stories in a new light, from a different angle, with a

sense of slant. I'm looking for words to help me be a person of God in a secular world, words that will give me hope in a time of darkness, words that will fan the fires of faith that sometimes flicker dimly. And so I'm just as much a reader of poetry as I am a writer, and I hope that what I've written here will inspire others to read more poetry, too.

Visit Barbara Crooker's website: www.barbaracrooker.com/

Book Recommendations

Rain When You Want Rain

The poems in Betsy Johnson-Miller's *Rain When You Want Rain* are not spare, exactly, but they don't carry unnecessary baggage, which I appreciate. Throughout the collection there is a thoughtful sense of challenge bringing up the questions of what to expect from life, of what is strange and what is ordinary. When do we feel too much is asked of us; when do we ask too much of others? It handles the nature of partnership (marriage and other relationships) that exists between praise and exasperation.

In the car, in "The Art of Folding" we get "Maps are quiet. / That doesn't mean destinations are." (52) In "The Horse" eating grass and corn "Beneath a thousand birds / and a thousand more // she watches the world. / How it does not fight // to keep its abundance. (50) The voice in the poems often sees bounty: in food, in the space of fields and open roads, in sex, in anger, in thankfulness, but she also names situations where "There is a polite way of saying you can take no more." (28) Her closing poem "[your hand between]" claims what has been hinted at in other lines "o what law but explosion // allows for expansion and contraction all / at the same time." (66)

I love the opening lines to "Psalm: my Son's Drawings"

Arise
O people
of seventy legs
and afflicted hair. (21)

In this collection, her lines are aware and direct, without feeling confrontational. The author seems unafraid to look (really look) at motivation, and to not always need answers. Despite these reflections, there is a sense of things to come. After all, there is much to try "again // in the morning."

Johnson-Miller has an M.Div. from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and an M.F.A. in poetry from Bennington College. She has worked as a pastor and is currently teaching at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University. She lives with her family in Minnesota. *Rain When You Want Rain* is published by Mayapple Press in Bay City, MI. Visit: www.mayapplepress.com/. Listen to her poem "What a Mouth Will do" from this book on The Writer's Almanac: http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index.php?date=2010/05/15.

67 Mogul Miniatures

When surrounded by works at the Brenton Good "Repetitions" exhibit (page 163) I was reminded of the form in 67 Mogul Miniatures by Raza Ali Hasan. The monotypes are based on playing cards, each the same size, but with different inks and different textures left from string and water. The result is both geometric and handmade. The cards "provide a grid," Good emphasized, "but it's an organic grid."

These poems are all in one form. They follow traditional Urdu musaddas, which consist of three rhyming couplets. They are inspired by a two-part sequence of musaddas by Mohammad Iqbal, a famous 20th century poet of Muslim India who wrote in Persian and Urdu. Hasan's couplets are mostly unrhymed (reminding me of a more organic grid) and he uses contemporary references and language. Iqbal's *Shikwa* (Complaint) and *Jawab-e-Shikwa* (Answer to Complaint) were published in 1909 and 1913. The *Shikwa* poems were written as a formal complaint to Allah and the *Jawab-e-Shikwa* poems were Allah's answer.

These poems are small, but expansive in scope and full of measured energy. From Heidelberg to the Himalayas, from airplanes to clotheslines, butterflies to interest rates, nightclub bouncers to foxes, Hejazi wine to hot cross buns, United Colors of Benetton to "the wondrous clutter of a Hindu temple," (59) the poems fit uniformly on each page, but they usher us through time and situations unfolding in many places.

From Part Two, no. 59:

You are a Joseph who sees Canaan in every Egypt. You don't need an American visa, you are going nowhere.

The caravan you joined has already been plundered. Except for my clarion call you have no luggage. (64)

The progression through both parts builds momentum while each poem retains its individuality and place in the larger grid. Old and new worlds fit into and in-between the couplets.

