ADVANCE EDITION

Exegesis of Isaiah Passages for Advent
   Everett Tilson

Pastoral Ministry During Advent
   Robert C. Leslie

Unfolding John Wesley
   Frank Tucker

Critiques of the Lutheran-United Methodist Statement on Baptism
   Arthur Landwehr, UMC, and David Tiede, Lutheran

Plus Book Reviews
Quarterly Review provides continuing education resources for professional ministers in The United Methodist Church and other churches. A scholarly journal for reflection on ministry, Quarterly Review seeks to encourage discussion and debate on matters critical to the practice of ministry.

Falling within the purview of the journal are articles and reviews on biblical, theological, ethical, and ecclesial questions; homiletics, pastoral counseling, church education, sacred music, worship, evangelism, mission, and church management; ecumenical issues; cultural and social issues where their salience to the practice of ministry can be demonstrated; and the general ministry of Christians, as part of the church’s understanding of its nature and mission.

Articles for consideration are welcome from lay and professional ministers, United Methodists, and others, and should be mailed to the Editor, Quarterly Review, Box 871, Nashville, Tennessee 37202. Manuscripts should be approximately twelve to twenty-five pages in length and should be in English and typed double-spaced, and the original and one duplicate should be submitted. No sermons, poems, or devotional material are accepted. Queries are welcome. A style sheet is available on request. Payment is by fee, depending on edited length.

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Quarterly Review: A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry
Advance Edition
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Introducing Quarterly Review
  Ronald P. Patterson

Why a Continuing Education Resource for Ministry?
  F. Thomas Trotter

Homiletical Resources: Exegesis of Isaiah Passages for Advent
  Everett Tilson

Pastoral Ministry During Advent
  Robert C. Leslie

Unfolding John Wesley: A Survey of Twenty Years' Studies in Wesley's Thought
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A Lutheran–United Methodist Statement on Baptism
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INTRODUCING
QUARTERLY REVIEW

RONALD P. PATTERSON

Since the mid-1800s, the name Quarterly Review has been associated with Methodism and scholarly endeavors. The old Quarterly Review survived in various formats until its demise in 1930. In 1932, it was reborn as the ecumenical review, Religion in Life. The Uniting Conference of 1939 ordered and sponsored Religion in Life, with the Book Editor responsible for its contents.

Through the ensuing decades (forty-eight years), RIL faithfully served the church at large by devoting its pages to scholarly articles on teachings, trends, and influential happenings within the church. It also reflected significant movements in the modern church world—both in theology and in life. It was published from 1932 through 1980.

The launching of the new Quarterly Review is an attempt to recapture the spirit and scope of its mid-1800s predecessor. The Methodist Quarterly Review was unashamedly directed toward Methodists—so is QR designed primarily for United Methodists. The MQR was seen as a continuing education link with the frontier pastor—so is QR designed to reach those ministers on the frontiers of faith. MQR’s pages were devoted to theology, ecclesiastical polity, education, and literature. These subjects were discussed mostly in the form of elaborate reviews. QR will give major attention to substantial book reviews.

The content of QR will be cooperatively developed by The United Methodist Publishing House and the Board of Higher Education and Ministry. In addition, the new QR will also feature biblical exegesis, prepared specifically for sermon preparation. Depth articles on the practice of ministry and theology, along with scholarly documents and reprints of important studies, will also be included.

Ronald P. Patterson is Book Editor of The United Methodist Church and Editorial Director of Quarterly Review.
John Emory, book agent of the Methodist Book Concern, wrote about the Methodist Quarterly Review he was about to launch in 1830.

For this class of periodicals there is certainly a greater vacancy in the department of theological journals, at the present day, particularly in our own denomination. There is danger, too, of satisfying ourselves, on the one hand, with light and transient reading, and, on the other, with light and transient writing. We yet need a journal which shall draw forth the most matured efforts of our best writers, whether in the ministry, or among other intelligent and literary contributors; where also they may have room for ampler and more exact discussion, in a record which shall endure for the inspection of posterity.

This is our hope and prayer, 150 years later, as we begin this new publishing venture—Quarterly Review: A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry.
WHY A CONTINUING EDUCATION RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY?

F. THOMAS TROTTER

QR has its "second birth" with this issue. It is not just another journal in a universe of journals. It is a special journal with a special mission. QR intends to be a central element in the continuing education of the ministry of the church.

In this mission, QR is recovering one of the oldest traditions of the Wesleyan movement. Care for the education of preachers and laity was an early feature of the Methodist societies. The publication of Wesley's Sermons, The Notes on the New Testament, the Arminian Magazine (1778), and the Methodist Magazine (1818) provided continuing education for the ministry in the first century of the movement.

We pride ourselves on living in a communications era. The community of theological discourse and debate in early Methodism was probably more highly informed than what we have experienced in the recent past. Not that we do not have access to a wider variety of resources. We do. But the focus today is obscure. QR intends to become the critical element in linking continuous learning and an informed profession.

Care for the learning and lore of the ministry and the cultivation of new insights and effectiveness for the ministry are the responsibility of the ministerium. That is basic to any definition of a learned profession. Ministry, in this sense, is dependent for its future upon the willingness of ministers to be in continuous study, engaging themselves and colleagues in critical debate and shaping theology and praxis for the church together.

As a part of the recovery of the style of continuous education, recording significant documents of the church's life for wide study and use by the ministerium will be QR's responsibility.

F. Thomas Trotter is general secretary, Board of Higher Education and Ministry, and Chair, QR Editorial Board.
Seminarians study such documents, but the general impression is that such theological work closed with the Reformation period. Most documents end in obscure archives—unheard of, unread, uncriticized. The root sense of “recording” is “taking more to heart.” The ministry finds its vocation in Jesus Christ in many ways, but it clarifies its vocation by sustained study, conversation, and the forming of statements for wider debate throughout the connection. It is our hope that QR will provide a wider community of discourse on issues such as ministry, ecumenism, interfaith dialogue, evangelism, ministerial disciplines—“taking more to heart” the work of the church.

Reordering the life of the ministry of the church is a goal of QR. The journal will seek through its pages to enhance the quality of ministry through preaching, pastoral care, administration, and the sacramental life. The editorial board seeks substantive and extended commentary and debate. We are confident that thumbnail reviews and topical paragraphs are insufficient for the quality of study necessary for the vitality of ministry in our period.

This is a joint effort of the Board of Higher Education and Ministry and The United Methodist Publishing House. We commend QR to bishops, ministers, laity, conference boards of ordained ministry, conference boards of diaconal ministry, and all others who sense the need to “unite the pair so long disjoined—knowledge and vital piety.” Out of this effort at continuous education for ministry may come a glorious third century of United Methodism.
HOMILETICAL RESOURCES

EVERETT TILSON

Each issue of Quarterly Review will carry an extended exegesis of the Scripture readings named in the lectionary. The exegesis will seek to bring the best thinking of biblical scholars to bear on at least one of the three lections. The intention is not only to provide fresh and recent thinking about the Scriptures for the sake of sound preparation but also to offer models for homiletics. The history of homiletical studies bears a twin curse. Material is either too technical and obscure to be of any use to a preacher, or it is a shameful spoonfeeding that does not nourish the preacher but provides only a pony for the approaching sermon. Here we hope the material can be useful and relevant, and at the same time provocative for the preacher's future work. Since this advance edition of Quarterly Review is being distributed in the fall, the exegesis that follows centers on the first four Sundays of Advent. Our attention is focused on the Old Testament lection; however, the other readings are shown to be pertinent and are treated briefly.

"Today's lessons emphasize the inseparability of God's presence in our midst from God's rule over nations and in our individual lives."

"To know God is much more to hold forth God's ideas than it is to hold ideas of God."

"The Christology of the New Testament... is not a Christology of status in terms of divine claim, but of function in terms of human service."

"Construed theologically, Immanuel ceases to be a sign of either deliverance or destruction. He becomes, instead, simply a sign of God's presence with us as God."
HOMILETICAL RESOURCES:
EXEGESIS OF ISAIAH PASSAGES
FOR ADVENT

EVERETT TILSON

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Lections

Isaiah 2:1-5 Romans 13:8-14 Matthew 24:36-44

1 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning
   Judah and Jerusalem.
2 It shall come to pass in the latter days
   that the mountain of the house of the Lord
   shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
   and shall be raised above the hills;
   and all the nations shall flow to it,
3 and many peoples shall come, and say:
   "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
   to the house of the God of Jacob;
   that he may teach us his ways
   and that we may walk in his paths."
   For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
   and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the nations,
   and shall decide for many peoples;
   and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
   and their spears into pruning hooks;
   nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
   neither shall they learn war any more.
5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk  
in the light of the Lord. (Isaiah 2:1-5 RSV)

Micah 4:1-3 is an almost exact duplicate of Isaiah 2:2-4. Verses 1 and 5 did not belong to the original piece, but were supplied by a later hand or hands. Verse 1, which repeats the title of 1:1, was added here to introduce the collection of oracles in 2:2-5:30. Verse 5 quite possibly was written by an editor, who inserted the oracle as a homiletical reminder to the people of Israel of their obligation to reveal God's lordship over the future by their quality of life in the present. However, few commentators believe that either prophet borrowed this passage from the other. Most interpreters trace its origin, instead, to an anonymous Jew of the Babylonian Exile (597-539 B.C.E.).

If this view is correct, then our author, whoever he may have been, faced radically different surroundings and attitudes from those encountered by Isaiah and Micah in eighth-century Judah. Both of these prophets had been confronted by complacent optimism in the midst of conspicuous immorality. And both, in turn, had met that challenge by heaping the threat of national disaster on their charges of personal and political bankruptcy. In their visions of ruin they had mixed figures of speech drawn from descriptions of military upheaval with those borrowed from accounts of natural calamity. But on the crucial question they had left no room for doubt: the ultimate source of Judah's judgment, no matter who its agent or the form of its manifestation, was the Lord. In short, when Judah was independent, Isaiah and Micah had confronted Judah with a message which at that time in its life it needed to hear: The Lord is Israel's Judge.

With the nation of Judah in shambles and its people captive to a foreign overlord, a drastic change overtook the mood of Jewry. Bleak hopelessness took the place of smug arrogance. Instead of questioning their need of God, as their ancestors had been prone to do, the exiles began to wonder if God had not abandoned them. No doubt, their anxiety was aggravated by their upbringing on the dogma of retribution. If their circumstances accurately mirrored their relationship to God, as this teaching inclined them to believe, what else could they do but despair of a
turn of fortune for themselves, for Zion, and for their world?

Our prophet-poet answers this inquiry in reassuring fashion. He directs his people's attention to God's imminent appearance on Mount Zion. Just as in former times the Law went forth from Sinai, in the days to come the Law shall proceed from Zion. Then Yahweh will teach Jacob (Israel) "his ways, so that we may walk in his paths" (v.3 Jerusalem Bible). The contents of "the law" or Torah are not explicitly detailed here, but the words "in the latter days" (v.2) suggest both their significance and adequacy for the conduct of the whole of life. (This passage clarifies the tendency of some modern rabbis to speak of Judaism as "a way of life" and to downgrade its significance as a system of theology.)