From Part Two, no. 52:

Blasted in two, the golden dome opens up To a sky littered with falling leaflets.

When the worshippers, interrupted from their worship And subpoenaed with promises of a curfew-free tomorrow, (57)

The first answer ties to the first complaint, set to a heart's beating at the beginning of each section. "Each poem a thump of Iqbal's racing heart." (37)

The scenes are active and passive, colorful and crippling, the declaring and responding genuine. And we know things are getting serious when, "even the men disappear." (48)

67 Mogul Miniatures is published by Autumn House Press, Pittsburgh, PA. Visit www.autumnhouse.org/.

Metaphor and Faith

Ted Kooser

Of the possible existence of a supreme order, Robert Frost once said, "With so many ladders going up everywhere, there must be something for them to lean against." And there are lots and lots of ladders, in every corner of the earth, each leaning up against The One Big Thing. I'd like to take advantage of Frost's poem, "The Silken Tent," to make a point of my own about those ladders, about the varieties of religious belief.

The poem, a sonnet, is a favorite of mine, one that I have used with students as an example of extended metaphor:

The Silken Tent

She is as in a field a silken tent
At midday when the sunny summer breeze
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
And its supporting central cedar pole,
That is its pinnacle to heavenward
And signifies the sureness of the soul,
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
By countless silken ties of love and thought
To every thing on earth the compass round,
And only by one's going slightly taut
In the capriciousness of summer air
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.

It's a poem about a woman, of course, a woman's beauty, and it is driven by the same impulse that drove Shakespeare when he asked, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" Frost shows us the woman's beauty associatively, through a comparison, or metaphor.

Though I don't want what I write here to be too concerned with literary mechanics, it is necessary for me to say that metaphors have two parts, the tenor and the vehicle. The tenor is, to fall upon a cliché, the "launching pad" of a metaphorical comparison. It is the real thing with which the imag-

inary is associated, from which the imaginary departs. In the instance of "The Silken Tent," the tenor is the "She," the real woman, and the vehicle is the silken tent, the imaginary thing to which "she" is compared.

You'll notice how the vehicle, propelled by Frost's imagination, completely takes over the poem. "She" is mentioned only once, as the first word, and from that point the metaphor lifts off and soars away, never to return to a realistic depiction of "She." The image of the silken tent is so rich and vivid that we almost forget that "She" is what the poem is about, or started out to be about.

It is significant that Frost used the tent, or vehicle, for the sonner's title, rather than the tenor, "She," which would be the customary way of entitling a poem like this. The vehicle has become a kind of reality, and the tenor, "She," has fallen into the shadows.

I believe that something like this has happened during the evolution and establishment of the world's religions. Nearly all peoples, of every ethnicity and in every time, have come to believe that there is some enormous compelling mystery beyond us. Some of us call it God, some of us have other names for it. And every religion, and each person's private faith, leans like a ladder against this presence that stands beyond the reach of our intelligence. That abiding universal order is, then, the tenor. It is, to use the vernacular, the Real Thing. And the worldwide diversity of beliefs are all vehicles, various, strange and often beautiful. And these vehicles, these rich metaphorical constructs, with their rituals, liturgy, scripture, have assumed primacy and dominance over the single tenor, that recognition of some infinite organizing and governing power. Just as in Frost's poem the "She" is the point from which the metaphor lifts off, so our common sense of this mysterious unifying order is the tenor from which all religious elaborations spin out and away. Our denominational and liturgical ladders dominate and overshadow what they lean against.

In the sonnet, the silken tent engages our attention, just as we are swept up and away by the compelling vehicle of creed, gospel and denomination. We dedicate ourselves to the immensely various vehicles of Christianity, or Islam, or Hinduism, but the tenor is the same for all. The common awareness of some great organizing force lies behind the variety of ways in which it is described.