The words of our prophetic reading for the day date from roughly the same time as those of Isaiah of the Exile (the anonymous author of Isaiah 40-55, often called Second Isaiah) and parallel that prophet's stress on the exaltation of the fallen and the gift of the Law, the two key elements in Israel's Sinaitic Covenant (a designation for the union of the traditions of Exodus and Sinai). Assuming this stress to have been deliberate, our author was inviting his fellow Jews to join him in the contemplation of their situation from the perspective of the original Exodus community. With this event in mind, the author believed they would come to see that their situation in Babylonian captivity was no more hopeless than had been that of their ancestors in Egyptian captivity, and that the Babylonians posed no greater hurdle for Yahweh than had the Egyptians. In short, when Judah is in exile, the prophet confronted it with a reassuring reminder which at that time in the nation's life was badly needed: The Lord is Israel's Savor.

The inserter of verses 1 and 5 into the text of the Isaiah and Micah collections may well have wanted to blunt these eighth-century prophets' threatening proclamations. This likelihood is especially probable in the case of Micah, where the oracle heralding Zion's elevation (4:1-3) has been placed immediately after an oracle announcing the annihilation of Zion and Jerusalem (3:12). Certainly there is no denying the fact that oracles of judgment and salvation, sometimes subtly but just as often curiously juxtaposing threats and promises, stand side by side in Israel's prophetic literature.
Such a juxtaposition deserves serious contemplation at this season of the year. It stands as a solemn reminder that the visit of God in our midst—our preparation for which is what Advent is all about—is much less predictable than that of Santa Claus. Indeed, taking our cue from Isaiah 2:2-4, we would stress that our commercialization and sentimentalization of Christmas are the wrong way to set the stage for the appearance of the Lord. In the Isaiah passage, where the Lord is portrayed as something of a Santa Claus, the divine appearance is promised to a people who are as helpless to go commercial as they are little disposed to wax sentimental.

Significantly, the only ruler mentioned in the prophet’s vision is Yahweh. That is often the case in Israel’s eschatological descriptions. This explains the claim of many rabbis that Judaism was more interested in the messianic era than the identity of the Messiah. (The use of the definite article and the capital “M” in this connection derive from Christian usage: The Old Testament provides little textual warrant for this practice.) The favorite Christian label for this time is “the kingdom of God,” but Rudolf Bultmann’s followers, wishing to stress the fact that emphasis belongs on the reality rather than the territory of divine rule, substitute “reign” for “kingdom.”

The ensuing description of the time of God’s rule envisions the conditions of paradise. Among other things, these include: the restoration of Mount Zion, followed by its elevation to the center of the earth (an Asian would doubtless have opted for Mount Everest); the ingathering of the nations to Zion (though Zion’s central place in this account does reflect a certain chauvinistic bias, it is sharply mitigated by the presence—according to the Jerusalem Bible rendering of v.3—of “peoples without number” from “the nations”); the assembly of the nations on “the mountain of Yahweh” to receive the Lord’s instruction (v. 3 JB); the abandonment of arms in favor of divine judgment as the means of settling disputes between peoples and nations (v. 4).

The Gospel lesson may have been placed here to counter the notion (implied in Matt. 24:15-25) that the parousia will be heralded by clearly observable and easily readable signs. Matthew sounds the need for unswerving faithfulness in view
of the absolute unpredictability of the Second Coming. Three examples describe its unexpected and startling occurrence. The coming of the Son of man will be as surprising as (1) the flood was to Noah’s contemporaries (vv. 37-40), (2) the unannounced parting of two co-workers, abruptly and permanently separated from each other (v. 41), and (3) the burglary of one’s home by a nocturnal visitor (vv. 42-43).

All three of these illustrations foreclose the possibility of eliminating the element of surprise from the advent of God’s reign. In conclusion Matthew says: “Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (v. 44 JB). Yet at the same time, the three examples suggest the possibility of draining the element of surprise from the Second Coming in its consequences for one’s life. If we would but join the ark-builders or the installers of a home security system by making watchful preparation for the event, then we could increase our chances of being ready and not being left behind. But while the Gospel lesson is clear and emphatic in vigilance and watchful preparation for the coming reign of God, it remains quite vague as to what such preparation might properly entail.

In our Epistle lesson, Romans 13:8-14, Paul compensates for this deficiency with the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 9). He gives specific content to this prescription by putting “reveling and drunkenness, . . . debauchery and licentiousness, . . . quarreling and jealousy” off limits for believers (v. 13). But he does not leave the matter with this rather tame bit of moralizing. In verse 11, Paul articulates the demand of God on believers during the interim between Christ’s first and Second Coming. “The time,” kairos, refers apparently to the inauguration of God’s kingdom in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and “salvation” seems to point to the second coming, since it clearly refers to consummation at some future time of a development already in process. Paul then radicalizes the Christian’s earthly obligation by using metaphors commonly employed (especially by the Gnostics and the Qumran community) to indicate movement from one realm of existence into another. Among the Gnostics and at Qumran, these warring realms were the turfs of “spirit” and “flesh” or,
more commonly, "light and darkness." In this scheme, "spirit" and "light" stand for the enlightened portion of corporate humanity and its cosmic backers, and "flesh" and "darkness" represent the corporation of rebellious humanity and its cosmic supporters. The final outcome of this war has already been settled in favor of the "children of light" and the corporation of spiritual humanity, but individuals can only assure themselves of a share in the fruits of this victory by shunning the works of "darkness" (v. 12) and spurning the cravings of the "flesh" (v. 14).

Both the Isaiah and Pauline readings eagerly anticipate the reign of God, but the Prophet and the Apostle differ in two important respects in their treatment of this theme. Isaiah looks forward to its dawn; Paul believes it has already dawned. And, whereas Isaiah stresses its implications for society, Paul emphasizes its meaning for the individual. But these differences aside, they both abandon the indicative to leave us with an imperative:

"Let us conduct ourselves becomingly," Paul enjoins, "as in the day . . ." (13:13).

"O house of Jacob," the prophetic lection ends, "come, let us walk in the light of the Lord" (2:5).

Each is saying to us, in effect, that the best way—indeed, the only proper way—to prepare for the Advent of God is to live as if the Lord had already come into our midst to launch the reign of God.

For us Christians, of course, this "as if" becomes "inasmuch as." For what is our gospel but the proclamation of God's self-disclosure in the life and ministry, the death and resurrection, of Jesus Christ? Therefore, inasmuch as our preparation for Advent shall take place on this side of the Incarnation, let us make ready for it by recognizing with Karl Barth that in Jesus Christ "the realization of the good corresponding to the divine election has already taken place . . . so completely that we . . . have . . . only to endorse this event by our action." Barth would have further reminded us that our endorsement can only be at best an incarnation of the Incarnation. And he would have warned us that, before even this can happen, we must stretch our wisdom and imagination to their
limits in the effort to bridge the gap that divides not only the first
century from the twentieth and rural life in the ancient Orient
from urban life in today's United States of America but also the
gap that separates Jesus' stance of "radical obedience" toward
God (Bultmann's phrase for capsuling our Lord's typical
response to God's demands) from our typically compromised
and compromising disposition to deity.

Today's lessons emphasize the inseparability of God's
presence in our midst from God's rule over nations and in our
individual lives. The first lesson spotlights the sphere and
substance of God's reign; the second, the radical character of the
divine demand on us in view of the imminence of God's reign;
and the third, the urgent need of actively witnessing to our
Lord's first coming by bringing our lives and our world into
conformity with God's will, instead of passively awaiting
publicly documentable signs of our Lord's Second Coming.

The three lessons might be used to remind us of the
substance, the summons, and the signs, respectively, of God's
reign. In view of the importance and the difficulty of adequately
covering the first two issues, the temptation will be to give only
brief attention to the third. But we should take pains, in view of
widespread preoccupation with and misunderstanding of this
last item, not only to address the issue of the signs of the coming
of the kingdom of God, but to do so with special care and clarity.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Lections

Isaiah 11:1-10 Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12

1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
   the spirit of wisdom and understanding;
   the spirit of counsel and might,
   the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear.

4 But with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

5 Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist,
and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

6 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the fattling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

7 The cow and the bear shall feed;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den.

9 They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

10 In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to
the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings
shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:1-10 RSV)

Traditionally, the second Sunday in Advent shifts attention
away from anticipation of the messianic era to preparation for
the Incarnation. These two emphases, however, belong
together in numerous messianic passages of the Old Testament.
This is especially true of the messianism that developed in
connection with the public ceremonies of kingship—coronation
and/or enthronement—in Israel and Judah.

Our prophetic lection for today makes the future experience of
the messianic era contingent upon the present embodiment of
its spirit and quality in this life. It brooks no separation of
prophetic vision from personal character.

To say this is of course to side with the bulk of modern
interpreters who recognize Isaiah 11:1-10 to be “messianic” only
in the sense that every monarch of the Davidic dynasty was an
anointed representative of Yahweh." By the same token, it is to reject the view of older scholars, who read this passage as a compensatory fantasy of Jews who sublimated their dreary life in Babylonian captivity by painting word pictures of an idyllic future. (Some of these older scholars construed the reference in verse 1 to the Davidic dynasty as "a stump" to mean that since nothing else remains of the royal tree of David, the monarchy in Judah has fallen into ruin. This reading provided textual support for their radically futuristic interpretation but the fact that gezer, translated "stump," elsewhere has the meaning of "trunk," "stock," "plant," or "stem," and that what we have here is the suggestion that a healthy tree—the Davidic dynasty—having trunk and roots, will sprout a new branch, the about-to-be crowned monarch.)

Before proceeding to more substantive issues, two RSV renderings call for a clarifying word. Comparing the RSV and the JB, in v. 4 the object of the verb smite becomes "ruthless" (JB) or "tyrant," instead of "earth," by the change of only one letter in the Hebrew. This reading produces a case of synonymous parallelism in verse 4 c-d balancing its antithesis in 4a-b. In verse 6 the "little child," which translates na'ar, should not be taken as a reference to a mere babe-in-arms. It refers to any "marriage-able male so long as he is a bachelor" and may properly be rendered "retainer," "attendant," "servant," or "armor-bearer." "Inexperienced attendant" would take us close both to the meaning of the word and the sense of the verse.

The inclusion of verse 10 in this lection has often been questioned. Inasmuch, however, as the implicit universalism of verse 10 is by no means alien to the thought of Isaiah and is most congenial to the Christian faith, its inclusion in our Old Testament lesson for today is both liturgically defensible and theologically significant.

Passages like this Old Testament lesson are known generically as Dynastic Oracles (e.g., Isa. 9:2-7) or Royal Psalms (Pss. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 144), depending on the place of their occurrence. They get their name from their concentration on the king, his character, function, or rule. While they sometimes reduce God to the size of the ruler's very this-worldly ambitions, some of them are conspicuous for the lofty expectations with
which they challenge the king and, indirectly, his subjects as well. In such “psalms,” nowhere more classically illustrated than in Isaiah 11:1-10, the king or “messiah” is called to embody God’s spirit and to enact God’s will in the conduct of the affairs of state. When Paul hails Jesus as one “who was descended from David according to the flesh and [has been] designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness” (Rom. 1:3-4 RSV), he is simply describing the king, almost any king, of Israel, at the time of his inauguration or enthronement. To say this is to recognize that such liturgies were vehicles for activating both the king and his subjects’ faith in Israel’s destiny as the agent and people of the Lord.