I have been attending an Episcopal church, and I bow to its grand and ancient order of service. I participate. I take communion on my knees, I bend my head in common prayer, and each morning I read from the Lectionary's selection of psalm and scripture. And some of my friends say, "How can you do that? Do you really believe in all that stuff? The wine and

bread, the blood and body of Christ, all that?"

My answer is, I am caught up by and in the elaborate, complex and beautiful Episcopalian vehicle, engaged by it just as any of us might be caught up by the imagery of Frost's sonnet. The tenor of my religious experience is my sense that there is something there, beyond us and around us and within us, some great power, and my chosen church, with its beautiful vehicle, with its readings, its time-honored order of worship, its Eucharist, is my means of describing it, of recognizing and acknowledging it. My faith is, as I see it, a kind of beautiful silken tent, and God is the tenor from which that vehicle lifts away.

Ted Kooser is Presidential Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. A former Poet Laureate of the United States, he has won many awards including a Pulitzer Prize (2005, for Delights and Shadows). Three editors (and longtime fans) from the Seminary Ridge Review staff had the pleasure of hearing him read at Elizabethtown College in 2008. Visit Ted Kooser's website: http://tedkooser.net/ and the American Life in Poetry website, with a new poetry column each week: www.americanlifeinpoetry.org/.

The Green Sweater

St. Mary's, 6th Floor Psychiatric, 1966

John Graber

I remember watching a cigarette burning skin black between two deeply yellowed fingers on my right hand as if it were someone else's hand. I remember being puzzled by two tracks of smoke stains beneath my nostrils on someone else's face in the mirror. I remember walking my head as if it were on someone else's shoulders down a hall and back for what they told me was two nights and the day between with tears running out the first night. I remember knitting my fingers through the heavy steel mesh surrounding the balcony, half-glad and half-sorry I couldn't fall.

The Rochester streets were wet and dark with early November. All day it was twilight outside. I pressed my forehead against it.

I remember begging to be knocked out before I hurt somebody.

I remember throwing a doctor into a wall and wrecking a room. I remember a little dark-haired nurse, who wasn't afraid of me, put her small hand gently on my right arm and say, O.K. I'll go get it.

I remember waking up without my clothes in the locked room, getting up ashamed, but suddenly finding myself inside of God.

I remember knowing for sure I had lost every good thing about me but believed him

when he said he still loved what was left.

I remember taking off the stinking green sweater
I'd worn a whole month when he told me
it wasn't the last chapter of my life.

John Graber is a graduate of St. Olaf College and the Iowa Writers Workshop. He has published poems extensively in magazines and has a book, Thanksgiving Dawn (a 2010 Pushcart Prizenominated collection), and two chapbooks out, Walking Home (Pudding House) and Only on This Planet (Parallel Press). Graber and his wife spent six years teaching college students in the Holden Village Christian Life Enrichment program. "The Green Sweater" first appeared in the collection Thanksgiving Dawn by Blue Begonia Press and is reprinted with permission from the author. Visit www.bluebegoniapress.com/.

Eve of Winter

George Ella Lyon

Against the silver rim of morning this very one far below the isinglass snip of moon God places coral feather-cloud boas piles them up like covers at the end of the rich bed she just climbed out of. God does not have to take a moon lantern into the dark barn of night and lean into the cow of chaos to fetch us the milk of morning. She does not have to tuck her flannel gown into work pants and tunnel her great arms into a weather-cracked mackinaw and shimble down the frozen path the way we do, tumbled from bed each dawn to the kitchen barn, the coffee-colored coffee.

She could though. She could do it however she would find *le plus amusant*.

She could tap dance on the guy wire for the phone pole that bears the hoot owl light, God could.

She could get herself born in that barn if it pleased her.

Let there be, she says, every day of this leafy leafless frozen flowering world and there is, by God, there is is IS

Dear Concert Master,

Orchestra practice in my backyard this August morning. Mockingbirds, cardinals, crickets tune up for the big fall show. Tune me too.