At this point the term “messianic” (i.e., “christological”) calls for definition. It refers to Israel’s expectations of a king who would bring to fulfillment all the hopes stemming from the promises vouchsafed to the founder of the Judahite dynasty, namely David. As long as Israel retained the monarchy, these expectations centered in a particular historical king. After the fall of Judah, the messianic hope sometimes took an otherworldly turn, but Jewish messianism simply transferred the king’s titles, role, prerogatives, and functions to the Lord’s agent of the future.

Taking Isaiah 11:1-10 as an expression of Israel’s hope for the historical kingship, it is easy to see why the postexilic authors of Israel’s messianic hope for the distant future took their model and cues from the writers of productions of this sort. The preexilic authors simply foreshortened the messianic hope to Israel’s near future. Unlike the postexilic messianists, they tended to look to an earthly rather than to a heavenly ruler. But this distinction notwithstanding, postexilic and Christian messianism is best viewed as a natural, if not always logical, development out of Israel’s preexilic royal hope. Evidence of this connection may be found in the fact that the Dynastic Oracles and Royal Psalms became a stimulus to reflection on Jesus’ significance as revealer and agent of God. Here we have convincing proof that New Testament Christology roots in Old Testament messianism.

The relevance of such passages for reflection on the meaning of Jesus is further heightened by the fact that they originated as
theological projections of Israel's political destiny under God. Therefore, rather than looking to particular kings for their inspiration, Israel's prophets and psalmists looked to their covenant with Yahweh. Consequently, they cast the king in the role of mediator between the God of Israel and the people of Israel. To them the king was at once both the steward of God, the one through whom deity exercises sovereignty and bestows blessing, and the representative of the people before God, the one through whom they are made partakers of divine favor and blessing. In the cult of kingship they symbolized this view of the monarch as divine-human mediator by hailing him as God's adopted son (Ps. 2:7; cf. Isa. 9:6).

The authors of these cultic pieces almost surely had in mind some Davidic messiah on the historical horizon. However, the influence of royal messianism on New Testament Christology attests to the fact that Jesus' denial of kingship over a "kingdom of this world" (John 18:36) was not construed by the canonizers of the Bible to mean that our life on earth is not subject to the reign and will of Christ (Matt. 7:21-27; 25:31-46). In our Epistle lesson, Paul goes so far as to make the extension of Christ's rule over the Gentiles contingent upon the harmonious living of believers with their pagan neighbors in the spirit of Christ (Rom. 15:7-12). The Gospel lesson (Matt. 3:1-12) enlarges upon this notion by demanding moral purification as a precondition for membership in the eschatological community of which Christ is king.

Our first lesson, like most of the Old Testament passages of this genre, leaves us with many unanswered questions about the occasion for its production and use, yet it presents us with a clear understanding of kingship. This notion may be described as messianic in character, but it is a messianism of function rather than status. In order for the messiah to effect the social transformation (enabling the people of Israel to live at peace with one another and their neighbors) and cosmic transformation (restoring harmony to nature and the nations) to whose achievement his anointment as king commits him, he must first undergo personal transformation.

Two developments fully justify our use of the Israelite king's responsibility for this threefold transformation as a guide in
making preparation for the coming of God in Christ into our lives and our world. One development is our democratization of governmental duty. The other is our substitution of decision rather than birth as our rite of passage for becoming people of God. What we get by joining these two ideas is the suggestion that, just as God and Jesus Christ may both be identified as subjects of the Incarnation, God and you or I may both be seen as subjects in our preparation for the coming of God in Christ into our life and worship during Advent.

The prophet responsible for Isaiah 11:1-10, whether Isaiah of Jerusalem himself or one of his disciples, did not develop his view of this transformation from scratch. He drew heavily on the traditions of Israel's faith in drafting his liturgy. His hope for the future did not take shape around his faith in Judah's king. It took shape, instead, around his faith in Yahweh, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the God of gods.

The significance of this fact can scarcely be exaggerated. Especially if, as many scholars are inclined to believe, these words were written by Isaiah for use in the coronation ceremony for Ahaz in 735 or Hezekiah in 715. With mighty Assyria on the march and Judah's neighbors choking one by one on her imperial dust, how could any intelligent person have construed the crowning of a king in Jerusalem to be anything more than a foolish and futile gesture? For one, Isaiah could, and apparently did, see something more in that action than a routine celebration. He glimpsed the shape of a power with which visiting, and probably mocking, dignitaries on hand for the coronation of Judah's king had not come to terms. That power, of course, was the selfsame power that had taken Pharaoh and his brick-making slaves by surprise. As it was when Yahweh first came into Israel's life, so shall it be, the prophet believed, when Yahweh comes into Israel's life again; and Yahweh can be counted on to do just that. And when that happens, as in former times, Yahweh will crash the best-laid plans of people and nations with revolutionary impact. Yahweh will wrench power from tyrants and turn it into the hands of those who once cowered before them. When Yahweh comes again, the exalted will be debased, and the debased will be exalted.

Thus shall it be with the coming of "the Spirit of the Lord."
This divine appearance may be construed as a time and a presence. The time is the day of reckoning when the powers that be must give an account of their exercise of power in the presence of Yahweh, from whom all power comes and by whom it is transferred. Yahweh will bring together the kingdoms of God and humankind, but this reconciliation will not come to pass without human help. The prophet safeguards human power and responsibility by hedging his promise with two conditions: (1) that the covenant be put ahead of the crown; (2) that public policy reflect the concern and compassion of the Lord of the covenant. With these conditions clearly in mind, let us briefly connect the prophetic demand, explicit or implied, to the prophet's envisioned transformations.

1) Personal Transformation. Despite the surprise with which God's imminent appearance shall take the neat calculators of international affairs, the signs of God's presence will nevertheless be apparent to the eyes of faith. The divine presence will clearly manifest itself in both the character (v. 2-3a) and the reign of Yahweh's representative on the throne of David (v. 3b-d).

In verse 2a the prophet describes the king as the dwellingplace of "the Spirit of the Lord." (The "fear of the Lord" in verse 2a, rendered by the Septuagint as "piety," is the source of the traditional seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.) This divine spirit not only bestows upon the king the qualities essential to discharging the duties of his office, but it endows him with the wisdom, the resolution, and the fidelity to conceive and do things that go beyond the call of duty. Instead of focusing attention upon the number or identity of spiritual gifts, the prophet highlights their utter sufficiency for the king's performance of his duties. He achieves this goal by noting that the king, in addition to mirroring the divine spirit in his life (3a), continues to pursue its implications in a mood of chastened but enthusiastic reverence.

Two of the gifts of the spirit, namely "fear of the Lord" and "knowledge of the Lord," underscore the prophet's call for the king's incarnation of the divine character. Here we need to recall that the word translated "fear" can just as accurately be rendered "awe" or "reverence." This explains the prophet's summons to take delight in this gift. For surely it is easier to take
delight in him whom we revere than it is to take delight in what we fear. And it likewise accounts for Isaiah’s linkage of the “fear of the Lord” to the “knowledge of the Lord.” Especially if we pause to recall the dynamic understanding of “knowledge” in Old Testament usage. Such knowledge is primarily subjective rather than purely objective; it is more relational than rational; and it is not purely formal but deeply and intimately personal. To know God is much more to hold forth God’s ideas than it is to hold ideas of God. It is not merely to be aware of God’s purposes; it is to share God’s purposes. In short, it is a form of interpersonal communion in which we assert our independence of other human beings by acknowledging our dependence on God. It is that act of the whole self in which the human “I,” by coming to feel and to love as and what the holy “Thou” feels and loves, proceeds to enact the divine will into human deed.

This understanding underlies the prophet’s designation of the king as “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” He is not thus designated because he is king of Israel. Quite the contrary, he is thus designated in the hope that he will develop a character to match the God in whose name he has been anointed.

The Old Testament anticipates the diffusion of the divine spirit upon all people in the messianic era. Since this age has long since dawned for us Christians, it requires little imagination for us to turn the prophet’s claim for the king into a divine summons for you and me.

2) Social Transformation. The test of the king’s achievement of the desired character will not be his private claim to a special relationship to God, but his conduct of this-worldly business on otherworldly terms (vv. 3b-5). In other words, the king’s decision-making process will mock this world’s preoccupation with the prejudices of Dr. Gallup’s “Mr. Average Citizen.” It will scorn our definition of justice in terms of government of the “ins,” by the “ins,” and for the “ins.” And it will rebuke our sanctification of the quest for personal advancement without regard for moral principle or social consequence.

Isaiah carved out for the king a creative role in preparing the way for God’s appearance among the people. That role committed him to unswerving labor for a just and merciful
society. Surely he would not, in this country with its government of, by, and for the people, allow us to carve out for ourselves any smaller role.

3) Cosmic Transformation. Another consequence of messianic rule will be dissipation of the enmity both between nature and humanity (vv. 6-9) and between nation and nation (v. 10). When Yahweh comes to earth in the person of his “anointed” to usher in the messianic era, peace will reign in nature and among the nations.

Poetic license has undoubtedly entered into this too-neat assimilation of the realms of nature and politics. Yet we must not allow ourselves, in reaction against this oversimplification, to neglect the potential impact of political actions on natural ecology. Today, more than ever, it is imperative that we should acknowledge this connection. For unless the peoples of the earth take governmental action to preserve and restore the human environment, the earth will exact its horrible vengeance on our children for the neglect of their parents.

The late oracle in verse 10 may have been the special contribution of a Jewish chauvinist, but it nevertheless attests to the inseparable relation of Israel and all nations. More important still, it attests to their common purpose in obedience to a common sovereign. Indeed, granted the anointed’s dependence on the Spirit described in verses 2-3a and his exercise of power portrayed in verses 3b-5, he could become “the rallying point for the nations” without doing harm to him or themselves. In fact, by thus honoring him, they would bring honor to themselves. And they would proceed to order their affairs, as he has begun to order the affairs of Israel, in accordance with the character and will of Israel’s God and theirs.

Read alone, verse 10 could serve as a prop alike for Jewish pride and Gentile envy. However, when read in the context of the preceding nine verses, both Jewish and Gentile pride pale into insignificance before a greater glory, the glory of the Lord. For when God comes in all his glory, human beings must cease to glory in all that is theirs. Face to face with God’s reality, they can only repent and obey.

The whole of the prophet’s and the Epistle lessons' teaching about how to prepare for the incarnation is capsuled for us in our
Gospel lesson by Jesus' trailblazer, John the Baptist: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:2). “Bear fruit that befits repentance” (3:8).

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Lections

Isaiah 35:1-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus 2 it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.  
4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
"Be strong, fear not!  
Behold, your God  
will come with vengeance,  
with the recompense of God.  
He will come and save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
6 then shall the lame man leap like a hart,  
and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
7 the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
8 And a highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not pass over it,  
and fools shall not err therein.  
9 No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.  
10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isaiah 35:1-10 RSV)

Today's Scripture lessons highlight the themes of the mission of God (Isa. 35:1-10), the Messiah of God (Matt. 11:2-11), and the vocation of the messianic community (James 5:7-10). Together these three pericopes witness to the inseparability of the divine appearance and human preparation. This assumes, of course, that God's appearance during this Advent, as in previous times, not only will be restricted to the eyes of faith, but that it will be confirmed by a unswerving demand for faithfulness.

Any one of these themes easily could inspire a whole series of sermons. By proposing that all three be treated in a single sermon, I am merely suggesting the need for special emphasis on the fact that a common mission is the link that connects all God's appearances throughout human history. For just as the Isaiah passage defines God's mission on the basis of the Exodus and just as the Gospel lesson implicitly identifies Jesus as the Christ from his embodiment of God's mission, the Epistle lesson implicitly claims that same mission for the Christian community.