I am your instrument, made in Spain in the seventeenth century, stowed in steerage on some ship from Ireland, dried to silence in a Missouri attic, conceived in Kentucky in 1948. Lift me

from the case,

its purple plush almost worn through. Check the bridge, the neck. Adjust or replace strings. Rosen the bow of me.

I may be a little warped, but I promise melody to mix with the steel song of cicadas you've got going over my shoulder.

Whatever music you mean me for, let it come.

George Ella Lyon is a Kentucky-based writer, teacher and activist. The award-winning author of 40 books and editor or coeditor of five others, she is a poet, multi-genre writer of books for children and adults, and a presenter of workshops and conferences in schools. Her Ph.D. is from Indiana University. Visit the Kentuckians for the Commonwealth website: www.kftc.org/. Look for Lyon's forthcoming poetry collection, She Let Herself Go, to be published by Louisiana State University Press this fall. Visit: www.georgeellalyon.com/.

Cathedral Mosque

Raza Ali Hasan

The cathedral mosque appears as it must, at night, to the seminary student finished with his studies, on his way to the outskirts of Kabul to fight the Russians, through the arcing pair of windshield wipers, as a lingering, rain-drenched dream on a mirroring lake by the road, with its four minarets puncturing the clouds, as if stapled to the sky, its gusts of minnows arcing west, now east over its watery marble courtyard sliding into water as the cathedral and the mosque come apart.

The Point Man

After the frantic European scholar, who translated Arabic and Hebrew texts into Latin, left Toledo, the contact between the West and the rest of us moved irrevocably from the pages of Averröes and Maimonides to the pages of Venetian merchants' heavy ledgers.

And so earlier, when the Arabs chose Mohammad, the businessman, to be their agent with God, a look of surprise crossed Allah's beautiful face.

Raza Ali Hasan teaches in the English Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has a B.A. and an M.A. from University of Texas at Austin and an M.F.A. from Syracuse University. Hasan was born in Bangladesh and grew up in Indonesia and Pakistan. "The Point Man" and "Cathedral Mosque" first appeared in the collection Grieving Shias, published by The Sheep Meadow Press, Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY, and are reprinted here with permission from the author. Visit http://sheepmeadowpress.com/. See page 137 for a recommendation of his collection, 67 Mogul Miniatures.

Stealth Guided Craniotomy for Left-Parietal Parasagittal Tumor: Three Days After Surgery

That center in which thought and language are coupled will still be dusky....

- Christa Wolf

Patricia Kirkpatrick

She woke up and thought she was dreaming.

People kept touching her and checking machines. She thought a violin was playing *Kol Nidre*.

She remembered them taking jewelry, her shoes, checking cavities, her almost-grown children holding bars of the gurney.

She remembered them pushing her through doors opened to clatter and cold precision instruments.

She could speak and she knew words. Craniotomy.

They had put her to sleep, lifted skin, drilled a pattern of burr holes, what they call a bone flap

to open the skull. All the time she left her body on the table. *Parietal*.

She remembered a chart of black letters. *Along the wall*. "The tumor is pressing the lobe that responds to sensation," the neurosurgeon told her.

Processes language. Guides the edge of the body in space. "It has to come out."

She remembered a rise of white granite. To pass undetected through unknown terrain.

The outcrop of dura was what they were after. *Parasaggital*. There must have been a portal, slippery fissure

where they could poke latex hands. Bloody. *Between two spheres*. Invisible. Where they could see who she was.

Faces, then flowers. Shock of mottled orchids, pitcher of sunflowers, pink bromeliad, milk-dipped leaves.

"Enjoy your morphine," the nurse said. Hawks blinked, hooks glistened. She saw people not really there. An owl at the threshold flew through

the-valley-of-the-shadow-now-sheep-shall-safely-graze.

Alerter, inhibitory – whatever they gave her, she took. Morphine didn't last. She got sick after Percocet.