The Mission of God—The theme of this poem is the return to Zion of the redeemed, on a luxurious highway. Carpeted with blooming flowers in the midst of plush meadows and gushing streams, it runs through a land that only recently was a barren desert; its "burning sand" and "thirsty ground" have become "pools" and "springs of water" (v. 7).

The imagery, the language, the background, and the outlook of this vision bespeak the mood and reflect the circumstances of
Isaiah of the Exile. As noted earlier, the bulk of this prophet’s oracles are to be found in Isaiah 40-55. We may quite properly, therefore, look to the activity and message of Second Isaiah for clues to its historical and theological context.

The situations confronted by First and Second Isaiah scarcely could have been more strikingly different. The audience of Isaiah of Jerusalem was made up of people who believed that, since Yahweh was on their side, they were immune to harm from any historical foe. Isaiah countered this false optimism with oracles of doom and judgment. The audience of Jerusalem was made up of people who believed that, since Yahweh was on their side, they were immune to harm from any historical foe. Isaiah countered this false optimism with oracles of doom and judgment. The audience of Isaiah of the Exile was made up of people who believed that, since Yahweh had permitted them to be enslaved by the Babylonians, they were as helpless as the hopelessly handicapped: “the blind” and “the lame” and “the deaf” and “the dumb.” Second Isaiah countered this false pessimism with oracles of hope and salvation.

Despite the radical disparity in the tone of their respective messages, the two Isaiahs spoke from a common understanding of God’s mission and the mission of Israel. Both perceived that aim to be the creation and dispersion of shalom. Also, they both construed the acceptance of this goal to entail commitment to work for the transformation of human society into a just and compassionate community.

When Isaiah of Jerusalem measured Israel against the yardstick of this purpose, he found the nation as a whole to be wanting. This discovery did not persuade him to revise his view of Yahweh’s mission but prompted him to rest his hope for its achievement with a remnant (7:3), which his disciples turned into the messianic bearer of Yahweh’s promises (10:20-22; 11:11; 28:5). Afterward, Second Isaiah’s disciples identified this remnant with the servant of Yahweh (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12), whose work would effect the transformation envisioned in 35:1-10.

Neither of these great theologians grounded his proclamation in an analysis of his own situation. Both based it, instead, on the Exodus tradition, with its witness to Yahweh’s will and power
either to turn a highway into a wilderness for oppressors or to turn a wilderness into a highway for the oppressed.

Both prophets blunted the role of human agency in this transformation. We may use this fact as an excuse for debating the point at which human activity ends and divine activity begins, or vice versa. Or we may, following the lead of our prophets, assess the mood of our audiences to determine just the right mix of grace and judgment with which we shall confront them in our proclamation of the coming of God into our world. Once we have opted for this latter alternative, let us recall the important corrective provided by each prophet's disciples. For just as those of First Isaiah anticipated the achievement of divine rule through a righteous remnant, those of Second Isaiah looked to the servant of the Lord for its enactment.

_The Messiah of God_—The Evangelist who gave us the Gospel of Matthew assimilated the work of the Lord's servant (11:2-11) into his portrait of Jesus as the Christ (1:1). Did Jesus himself effect this combination? Or was it the work of his disciples, who reinterpreted the meaning of messiahship in light of Jesus' life, despite his adoption, apart from any messianic claim, of the vocation of the servant of the Lord? The evidence for settling this debate is contradictory and inconclusive; nevertheless, there is no questioning the fact that the New Testament, almost without exception, takes the recognition of Jesus as the Servant/Messiah of the Lord as its point of departure for christological speculation. In other words, the Christology of the New Testament as a whole, no less than in the Gospel of Matthew, is not a Christology of status in terms of divine claim, but of function in terms of human service.

"The coming one" (ho erchomenos) in verse 3 is an obvious reference to a messianic figure, even though we are unable to point to Jewish texts in which it is employed as a messianic title. Taking the narrative at face value as the transcript of an actual encounter between Jesus and John's disciples, it may be construed either as a reassurance to John (cf. Matt. 3:11) or as the illumination for John's disciples as to the true meaning of Jesus' messiahship. If one chooses to interpret it instead as a rhetorical means of instructing the Matthean church on the true meaning of Christology, the crucial question still concerns not the fact,
but the character of Jesus' messiahship. By the same token, and no less clearly or emphatically, the Evangelist directs those for whom the issue remains in doubt to seek their answer not in the claims made by or for Jesus, but in Jesus' deeds. In reflecting on these deeds the interpreter needs to bear these three facts constantly in mind: (1) They parallel Old Testament descriptions of the mission of God (Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1). (2) They provide the criteria for answering John's loaded question about Jesus in our Gospel lesson; (3) They define our Evangelist's requirements for admission into the kingdom of God, both in this world (7:21-27) and in the world to come (25:31-46).

In summary, then, we can say that for our Evangelist, the Messiah and the messianic community have a common denominator in their recognition and acceptance of God's mission as their own. Therefore, rather than waiting passively for God's appearance among us as a bolt from the blue, he would urge us to ask ourselves the "$64 question." What are those obscure deeds that God in Christ is calling us to perform on behalf of the oppressed and afflicted of our world, in this last quarter of the twentieth century? To raise this question is to put the burden of the messianic inquiry back upon us, as surely as Jesus put John the Baptist on the spot by his answer to him. That is to say, if I have read the Evangelist's mind correctly, when our neighbors ask us concerning Jesus "Is he the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" our style of life should enable Jesus to say to us, "Blessed are they who take no offense at you."

**The Vocation of the Messianic Community**—The Epistle lesson (James 5:7-10) raises the question of Christian conduct during the interim between God's first and second comings in Jesus Christ. Quite clearly, the early church's anticipation of the return of Christ to earth underlies the thought of this passage. Yet its counsel of patience, especially when combined with the prior threat of imminent punishment of the arrogant and callous rich (5:1-6), implies God's manifestation in grace and in judgment to the eyes of faith, even during the interim. For just as surely as the rich, in effect, have rejected Jesus' brand of messiahship, our Lord's faithful followers ("the brothers" of v. 7) patiently will reenact the "kind and compassionate" ministry that he set in motion in Nazareth of Galilee.
All three of the Epistle writer’s examples of patience—the farmer, the prophets, and Job—underscore the inseparable connection between means and end. For just as the prophets and Job prepared for their climactic encounter with the Lord by faithfully proclaiming God’s word and diligently doing God’s work, the farmer prepares for the harvest by translating its anticipation into deeds that will multiply its fruit.

If in the end the God who comes to earth will be none other than the God who came to earth in Jesus of Nazareth, how do we prepare for the Advent of that God? How else, all our Scripture lessons for today move us to ask rhetorically, but by doing the works of the One who became the servant of us all? Or, viewing the matter negatively, how else but by eschewing the works spurned by the One who became the servant of us all? (Matt. 4:1-11)

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Lections

Isaiah 7:10-17 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25

10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 11 “Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” 12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” 13 And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. 15 He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. 17 The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.” (Isaiah 7: 10-17 RSV)

Our three suggested lessons lend themselves equally well to the observance of today either as the last Sunday in Advent or as Christmas Sunday, if we take care to interpret them in light of
the entire books in which they occur. This proviso applies especially to Matthew 1:18-25. Unless interpreted in light of the Evangelist's other words about Jesus, this passage easily could become an excuse for another sentimental sermon about Baby Jesus and a further distortion of the Gospel. Not so, however, when considered against the background of the Gospel writer's entire work. From that perspective, it heralds the advent, as surely as does Isaiah 7:10-17 or Romans 1:1-7, of a Savior who is no stranger to pain. Read in this way, it joins the Isaiah and Romans lections (even though these two pericopes cannot agree as to whether the Savior's appearance will be as a pain-inflicter or as the pain-afflicted) in summoning us for our observance of Christmas, from the land of legend to that of flesh and blood for our observance of Christmas. In short, when properly read, it is a reminder that the focus of Christmas belongs not on the infant Jesus but on the adult Christ.

The setting and thrust of the Isaiah lesson (7:10-17) are given to us in the preceding nine verses. In fact, the two passages are best read as a situational and theological unit. They juxtapose word (7:1-9) and sign (7:10-17) in typical prophetic fashion: The futuristic sign—introduced here by the words, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign," a slight variation of the usual, "This shall be a sign unto you"—is offered as confirmation of the previously spoken word of the Lord.

Even though, as in this instance, the sign offered by the prophet would not materialize until after the event anticipated in his spoken word, its announcement is best construed as an emphatic warning to the one(s) to whom he addressed his word that it had better not go unheeded. Presumably, if the warning were heeded, the sign would not be enacted—having elicited the requested repentance, the sign could, therefore, be withdrawn. On the other hand, if the announcement should not move its addressee(s) to obedience, the sign's enactment would stand as a reminder to the prophet's audience that God's rule cannot be sidetracked. If the announcement of the Lord's sign should fail to elicit the obedience that would permit him to rule in grace, the enactment of that sign would announce the Lord's judgment on disobedience.

Isaiah's sign to Ahaz illustrates this salient fact: A prophet's
offer of a sign carries with it no option for its addressees concerning the fact of God’s reign. For better or worse—that is, in grace or in judgment—they are related inescapably to the reign of God. The option has to do with the way their response to the fact of divine rule affects the how of its manifestation. Just as, by obedience, the respondents can reduce the odds against their experience of God’s rule as judgment, by disobedience, they can lengthen the odds against their experience of God’s rule as grace.

The historical background of Isaiah 7:10-17 deals with a situation of royal and national jeopardy (cf. II Kings 16:5-20). The kings of Syria and Ephraim, who were spearheading a drive to enlist all neighboring states as members of an anti-Assyrian coalition, were marching toward Jerusalem, bent on replacing Ahaz with a puppet king who would put Judah’s military forces at their disposal. His life and his throne were in grave peril from those invaders, and the Davidic throne was in danger, as well. The throne of Judah retained the title of “throne of David” because of the expectation of messianic rule by a Davidic descendant, springing from the promise to David (II Sam. 7:8-16) of an eternal dynasty. Therefore, Ahaz began assessing his options. These included the possibility of an alliance with that day’s great superpower, Assyria, and this alternative quickly became the odds-on favorite to win the day and the heart of the king of Judah.

At this point Isaiah entered the picture to inveigh against such an alliance, but he resorted to oblique tactics. He did not highlight the possible dangers—military, political, and religious—from Assyria. Instead, he resorted to sarcasm and ridicule in order to downgrade the challenge posed by the Syro-Ephraimitic alliance. Dismissing those nations’ heads of state, Rezin and Pekah, as “two smoldering stumps of firebrands” (7:4) who were incapable of making good their threats, he declared, in effect, that the only thing Ahaz had to fear was fear itself. Yet “his heart shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind” (7:2). As a consequence, despite Isaiah’s solemn warning that reliance on Assyria rather than Yahweh would imperil his throne,7 Ahaz turned pleafully to Tiglath-pilesor of Assyria, offering him tribute and obeisance in exchange for protection (II Kings 16:7-9).
Though discouraged by this turn of events, Isaiah proceeded to press his case by inviting Ahaz to ask for a sign from the Lord that would confirm the prophetic word. When Ahaz spurned this request, the prophet declared that the lands of Syria and Ephraim would be deserted, before Immanuel, the name of the child about to be conceived by "a young woman," could distinguish edible from inedible food.9

Despite minor chronological difficulties, much can be said for viewing the wife of Ahaz as the enigmatic "young woman" and her royal son, Hezekiah, as Immanuel. Since it promised the continuation of the Ahaz dynasty after the demise of Syria and Ephraim, the Immanuel sign may be construed as a sign of blessing. But eventually, "The Lord will bring upon you and ... your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah" (7:17). In effect, then, the sign was nothing more or less than the promise of God's imminent self-manifestation in line with Isaiah's prophetic word. For just as Immanuel would attest to the prophet's correct assessment of the threat from the Syro-Ephraimitic alliance to Judah, he also would herald the fall of disaster upon Judah. In short, his appearance simultaneously would vindicate Isaiah as the faithful spokesman of the Lord's word and would set the stage for retribution on Ahaz for his defiance.

For homiletical purposes this passage may be analyzed on two planes—historical and theological. At the historical level, it easily can be reduced to a sham battle between the fear-ridden and compromising institutional leader, Ahaz, and the faith-intoxicated and uncompromising charismatic leader, Isaiah, with the latter emerging, to no one's surprise, as the winner. Unfortunately, life's choices rarely confront us with neat and clear-cut alternatives: fear or faith, God or government, alliance or no alliance, and so on. While the God of Christian faith may be quite as unambiguous as these polarities would seem to imply, nevertheless, we can never know God this explicitly.

It would be wise, therefore, to subordinate historical to theological considerations in our interpretation of the Immanuel sign. Construed theoretically, Immanuel ceases to be a sign of either deliverance or destruction. He becomes, instead, simply a sign of God's presence with us as God. By the same token,
because of the infinite distance between God and mortals, he also becomes a sign of the ambiguous character of all our knowledge of God. The offer of such a reminder on the A.D. side of the Incarnation may strike us as being strangely out of place. If we are inclined to think so, we would do well to recall the apostle Paul's confession of this limitation, both for us and for himself: "For now we see in a mirror dimly. . . . Now I know in part" (I Cor. 13:12).

The use of Isaiah's Immanuel sign as the point of departure for interpreting God's presence in our midst is not without a certain risk. However, considering the difficulty of turning it into a support for the sentimentalization of Christmas, it is a risk well worth taking.

The Gospel lesson (Matt. 1:18-25), after recalling the manner of "the birth of Jesus Christ," finds the Evangelist declaring,

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

and his name shall be called Emmanuel."

Many naturally assume, since the lines quoted by the Evangelist come from the Greek version of Isaiah 7:14, that Isaiah predicted the virgin birth of Immanuel and that Matthew's use of this verse was prompted by the desire to affirm the virgin birth of Jesus.

These assumptions fairly bristle with difficulties—textual, historical, and theological. They rest on the Septuagint rendering of 'almah as parthenos. Since the Hebrew word 'almah means a young woman of marriageable age, without reference either to her previous sexual activity or her marital status, would not the prophet, had he wanted to emphasize the virginity of Immanuel's mother, have applied to her the common Hebrew word bettâlah, which normally refers to women who quite clearly are virgins? In any event, even assuming that Isaiah thought Immanuel would be born of a virgin, since he offered his sign to Ahaz in confirmation of his prophetic word concerning the disaster in store for Syria and Ephraim, it is a safe assumption that he did not have in mind the mother of Jesus of Nazareth. What possible significance could the birth of a child in
4 B.C. have had for Ahaz or for Isaiah's audience in the eighth century B.C.?

In addition to the linguistic and historical problems associated with the traditional view, it presents a serious theological question concerning the meaning of fulfillment. Was the Evangelist's understanding of "fulfillment" confined to the use of the catchword parthenos? That is to say, did he call Jesus Immanuel because he was born of a virgin? Or did he identify Mary as a virgin because she was the mother of Immanuel? Of course it is possible that Matthew used this text within the original messianic framework of meaning. In that event, it would have been the Evangelist's purpose to assert that the mission of God, which Isaiah believed Israel would accomplish through God's anointed agent, Hezekiah of the Davidic dynasty, had at last been accepted and embodied in Jesus of Nazareth.

Several considerations argue for Matthew's use of the quotation from Isaiah in terms of this latter understanding of fulfillment. Most important is his translation of the theme of fulfillment into a theological dogma. On thirty-seven occasions he introduces a citation from the Old Testament with a "that it might be fulfilled" formula, but it is seldom employed only to draw attention to some detail in Jesus' life that corresponds to some Old Testament prediction. His purpose is far more sweeping. It is to assert that the saving deed of God, begun and carried forward in the history of Israel and told, retold, and foretold in the Old Testament, has been finally and fully enacted in Jesus Christ.

Hardly less significant is the fact that the Matthean pericope itself simply swarms with indicators of the Evangelist's assignment of top priority to theological, not historical, concerns. The name Jesus is given to the child, "for he will save his people from their sins" (in the Old Testament, God is normally the subject of salvation). The child Jesus is "conceived... of the Holy Spirit." Since, in the Old Testament, to ascribe an action to "the spirit of God" is to claim God as the subject of that action, Matthew's assertion regarding Jesus' conception can have but one purpose—to claim God as the subject of the life of Jesus from its very beginning. Joseph's decision concerning Mary is prompted by a communication from "an angel... in a
dream”—a typical agent and a typical medium of divine revelation in the Old Testament. This explains Joseph’s readiness to do God’s bidding, despite his uncertain status before the Jewish law. Note, finally, how the Evangelist introduces his narrative. It is to announce the birth not of Jesus but “of Jesus Christ.”

These details fully justify the commonly held opinion that this birth narrative, like the others, exudes the spirit of adoration. It should be read, therefore, not as a report for the vital statistics column of the Nazareth Weekly or the Bethlehem Chronicle, but as a hymn of praise to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Adam, and Calvary. For it is not a piece of speculation about Jesus’ life at the time of his birth, but an affirmation of faith as to the meaning of his life in light of his ministry and passion. If it may in any sense be called an exercise in speculation, it is speculation about Christmas, on the basis of Calvary.

So, for the Evangelist, the man from Nazareth (or Bethlehem) becomes Jesus Christ. And his portrait of him becomes “The Gospel of Jesus Christ.” So he addresses himself to us—as to all his readers—as an evangelist in the popular, as well as in the technical (“writer of a Gospel”) sense. Beginning with the conviction that in Jesus, God has proclaimed his “good news” concerning “the Christ” of Jewish expectation, he gathers, arranges, and focuses the inherited traditions in such a way as to turn his readers into disciples. In short, his motive for telling “the old, old story” is not either to set the record straight or to “get a load off his chest,” but to win us to the recognition and acceptance of the man from Nazareth as the Christ of God, in whom the Lord of creation is at work for the world’s reconciliation unto himself.

This linkage of Jesus to the Christ marks Christianity’s most vital, and probably its most original, contribution to humankind. Jesus fulfilled the messianic hope by standing the popular messianic expectation on its head. Rather than emerging as a swashbuckling military hero, marching at the head of a triumphant army en route to the establishment of a kingdom in which his followers would live in ease and comfort, Jesus joined the human race as a crossbearing servant of God’s mission to the world.
Nowhere does Jesus' transmutation of the messianic hope in the process of fulfillment become more apparent than in today's Epistle lesson (Rom. 1:1-7). Instead of offering Jesus' Davidic descent as justification for his designation as "Son of God," it is presented as evidence of his humanity ("descended from David according to the flesh"). Paul then completes the Christian revision of the messianic hope in startling fashion. The task of "apostleship," he declares, is "to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations" (1:6). It is not, as in the typical version of the messianic hope, to celebrate Christ's victory over the nations, but to facilitate Christ's victory "among . . . the nations."

Today's lessons successively proclaim the coming of God as Judge (Isa. 7:10-17), as crossbearing Savior (Matt. 1:1-7) and as apostle-sending Redeemer of the world (Rom. 1:1-7). They underscore the fact that the stories of Christmas and Calvary belong inseparably to the same Gospel. While they are no guarantee that the sentimentalism of the season will not, as usual, threaten the realism of the Gospel, they are our assurance that we need not succumb to this threat.

NOTES

1. Readings here are taken from those developed by the Section on Worship, United Methodist Board of Discipleship, and published in Seasons of the Gospel: Resources for the Christian Year (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).
6. See the interpretation of this passage by Father John McKenzie, "Temptation," Dictionary of the Bible, p. 89. He encapsulates my unitary view of the mission of God, of Christ, and of the church: "The episode describes the kind of Messiah Jesus was, and . . . [the] kind of society the Church . . . is: it lives by the word of God . . . does not challenge God's promises, and . . . adores and serves God alone and not the world. Jesus rejects in anticipation the temptations to which his Church will be submitted."
7. The apparent meaning of the prophet's Hebrew pun in 7:9 which, in JB, is translated: "But if you do not stand by me, you will not stand at all."
8. Cf. 8:3 where, in a domestic parallel to this sign, Syria and Ephraim are threatened with disaster before little Maher-shalal-hash-baz can cry "My father" or "My mother."

Scripture quotations noted RSV are from the Revised Standard Version Common Bible, copyrighted © 1973 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission.
How do pastors, counselors, campus ministers, and other professionals respond to the individuals and couples and families who come to them for help? This section of Quarterly Review is designed to stimulate reflection on the problems and crises that may grow out of the cultural and religious situations described in the exegesis. Where the preacher proclaims the Word pertinent to our historical situation, the pastor and counselor provide personal support in ways required by that Word. In this issue, the problems analyzed relate to the Christmas scene. In later issues, the phenomena may not be so peculiar to a time of year, but they will be relevant to the themes displayed in the homiletical section. Quarterly Review will also carry other essays from time to time that treat the task of the pastor and counselor, not necessarily related to the lectionary.

Christmas is a time when the ordinary and the extraordinary come together. Stars are ordinary enough, are visible every night when the weather is clear. But a star that moves, that is something else! A crowded inn is nothing new. Virtually everyone has had the experience of trying to find a motel or hotel late at night when everything is filled. But the hospitality of an inn-keeper that turns a manger into a royal court, that is pretty special. The arrival of a newborn baby into the world is commonplace, although ever new and wonderful. But the coming of a messiah as a little baby, recognized and acknowledged at birth, is a truly extraordinary event.

It is this mingling of the ordinary and the extraordinary that makes Christmas, and the Advent Season which precedes it, so unusual. There are other seasons of the Christian year that loom...
large in the Christian calendar, but there is no other season that touches the heartstrings so directly or elicits such a personal response. Christmas is a time when the opposites in life come together in an unexpected and unpredictable manner.

For one thing, Christmas is a time when both fear and hope are present. Note how often in the Advent Season the word is “Do not fear.” Whether it is the prophet declaring to those of a fearful heart: “Be strong, fear not!” (Isa. 35:4 RSV), or the angel saying to Joseph: “Do not fear to take Mary your wife” (Matt. 1:20), or an angel chorus declaring to shepherds keeping watch over their flocks: “Be not afraid” (Luke 1:10), the message is the same. “Don’t be afraid,” the message says, “because a great event is about to take place that will bring hope into your life.” The point is not that fear is present throughout the Christmas story, but rather, that although fear is present, hope is present, too.