She couldn't tell aura from touch. Grief from incision when a charge slid down her cheek. Her head hurt. Her strip shave. She slurred manic speech.

Closed with staples, she was fastened and tied into gowns, gap-toothed as plastic sacks to put apples in.

No pocket. No place to keep secret. She had to learn to walk, use a toilet, write her name. When she tried to stand up, her foot sloughed like a sock.

Empty. Now tested. She waited in a bunker for transport. If she sneezed she'd explode. She'd fall out of herself as if *the top of my head were taken off.* Oh, the top of her head...

The man in the berth beside her was moaning. She wanted to say something to him but didn't know what. She begged not to go but they pushed her into magnetic resonance. Where they could see what was left.

Gross total with no transfusion. Complete resection.

Voices said "Mama" and spooned chips to her tongue. She wanted to know where she'd been.

I'll learn to walk tomorrow she promised. Today she lies empty and shorn.

She wanted to know who she was.

Patricia Kirkpatrick teaches in the M.F.A. program at Hamline University in St. Paul, MN, where she is the Poetry Editor for Water-Stone Review. Her collection, Century's Road, is published by Holy Cow Press. She is the author of two letterpress chapbooks as well as books for young readers. Her poems have appeared in anthologies including What Have You Lost?, The Writing Path, Minnesota Writes: Poetry, and To Sing Along the Way: Minnesota Women Poets from Pre-Territorial Days to the Present. Kirkpatrick has conducted workshops and residencies at Princeton Theological Seminary and other schools, libraries, and associations. Visit: www.holycowpress.org/.

Pandora's Art

Maureen Jivani

Her therapists presented her a box of charcoal and fine graphite

though what she drew attracted little interest: Bluebells

trampling fennel, choked grass, blades of stone, though sometimes

a heap of twisted metal that could have been a car,

a plane, a boat, and once she captured

fire: a vulture retreating with its livered beak,

Prometheus burnt and wrecked upon his rock, seeking oblivion.

Maureen Jivani lives in Surrey, England and has worked as a nurse for the National Health Service for over twenty-five years. Her chapbook, My Shinji Noon, and full collection, Insensible Heart, are available from Mulfran Press in Cardiff, Wales. Insensible Heart was shortlisted for the 2010 London New Poetry Award. Jivani's poems have also appeared in journals such as Frogmore Papers, The Glasgow Review, Magma, The Rialto and Smiths Knoll. Visit www.mulfran.co.uk/.

L'shanah tovah

waiting for national day, Shenzhen, September 2009

Steven Schroeder

A woman sweeping on Nan Hai Da Dao stops to talk to a baby in his mother's arms,

and the rhythm of her broom gives way to the cooing everybody thinks every baby knows.

Smiles say this one knows work has stopped for him for now,

and that is all anyone can ask of a universal language in a place

desperate, as the world is desperate, for a sabbath

in which to lower the flags, lay down the guns,

put tools aside, and say of this now we have not made, a place in the world, nothing

more, to say nothing more than hao, dahao.

Laudate

Birds chant matins an hour before dawn.

Their psalm is call and response,

time rolling to rain last night, to lauds.

They do not doubt sun, even in this darkness.

Cardinal sings lachryma Christi

alone, surprised by joy, certain

tears trilled to the end of one

breath after another signify spring

in spite of dark rumors of extinction. Bread

baking fills this sanctuary with incense, calling

what will soon be broken to mind. There is

no answer but a song, no reason to believe

otherwise.

Steven Schroeder teaches at Shenzhen University (China) and in Asian Classics and in the Liberal Education for Adults program at the University of Chicago, where he received his Ph.D. His most recent book in philosophy and religious studies is On Not Founding Rome: The Virtue of Hesitation. Schroeder is the author of two chapbooks and four full-length collections. His poems have appeared in numerous anthologies and journals. He co-founded the Virtual Artists Collective (a gathering of musicians, poets, and visual artists) with composer Clarice Assad. Visit: http://vacpoetry.org/schroeder/.