The paralyzing power of fear is well known. Who has not experienced the sense of being immobilized in the presence of an overpowering fear? Usually the fear is related to a sense of personal powerlessness, as if resources for measuring up to the demands of the hour are lacking. To feel inadequate for coping with the problems of life is the commonest source of fear. To feel ineffective in coping with a crisis is almost guaranteed to lead to fear.

Some of the most helpful suggestions for coping with crisis come out of a study reported in a popular article in Redbook.¹ This article is based on research by Gerald Caplan and his associates, indicating that a small amount of supportive help at the moment of crisis is worth more than large amounts of therapeutic work later on. The study points to the need for a community of support to stand by in the time of trouble. This community does not need to consist of professionally trained helpers but simply calls for interested people who will be present in a caring way and who will encourage the talking through of feelings. The particular crisis focused on in this study was premature birth, but the principles that emerged apply to any crisis. Where caring persons were present to help the mother of a premature child talk out her anxiety, the crisis was worked through with generally satisfactory results. Where no
supportive community was present to assist in talking out personal fears, the crisis was not resolved and continued to affect the family long after the birth. And this was true whether the infant lived or died.

The need for a supportive community is especially present at Christmas. At no other time during the year is the absence of a caring community more obvious than at Christmas. At a time when gifts of love and remembrance are being exchanged and when greeting cards are being written and received, the presence or absence of a community of support is felt with special impact. Community mental health programs anticipate an influx of patients during the holiday season, for when joy and gladness are being accented on all sides, and especially in the media, the absence of joy and the lack of caring persons stands out with unavoidable clarity.

Psychiatrist E. Mansell Pattison, who heads a community mental health program, writes that health and illness can be measured in terms of the presence or absence of a supportive community. People who exhibit a really healthy outlook on life, who are happy and productive persons, ordinarily have a network of between twenty and thirty persons with whom they keep in close touch. Neurotic people who manage to live a reasonably normal life but who suffer a good deal under daily pressures ordinarily can cite ten to twelve persons as being in a reasonably close relationship to them. Mentally ill persons can come up with only four or five persons who are at all important to them and who keep in touch with them.

Since most of us are extra busy in the Christmas season shopping for gifts for those whom we love, and sending out cards to keep our friendships alive, it is especially easy to overlook those in our midst whose lives are empty and who have virtually no community support. The rejection some of us occasionally experience when there is “no room in the inn,” is for some a constant in their lives. Nothing stirs up personal anxiety more than the feeling that no one cares. Nothing deflates self-esteem and leads to personal fears more easily than a sense that no one is concerned.

But the Christmas story does not stop with fear. Whenever fear is mentioned, hope is mentioned, too, and the source of
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hope is given. When the prophet speaks the words “Fear not,” they are followed immediately by reference to God, “Behold, your God will come” (Isa. 35:4). The angel’s assurance to Joseph is followed by reference to the name Emmanuel interpreted in a parenthetical phrase as meaning “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). The angel chorus was quite clear in the message to the shepherds; “Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:4). Whatever the source of fear, God brings hope into the picture. When Paul writes to the Christians in Rome about finding hope through Scriptures, his next sentence affirms God as the source “of steadfastness and encouragement” (Rom. 15:5).

If the central story of Christmas is that God entered human life, becoming incarnate in a baby, then the challenge of Christmas is to make God’s spirit incarnate in our life. If the source of fear lies largely in a feeling of personal inadequacy, and if a sense of inadequacy is enhanced by feelings of being alone, then the real need at Christmas is for an obvious supportive community, a community that makes God’s love very apparent in demonstrations of concern by very real human beings. Hope comes to help offset fear when God’s presence is incarnated in ordinary relationships.

The hope that the Advent story points to over and over again is not, however, a Pollyanna type of optimism. It is a hope that is affirmed even in the presence of the worst kind of evil. In the Christmas story the contrast is sharp between the presence of darkness and of light, of evil as well as good. The figure of Herod casts a dark shadow over the entire Christmas story. It is the presence of evil in the Christmas story that makes it credible.

The Christian faith has never omitted the presence of evil. Some power like Herod is always present, seeming to thwart the good and to promote the evil. The Christian faith simply asserts that evil does not have the last word. Wise men do find another way to leave. Parents do find a way to slip away to safety in Egypt. Those dedicated to God’s purposes may falter and stumble, but they are not stopped.

One of the strongest trends in contemporary psychology is an emphasis on what persons can do to work out their own futures. This emphasis stands in sharp contradiction to older more pessimistic approaches in which the future was seen as largely
determined by past events. To be sure, the past does play a very significant role. Both Matthew (ch. 1) and Paul (Rom. 1:3) note the descent of Jesus from David, thus affirming the importance of roots, but the current trend sees the past as having historic significance but no necessarily determining influence. This emphasis leaves a much larger place for conscious choice and accents the power of persons to act in their own behalf. The new trend results from the convergence of a number of different approaches to personality. It has found popular expression in ego psychology, in the development of Transactional Analysis, commonly called T.A., as developed by Eric Berne and as popularized by Muriel James. It was a central part of Fritz Perls's gestalt therapy, and is a principle feature of Viktor Frankl's logotherapy. It is Frankl's approach that we will deal with in particular.

Victor Frankl knows the power of evil. As a Jew in Vienna when Hitler marched into Austria, Frankl experienced the Nazi horror at firsthand, being imprisoned in four different concentration camps over a period of two and a half years (it was my privilege to be with Dr. Frankl in 1961, when he returned to Auschwitz for the first time). One of Frankl's books takes as its theme a song that was written in Auschwitz: "Say 'Yes' to Life in Spite of Everything." That title describes Frankl's affirmation. What really counts is not the evil that one experiences but rather how one reacts to the evil. In every situation in life, no matter how impossible it may seem, there is always the option of deciding how to respond. Every person is free to make that decision, and this freedom is present even though many have been taught otherwise.

Frankl's optimism is based on his conviction that there is meaning at the heart of the universe. His phrase is "ultimate meaning." Our phrase is God. One can find meaning, even in the most impossible situations, because of God. In the presence of evil, hope is possible because of God.

The response of the wise men to Herod was consistent with ego psychology: they decided to depart by a different way. They acknowledged the presence of evil, recognized its awful power, but made their own decision about how to deal with it.

There is still another contrast in the Christmas story. It is the
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contrast between sickness and health, between brokenness and wholeness. In Isaiah's prophecy of Zion's happy future, and in Jesus' message to John the Baptist's disciples, the word is the same. "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, . . . and the deaf hear" (Matt. 11:5; cf. Isa. 35:5-6). It is not by accident that a message of health, healing, and wholeness accompanies the story of the birth of Jesus. It is the testimony of countless Christians that health of a new sort has come to them when they adopted the way of life of Jesus Christ. The words of the hymn "Amazing Grace" describe it very well: "I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see."

It is quite clear that Jesus considered healing to be a part of his ministry, and that his disciples were sent out to heal as well as to teach and preach. Among the healing miracles recorded in the New Testament, none is more dramatic than the recovery of sight. Yet this seemingly miraculous occurrence is well known in psychiatric circles, and, indeed, in some periods in history has been quite common. In the early days of this century when Sigmund Freud was practicing medicine in Vienna, functional blindness without an organic cause (termed "hysterical blindness") was well known. Such cases are rare today, but they still occur.

I recall hearing a case discussed at a clinical staff conference in a mental hospital where I served as chaplain. The patient was a young school girl who was blind, but there was nothing wrong with her eyes. The apparatus for seeing was there, but she wasn't using it. She had no sight, but there was no organic reason why she could not see. In psychotherapeutic exploration, however, the psychiatrist treating her discovered that some years earlier she had witnessed her mother having sexual intercourse with a man who was not her father. The experience was so traumatic that she literally could not stand to see it. Her resolution of the trauma was to blot out all vision, thus blotting out what was too difficult to accept. With the help of the psychiatrist, in the supportive climate of the mental hospital, she was helped to re-live the emotion of the traumatic scene and to integrate it into her life. When she was able to deal with her mother's unfaithfulness to her father, she suddenly regained the use of her eyes. Healings of this sort, called "miraculous" by
the lay person, are quite easily understood in the psychiatric field.

One of the fascinating developments in the contemporary world of medicine is a new appreciation of how body and mind go together. Among some segments of the medical world, especially where there is an openness to new ways of thinking about health, there is a renewed interest in the field of psychosomatic medicine. This is the branch of medicine particularly concerned with how body and mind interact, with how physical health is influenced by mental attitudes, and how emotional states may cause actual organic illness. Among the leaders in this current emphasis is Kenneth R. Pelletier, a psychologist who wrote *Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer.* Among the many studies he cites is one by Dr. Lawrence Le Shan that discusses cancer patients in the light of their total life history. In making an intensive study of seventy-one patients with cancer, Le Shan discovered that seventy of the patients had suffered a major loss, either of a person or of a role in life, six months to two years before the occurrence of the disease. His argument is that the sensitive balance of the chemistry of the body that ordinarily makes for health is easily upset by a traumatic experience of loss, and that the bodily processes that normally make the organism immune to disease, lose their effectiveness when an emotional state of unresolved grief exists.

Le Shan cites the case of Linda, a teen-ager who was talked out of going to college by her parents so that she could marry “well,” the groom being a wealthy man they approved of. Her marriage was not a happy one, and four children came along in rapid succession to imprison her in nursery and kitchen. In desperate unhappiness she sought to assert herself by having an affair, but her parents and husband persuaded her to give up the other man and be “enfolded once again within the claustrophobic arms of her ‘forgiving’ family.” Four months later she discovered a lump on her breast and eventually had a mastectomy followed by a hysterectomy since the cancer had spread. She was told that no further treatment was possible, that her cancer was terminal. At this point she sought out Le Shan.

Le Shan became her ally against her husband and her family. He encouraged her to begin to live her own life, to take a
part-time job, and to start the college course she had always
longed to do. She eventually became a full-time student,
completed college, divorced her husband, and took a job as a
librarian. Le Shan writes: "Having discovered who she really is,
she is able to communicate that self and her needs to others. . . .
Every summer she travels to Europe and she has never felt better
in her life." Originally diagnosed as having terminal cancer, she
now has no symptom of disease.

It is the complex interplay of body, mind, and spirit that
especially interests Pelletier. Just as Viktor Frankl puts primary
stress on helping the patient to discover the meaning in his life,
so Pelletier stresses the role that the patient plays in sharing
responsibility for the healing process. A major new dimension
in medicine grows out of the realization that patients can
exercise a heretofore unknown degree of control over the course
of their disease.

NOTES

3. Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, Born to Win: Transactional Analysis with
Gestalt Experiments (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1971).
4. Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (New York: Pocket Books, 1959). See also
Robert C. Leslie, Jesus and Logotherapy: The Ministry of Jesus Interpreted Through the
5. Kenneth R. Pelletier, Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer: A Holistic Approach to Preventive
7. Le Shan, p. 155
8. Le Shan, p. 156
We thought we knew him. We have heard about him, read about him, spoken and preached and written about him. But no biography has captured the man whole, even though the first-rate biography is now becoming a possibility. For we know more, much more, about John Wesley’s work, his style of life, his thought, than we did twenty years ago. And what is significant is not only the biographical possibilities, but also the remarkable growth in our knowledge of his theological importance for the church universal.

During the past twenty years there have been dozens of dissertations dedicated to Wesley’s thought, hundreds of books, monographs, and articles, and probably many thousands of paragraphs in sermons and addresses. Many have brought new insights, so that Wesley students today may be likened to biblical scholars upon the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls: with much enthusiastic research behind us, but with the exciting prospect of much new knowledge ahead as the technical experts patiently, tenderly, unfold the scrolls and interpret the scrawls for us. In bold outline things may seem to remain as they were in 1947 or in 1960—whether we study the Messianic hope or Wesley’s views of sanctification. Yet fragments of unfolding new knowledge are leading to minor modifications, and these in turn are becoming major shifts of emphasis.

One sight of the theological ferment of these last twenty years is the presence since 1966 of The Wesleyan Theological Journal, which has published more than a hundred studies of various
aspects of Wesley's theology, especially as that theology was focused on the work of the Holy Spirit in human life. The articles vary in quality—as do those of most journals—but most are well written and carefully documented; occasionally they are of major importance. The fact that membership in the publishing body, the Wesleyan Theological Society, is restricted by a conservative doctrinal test—one, however, to which Wesley himself would have had little difficulty subscribing—may sound unpromising to many, but the thousand members are drawn from many different denominations, including both non-Methodist and non-American.9

Perhaps an even more interesting phenomenon indicating the way in which Wesley's theology has spread its influence over the last twenty years, even in the Orient, is that the Wesley Theological Society has its largest overseas membership—several dozens—in Taiwan, Korea, and the Philippines, with one lone member in Papua. Most remarkable is the eager study of Wesley in Japan, where there is no Methodist Church, but a very active Japan Wesley Association. Carl Michalson claimed that of all the younger churches in Christendom, the Japanese was "the first to have developed a significant theology." Several of those whom he singled out for their special contributions were nurtured on John Wesley's insights, including the veteran president of the Japan Wesley Association, who was brought up in the Holiness movement, studied at a Presbyterian school, was graduated from a Congregationalist school in the U.S.A., and went from there to three German universities, but found his spiritual home in Methodism. During fifty years of teaching in theological schools and universities in Japan he emphasized as his constant motif: "Theology without experience is empty; experience without theology is blind"—Wesley in a nutshell!10

The development of Wesley's thought. It now seems somewhat strange that until recent years there had been little attempt to devote any close study to the fairly obvious fact that Wesley's thought continued to develop throughout his life. Most scholars seemed to assume that his mind budded, blossomed, and came to full fruit in a day, or at least in a year. Those who realized that he wrote no all-embracing systematic theology perhaps uncon-
sciously fulfilled their secret wish that he had served them better by treating his theology at least as monolithic, with such phrases as “Wesley believed,” “Wesley taught,” with no modifying phrase about when he believed this or taught that. The obvious assumption was that he believed and taught exactly the same about everything throughout his long life as a committed Christian—and that that life began on May 24, 1738. Umphrey Lee, in *John Wesley and Modern Religion* (chapter 5) warned us that Wesley’s post-Aldersgate experience was by no means without its spiritual crises, and in chapter 8 that his theology also changed as it matured, so that for Wesley, Christian perfection was not only a doctrine of development, but a doctrine subject to continuing development within his own mind.

During the last two decades, however, this assumption has been strongly attacked. In particular much more attention has been devoted to the “early Wesley,” usually defined as Wesley from his ordination in 1725 to his heartwarming in 1738. The exploration of Wesley’s youth and early manhood has been made possible by the opening up of the British Methodist Archives under the more liberal policy of Dr. Frank H. Cumbers (book steward, 1948–69) and his successors. The first publication to make extensive use of Wesley’s Oxford diaries and related documents was *The Young Mr. Wesley* (1961), by Dr. Vivian H. H. Green, himself also a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. This volume remains of great importance in understanding the religious and intellectual background of Wesley’s decade at Lincoln College, Oxford. Our knowledge of this period was deepened and to some extent revised, however, by the more detailed work of one of my own graduate students, and now my valued colleague in the Oxford Edition of Wesley’s Works, Prof. Richard P. Heitzenrater. His dissertation was entitled “John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1725–35” (Duke University, 1967). His groundbreaking researches were greatly aided by his discovery of a full key to some of the devotional notations in Wesley’s diaries in a parallel diary kept by his younger colleague, Benjamin Ingham. Heitzenrater’s work has at last given us the true interpretation of some of Wesley’s longhand abbreviations, and also of some of his code signs, at which Cumock and others had incorrectly guessed. Thus “rt” stood for
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“religious talk” and “gt” for “good (i.e., useful) talk.” For his own spiritual guidance Wesley had developed two distinct systems for denoting the degrees of his attention in prayer, one by points, another by strokes connected with the letter “p,” so that he was able to maintain an hourly chart of the readings on his spiritual thermometer, ranging from “fervent,” “attentive,” “indifferent,” “cold,” or even “dead in prayer.”

An influential study of Wesley’s theological development during the years leading to and including his “conversion” in 1738, by Martin Schmidt, first appeared in German in 1953, but did not make a major impact until its translation into English in 1962 as John Wesley: A Theological Biography. This not only traced carefully the literary sources of his developing thought, but used more fully than had been done hitherto the relevant German documents available both in Herrnhut, Halle, and elsewhere. Volume 2 (published in English in two parts in 1972 and 1973) is less important, mostly covering familiar territory, though it is interesting to read a German scholar’s summary of Wesley’s theological output: “One perceives a similarity to Martin Luther. . . . The outstanding characteristic of every writing is its conversational style. Wesley needed the other party—whether it was someone who wished for instruction, advice, and encouragement from him, or an opponent who provoked him by affronting Christian truth, or the Societies which called for guidance from him, support through him, or advocacy by him.”

More research on Wesley’s early manhood and ministry are just over the horizon. Wesley’s early letters (1721–39), including outstanding selections from both letters written to him and by him, have now been made available in volume 25 of the Oxford Edition of Wesley’s Works, a massive volume in which his mother’s great influence upon him may be traced, in exchanges which emphasize not only her pastoral sensitivity and shrewdness but her down-to-earth theological acumen. This undoubtedly gave substance to much of his later teaching, but also helped to form his whole approach to doctrinal questions. The early diaries (elucidated by Dr. Heitzenrater) will be made fully available in a few years, along with much fuller transcripts from the handful of his early manuscript journals, in volume 18.
of the Oxford Edition. The early manuscript sermons—more than had originally been thought, because some of them are available only in transcriptions made by Charles Wesley for his own use—have been edited by Prof. Albert C. Outler, and will appear in volume 4 of the Sermons, preceded by an appraisal of the whole corpus of sermons in volume 1, which should be published in 1982. Wesley’s early manuscript devotional manual should appear in volume 8, and other volumes of the new edition will be enriched by, and will themselves enrich, our knowledge of the hitherto almost unknown early Wesley. Then we shall be able to assess more clearly how the first decade and a half of his ministry furnished his retentive mind with a thousand quotations from the classics, the Fathers, the poets, laid the foundations of his theology, and served as a testing ground for his developing spirituality and pastoral practice.

One of the most interesting aspects of John Wesley’s thought, even after his life’s work within the Church and Methodism had received new direction and power as he was approaching thirty-five, was its continued fluidity. He was constantly gaining new impressions and insights and formulating new ideas and experiments, both from his varied experiences and his omnivorous reading. This continued unabated into old age—witness his letter encouraging William Wilberforce in his fight against slavery, citing (clearly as the immediate cause of the letter) the words of a black slave, Gustavus Vassa, to whose recently published biography Wesley had himself subscribed and which he had read that morning, a week before his death at the age of eighty-seven. Wesley suffered from physical impairments, and his memory was never too reliable; yet instances of his mental alertness abound.

With something of the original glow of his greatly enriched spiritual experience of 1738 clinging about him, in 1740 Wesley had published the first two extracts from his Journal, in which he claimed that until May 24, 1738, he had not been a Christian and had had no faith. Thirty years later he realized not only that he had greatly overstated his case, but that he ought to set the record straight, which he did in his early seventies. The gist of what he said in revision was that he had been correct in a measure only, not having been a Christian in the full sense of the
word, because he had only the faith of a servant, not that of a son. John Allan Knight wrote of "Aspects of Wesley's Theology after 1770"—when Wesley was sixty-seven—maintaining that the first subtle step in Methodist teaching from an emphasis on free grace to one on free will was made late in life by Wesley himself, rather than posthumously by his followers, and traced its causes in the growing affluence of Methodism, Wesley's growing fear of antinomianism in the Calvinist controversy over the 1770 Minutes, and the great influence over him of John Fletcher, his protagonist in that controversy. A decade earlier the debate over Christian perfection with his brother, and the need to safeguard Methodism against "enthusiasm"—the other wing of the danger of emphasizing faith to the exclusion of works—had caused Wesley to modify his views on that doctrine.

In his new edition of Wesley's Sermons, Albert Outler shows that volume 4 of Wesley's Sermons on Several Occasions (1760) in a sense marked the high point of the "mature" Wesley, and that from that time onward a number of changes took place in his thought, so that volumes 5-8 (collected 1787-88), and most of them written in Wesley's eighties) contain many new emphases. Summing this up he states in his Introduction:

[His last twenty years] was a time of still further theological maturation, especially in the development of his views of Christian praxis. It is as if, after laying the firm foundations of his soteriology, Wesley had set himself to work out its practical consequences—without weakening any of those foundations. . . . [These later volumes] reveal new, and some fresh, facets of Wesley's mind and heart, and lend further complications to any explanation of his role as folk-theologian. . . . There are sermons here to fortify and edify believers in the face of new challenges to historic Christian doctrine from Enlightenment scepticism and secularism. There is ammunition here for the Methodists in their protracted debates with the Calvinists on one flank, and Anglican traditionalists on the other.*

Theological themes in recent Wesley study. Although the early and late emphases of Wesley are important, they are differences in emphasis rather than in basic content, and it remains useful to deal with the themes which Wesley expounded during his mature middle years, or upon which there seem to have been
few changes of emphasis. Most serious students today, however, know better than to treat them without being alert for some development in his thought. Books, monographs, and dissertations have continued to illuminate varied themes during the last two decades. One of the most valuable monographs was by a distinguished Roman Catholic scholar, Father Jean Orcibal of the Sorbonne, Paris, translated for *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 1 (ed. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp, 1965, pp. 83-111) as *The Theological Originality of John Wesley and Continental Spirituality*. Father Orcibal outlines Wesley’s debt to the Roman Catholic mystics throughout his life, especially in his early years, not only in his personal devotions and spiritual quest, but in his pastoral and publishing activities. The impact of this study and others (such as John M. Todd’s *John Wesley and the Catholic Church*, 1958; and Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *John Wesley: His Life and Theology*, 1978) have filled out our knowledge of Wesley as a Christian who drew upon the spiritual resources of the Roman Catholic Church to a remarkable degree, even while he kept up his attacks upon what he considered the flaws in its institutional character. Roman Catholic contributions to the study of Wesley’s theology continue, and the publication in 1968 of Wesley’s *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, edited by Michael Hurley, S.J., was hailed as “an important ecumenical event.” Noteworthy also for what he had to say as well as for the company in which he said it was Father Hurley’s paper on “Salvation Today and Wesley Today” in a Wesley symposium at Drew in 1974.9

In the same *History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (pp. 147-79), Rupert Davies issued the caveat that in accepting the fact that Wesley was no systematic theologian of the order of Aquinas and Calvin, who alike endeavored to systematize the whole realm of Christian doctrine, he was in fact a redoubtable systematic theologian in that area which he made peculiarly his own, the processes of human salvation. Even though this theology was undertaken in order to introduce Christians to a living experience of God, and found confirmation in that experience, it was neither subjective nor speculative in character, but avowedly and fundamentally biblical. This forms the whole background of what Methodists are taught to think of
as "our doctrines": the loss of the image of God through original sin, baptismal regeneration, the new birth, justification by grace through faith, the Christian assurance of salvation through the witness of the Holy Spirit, and the pursuit and realization of Christian perfection as the final stage of the way of salvation. Not that "our doctrines" belonged only to the people called Methodists, of course, but their founder made them his peculiar study, not simply as a matter of interesting theological speculation, but of the life or death of the soul. Through all stages of his life he worked and reworked these themes, testing them by the light of reason and experience and new interpretations of the Bible itself.