Asking for Mercy

Mary Anne Morefield

Thirty three thousand five hundred eighty mornings, thirty three thousand five hundred eighty nights,

evenings, afternoons, all a jumble of tumbling noise and rumbling silence

where lakes shimmer blue as bluebird wings before they frolic and flee, diving

into a half remembered line of a poem or into a lyric of a song she can't quite sing,

but never mind, would you like some tea? No, she doesn't know what she ate for lunch,

or who the pretty woman and the children are in the gilded picture on her wall.

She looks at me with watery eyes and asks, *Is it all right if I don't remember?*

Mary Anne Morefield has an M.Div. from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (class of 1974), and a D.Min. from Boston University School of Theology. She has served as a parish pastor and as Chaplain of Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. Her poetry has been published in Poetry East, The MacGuffin, Green Mountains Review, Chautauqua, and Thin Air.

Friday Bells

In memoriam: M.M.

Will Lane

She hears church bells and loves their stunted sound, Shallow as a pool where butterflies feed, Of iron taught to yield and serve a creed. A finger of wood just touching the round

Hip of the bell? A clapper gloved to please Some smiling man with a brutal cologne? She smiles in bed and thinks herself cut stone Lodged in a bulging farmhouse wall, with ease

Taking and giving the blessing of weight.
These bells ring like her blunted self, half-numb
With changes, smiling though hard days have come
Of seeking in small things her absent mate

Who lingers like a pallor in the light Long after blunted bells could ring him right.

Myth of the Orchids

for Karl Mattson¹

We stepped onto your heated porch to see Your *girls* – potted, racked in the winter dusk On shelves inside shiny Plexiglas walls, And stood as if orchids alone could be Prayers for the innocent, songs for the numb.

That a self can harden into a tree Right out of Ovid's no mystery When you've seen what men do to their better Natures, drifting backward at desks all day. But an orchid comes out of a larger mind

And finds us where we think we are, Between meetings, in lives that lean Calmly toward others, though we work alone: Old souls, empty cups in the dark of the moon.

Canaanites

I don't know why,
But there are always Canaanites
Dancing near a fire they honor in our texts
While their bread turns slowly to stone,
Loaves of sandstone round and smooth
Under their practiced hands.

They're a people emptied by stories, By the nearness of their neighbors' Sly and talkative god, And their spirits chatter like poplar leaves in the wind When they see the head of their king on a pole.

What we need is their emptiness Shimmering like heat over sand.

Their cries put the curl in our prophet's beard And the lightness in his step. At sundown their gold Shines on our clay houses.

What we need is a blessing from these strangers, What we need is their delight, Sharp as the edge of their curved, useless swords.

Will Lane teaches in the English Department at Gettysburg College, where he is Assistant Director of The Writing Center. His poetry books include In the Barn of God, Moonlight Standing In As Cordelia and Elegy for Virginia Redding. Lane's activism includes chairing a local task force focused on extending access to affordable, comprehensive health care to all. Visit www.healthcare4allpa.org/. He also started a Transition Study Group which looks at ways to respond to peak oil and climate change by building resilient communities at the local level.

Notes

Karl Mattson, the former Chaplain and founder of the Center for Public Service at Gettysburg College, "is my good friend and mentor, and we have worked together on many community projects over the years."

GETTYSBURG SEMINARY FINE ARTS

So It Is There When You Need It

John Spangler

"We don't know that hymn, pastor," said a member of the congregation. "You will by the seventh stanza" replied the seasoned church leader.

It is no secret that worship in a liturgical tradition depends upon cycles that will repeat and bring a text or song back into view on a regular and recurring basis. Preachers know, for example, that the Reformation Sunday texts will bring back an encounter with Paul's letter to the Romans (chapter 8) each year. And until the latest revision in the lectionary, there was no variety in the texts for Thanksgiving Day, and so each year, only one healed leper returned to express thanks.

This point was raised effectively in a recent sermon on campus in which the Dean of the Chapel reminded us that in our spiritual practices we repeat texts and prayers and hymns not because they are our particular favorites, and not because we must have missed some important depth of meaning the last time around (although that could be the case). A more important reason that we repeat hymns and texts and prayers, and catechism is so that they will seep deeper into our minds and hearts "so that they will be there when we need them." The preacher, the Rev. Dr. Mark Oldenburg, didn't even expect us to meet every encounter with the same intensity as a Holy Week bidding prayer, either, because we don't always have a matching intense need at every encounter. But there are times when we will need it, and then it is good to have those meaningful words close to our hearts and inside our heads.

Repetition and revisiting special texts and prayers is more effective than setting out to memorizing a work for later reproduction. Memorization of a catechism text may not last so very long if one crams for the quiz. Repetition and revisiting a text over many seasons and years embeds it in the long

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term memory in deeper ways. The embedding process works more quickly than we might suspect. Who needs a hymnal to sing a Taizé hymn that you have sung even a half dozen times?

In Dr. Oldenburg's sermon, he mentioned one of the Iranian hostages known well to Lutherans, Ms. Kathryn Koob (and known also to Gettysburg Seminary as a respected alumna). After her release, Koob spoke often of coping with the threats, isolation, and fear by running through the texts she had at the ready. Since no Bible or other books were made available to her, it was those deeply embedded biblical texts, hymns, prayers and catechism texts that became her lifeline during the 444 day captivity.

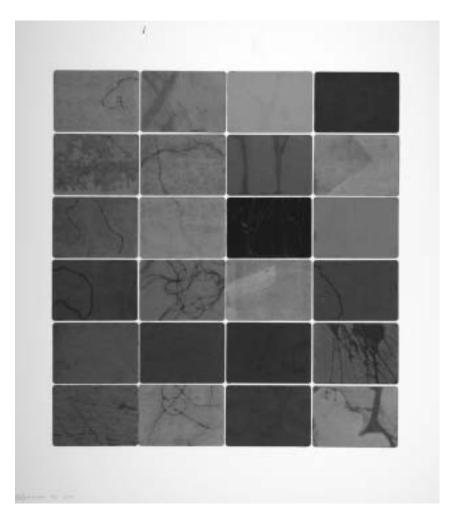


Figure 1: "Repetition 41," monotype, 14 x 15.25 in., 2010.

So it was a fascinating juxtaposition when, days after this sermon, the spring 2011 exhibit of prints by Messiah College artist Brenton Good arrived on campus, featuring a pattern of rectangles of differing colors. The exhibit, entitled "Repetitions," could qualify as minimalist and abstract. Mark Rothko came to mind. First impressions elicited that of a window with a grid of pains, looking out and seeing twigs and bits of a tree flying high in the sky (fig. 1). This was especially true where the grays and blue hues might have suggested the sky – with only subtle color variation across the print. Some saw quilts in the series of prints they first gazed. Others described the impression of a lattice.

Good confessed to branching out to include new colors in his prints once he spent some time exposed to autumn in New England (see cover), after beginning with a more monotype color pallet. And in his own words, he saw these prints as not only studies in color, but suggestive landscapes.

Repetition is part of the devotional framework in Brenton Good's method for making these prints. They are created from inked pinochle cards. "If I rushed, my playing cards glued themselves to the paper." So he carefully mixed and printed one color at a time, and observing "time between each color." Good brings a self-conscious, meditative spirituality to his technique, and the nineteen prints represent a record of his time spent in the studio. His intention is that the prints become contemplative for viewers as well. He wonders aloud if those who view his collected prints might see landscapes, the colors of a New England fall, a painting reference, or a rhythmic encounter of another kind. Even returning to Pennsylvania after his years in graduate school in Texas brought a new awareness of color. There are distinct seasons here. "These are probably the brightest pieces I've ever made. In the past I was limiting my palette to focus on composition."

When asked about his earlier, figurative work, Good explained that he is obsessive about both. Then, he was obsessive about realism in his portraits. A series of prints with a uniform grid allows for a different kind of experimentation with color. When a viewer sees a portrait, they focus on the face and the body. "I like the idea that you can walk up to one of these [prints] and see the green of your grandmother's table cloth or the exact blue of that car you drove in high school. You can't do that with a figure."

Good claimed that "Repetitions" is not about the whole, "it is about doing something over and over, like practicing the violin." But even while practicing and perfecting the processes of making color and shape work together, controlling the variables and mixing his inks so very carefully, he dropped string and water and allowed chance to enter into the art (fig. 2). "Now I'm adding Eastern influence, where, for example, accident is held as just as valuable" as the more controlled aspects of his earlier efforts. Some of

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the influences for this series include Josef Albers, Camille Corot, John Cage, Mark Rothko and David Batchelor's book *Chromophobia*.

Good emphasizes that, despite the uniform geometry you see at first glance, these are handmade, individual pieces. He chooses not to reproduce them mechanically. This gets back to the description of the exhibit "between printmaking and painting." At the opening reception, one of the Seminary faculty members said these works, and the process of making them, reminded her of the St. John's bible in calligraphy. She said "when you're holding a book that has been reproduced by someone handwriting each letter, it definitely feels different."

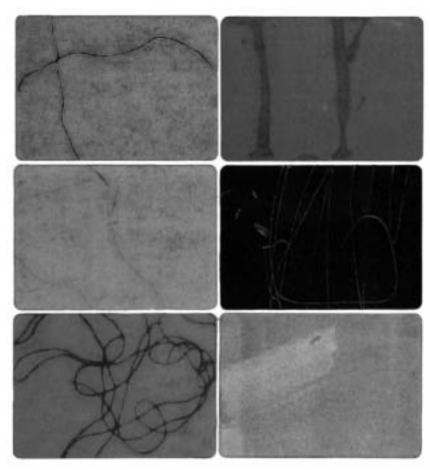


Figure 2: "Repetition 41" (detail).



Figure 3: The "Repetitions" exhibit in the Pioneer Room (19 works, on display from March 7-May 14, 2011).

In the end, "Repetitions" is doing visually what a Taizé hymn is intended to do for us musically. They are not designed to be powerful on first glance. But gradually, as form and color begin to work together, after several cycles of carefully chosen blocks of color, the more profound associations

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begin to take root. By the time stanza seven comes around, you not only know that hymn, but it is well on its way to settling inside somewhere. Someday, at an hour we cannot often foresee, we will need that hymn, that text, that graphic vision of a landscape, and it will take on the role of something more precious and powerful than we expected. Our imagination may be starved, or alarmed, or frightened or thirsty, and the important text, prayer, tune or vision will be there. If all goes well, it will be there when we need it most.



For every person who has paused over a good word, a real story, a perfect brushstroke—longing for the significance they point us toward. And with contributors such as Frederick Buechner, Scott Cairns, Luci Shaw and David James Duncan, there're plenty of good pauses to go around. *Please join us.*

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-Sue Ellea Thempean, author of The Goldea Hour and editor of The Automa House Authology of Contemporary American Poetry

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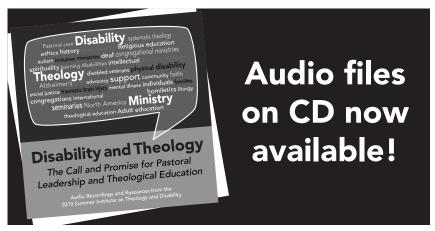
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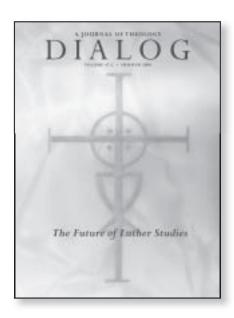
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