Much pioneer work had been done on major aspects of Wesley's soteriological system during the previous quarter of a century, including volumes by W. B. Cannon and Franz Hildebrandt on justification; A. S. Yates on Christian assurance; and Newton Flew, W. E. Sangster, and Harald Lindström on sanctification. During the last two decades more creative research has focused on other neglected themes related to this same general evangelical concern.

The period began with a study of Wesley's soteriological summa (and a little more) by Colin W. Williams, entitled John Wesley's Theology Today (1960). This dealt succinctly and boldly with this pragmatic core against the backdrop of the ecumenical movement. In the same year came a more detailed volume, Wesley's Christology, by John Deschner, on a neglected aspect of Wesley's thought. In a thoroughgoing attempt to recapture the presuppositions on Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King which inspired and infused Wesley's preaching on salvation, Deschner made much fuller and more fruitful use of his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament than has been customary among students of his thought.

Lycurgus M. Starkey offered a useful contribution toward filling a major gap in The Work of the Holy Spirit: a Study in Wesleyan Theology (1962), but much remains to be done in this important area. A. Skevington Wood dealt much more with the methods than the theology of evangelism in The Burning Heart: John Wesley, Evangelist (1967), just as W. Lamplough Doughty had scarcely mentioned theology in John Wesley,
Preacher (1955). A valuable specialized study which carefully showed the development from Wesley's early to his later views was done by Charles A. Rogers—"The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley" (Duke, 1967)—now planned for publication after both pruning and broadening in scope. Another valuable study of a somewhat larger area was by John C. English, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Initiation" (Vanderbilt, 1965), of which a precis was published in The Wesleyan Quarterly Review for May-August, 1967. This also dealt with three periods of thought, those of "the young Mr. Wesley," of Wesley under the influence of the Moravians, and of the mature Wesley.

The whole field of church, ministry, and sacraments has been explored as fully during this period as the major evangelical themes were during the preceding decades. One of the lasting results of the Oxford Theological Institute, organized periodically at Lincoln College, Oxford, under the auspices of the World Methodist Council, was the publication under the editorship of Dow Kirkpatrick of a distinguished book of essays under the title The Doctrine of the Church (1964). The list of contributors (listed in order of their appearance) is as remarkable for its high quality as for its variety of attainment: Albert C. Outler, C. H. Dodd, C. K. Barrett, E. Gordon Rupp, Robert E. Cushman, Herbert J. Cook, Philip S. Watson, A. Raymond George, Gerald O. McCulloh, Frederic Greeves, and F. Thomas Trotter. In the same year Rex Kissack issued a penetrating study entitled Church or No Church? The development of the concept of Church in British Methodism. In 1968 Frederick Hunter published John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church, showing Wesley's ecclesiastical debt to many sources, especially the Non-jurors, but also to the Independents and Presbyterians, and his constant stress on the need for unity among all Christians. In much greater detail in 1970, I attempted an "ecclesiastical biography," tracing both the theological changes in Wesley's churchmanship and the successive steps which led him to an unavowed but apparently inevitable breach with the Church of England. In this a chapter was devoted to Wesley's views on the ministry, on which a major work was written by A. B. Lawson in 1962—John Wesley and the Christian Ministry: the sources and development of his opinions
and practice. On the sacraments the slight work of John R. Parris, *John Wesley’s Doctrine of the Sacraments* (1963), was far outclassed by Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study* (1972). *Baptism in Early Methodism* (1970), by Bernard G. Holland, contains the fullest survey of Wesley's thought and practice in this field of inquiry, where Wesley's own strong views have failed to be transmitted to his followers. A thoughtful contribution to the ecumenical debate is Franz Hildebrandt, *I Offered Christ* (1964), subtitled "A Protestant Study of the Mass," in which he shows how close to the Roman Catholics were both of the Wesley brothers in their conception of the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice—and the promises and challenges that this fact holds.

Other aspects of Wesley's thought, less directly related to the way of salvation, have been engaging more attention, including the avowed source of that teaching, the Bible. In 1974 Thorvald Källstad published a doctoral dissertation for the University of Uppsala entitled *John Wesley and the Bible*. The subtitle, however, "A Psychological Study," shows that this is not quite what at first it seems. Dr. Källstad proposed to study Wesley's thought and personality in the framework of the psychology of religion, and especially of the psychological "role theory" worked out by Hjalmar Sundén, claiming that Wesley was unconsciously acting out a variety of biblical roles in his relationship with God, so that the chief frame of reference governing his life was the Bible. More conventional, but perhaps more illuminating in some ways, is a dissertation by Robert Michael Casto (Duke, 1977), entitled, "Exegetical Method in John Wesley’s Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament: A description of his approach, use of sources, and practice."

Over thirty dissertations on Wesley's thought have been completed since 1960, and the titles of a few others emphasize the diversity of themes:

"A Study in Theology and Social Ethics" (A. Lamar Cooper, Columbia, 1962).
"The Problem of Church and State in the Thought of John Wesley, as reflecting his Understanding of Providence and his View of History" (G. B. Hosman, Drew, 1970).

One of the most important published works, which at first may seem peripheral, is The Methodist Revolution (1973) by Bernard Semmel. E. P. Thompson, reacting against the blind denominational triumphalism of some of Wesley's biographers, had crystallized the view that Wesley's preachers and societies had headed a reactionary social movement because their theology was muddled and repressive, a faint shadow of the sturdy democracy of the old Dissenters. Against this Semmel argues, with theological as well as sociological acumen, that Methodist teaching was "much more decidedly liberal and progressive than that of Calvinism. . . . The Revival was, indeed, a revolution—undeniable on a spiritual and in all likelihood on a social level as well—and was so understood by both Methodists and their opponents" (p. 5). He seeks to demonstrate that Wesley's tedious doctrinal controversies with the antinomians constituted in fact the formation of the charter of the Methodist revolution, a synthesis of liberalism, order, and mission.

Seeing Wesley whole. A Colossus towering over all others throughout this period, however, has been Albert C. Outler, of Perkins School of Theology. His volume John Wesley, in the Library of Protestant Thought (1964), furnished the best theological anthology of Wesley, and gave us the term which most aptly describes him—"a folk-theologian: an eclectic who had mastered the secret of plastic synthesis, simple profundity, the common touch" (p. 6). The masterly introduction to this
volume is a *summa* of Wesley's theology which Outler has repeated frequently in varying terms and from different perspectives throughout the intervening years, with the enrichment of continuing research into Wesley's sources. He has proved far and away the most captivating and compelling protagonist of Wesley's unique importance as a theologian and exponent of the components of that importance. Nor has this been confined to academic and Methodist circles, whether national or international, but Albert Outler has been respected as the Methodist theologian par excellence both in Vatican II and the World Council of Churches. At the "Consultation" of Wesley scholars at Drew in 1974, he delivered the most impressive address, on the theme of that gathering, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition." On this occasion he expounded a low-key definition of Wesley's status as "the most important Anglican theologian of the eighteenth century because of his distinctive composite answer to the age-old question as to 'the nature of the Christian life,'" and concluded: "The old disjunction between 'evangelical' and 'catholic' is no longer a fruitful polarity, and the only conceivable Christian future is for a church truly catholic, truly evangelical, and truly reformed. John Wesley—an evangelist with a catholic spirit, a reformer with a heroic vision of the Christian life created by faith matured in love, a theologian who lived in and thought out of the Scripture and Christian tradition, and who brought all his judgements to the bar of experience and reason—this Wesley offers a treasure to the church of tomorrow that will leave it the poorer if ignored."

Over the past decade and more, Outler's main task has been the exposition of the main depository of Wesley's theological thought, his *Sermons*, which should begin publication in 1982, and will comprise the first four of the thirty-four volumes in the Oxford Edition of Wesley's Works, of which he was one of the chief architects.

The main impetus behind this whole formidable editorial undertaking was frankly theological, even though most of the volumes do not appear to be theological literature. The Oxford Edition will without question furnish the major instrument for the understanding of Wesley's many-sided approach to his
constant theme of man's recovery of the image of God in the
arena of this world. So far there are available volume 11,
Wesley's Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion, one of a group of
more obviously doctrinal writings, edited by the late Gerald R.
Cragg, and volume 25, the first of seven volumes of his Letters to
be edited by me—in this case those of 1721–39, demonstrating
(among many other things) much of his early theological quest,
and especially the remarkable influence of his mother, herself a
"folk-theologian" before her son. In the press are volume 26, the
letters for 1740–55, including Wesley's complete correspond­
dence with "John Smith," and volume 7, A Collection of Hymns
(1780), edited by Franz Hildebrandt (another of the founders of
the project), Oliver Beckerlegge, and James Dale.

Of the thirty-four volumes, three will contain little direct
doctrinal commentary or elucidation, the Bibliography (vols.
32–33) and the General Index (vol. 34)—although their indirect
importance in the undertaking is obvious. Every other volume,
however, will offer some unique contribution to our knowledge
of Wesley's thought. It is important to recognize that because
Wesley did not set out to compile a complete theological system
he wrote few avowedly theological treatises. Theology became
for him the handmaid of evangelism and Christian nurture. If
you seek his theological monument, therefore, you must—like
those who seek Christopher Wren's monument in St. Paul's—
"look around you." All his writings constitute his theological
monument: the sermons, the translation of and explanatory
notes upon the New Testament, the hymnbook, the apologiae
for Methodism, the Minutes of his conferences (especially the
early ones), his controversial pamphlets, his pastoral writings,
even his varied attempts to improve the health and mental
equipment of his followers—every volume reveals some explicit
doctrinal statement, as well as much that is implicit. His Sermons
for Several Occasions tailored doctrinal truth to human occasions.
Similarly in his Journal, in his personal letters, in brief articles for
his Arminian Magazine, we light upon some of his more cogent
doctrinal teaching. He was an occasional theologian—implying
by that, of course, not a dilettante, but one who instinctively
brought his profound thinking about God to bear on every
human experience of every day; he was, in fact, a perpetual
theologian. The process of theological writing for Wesley, indeed, was never a matter of reflecting in a kind of intellectual vacuum, but of reacting to human events, human criticisms, human needs, human opportunities. It is all the more important to trace and analyze those occasions, to discover more about the sources which prompted the embryonic ideas which he developed and filled out, and which were eventually woven into the tapestry depicting in ever richer hues Wesley's view of the life of God in the soul of man.

This is the kind of Wesley that the editors of this project see, and to whose fleshing out they dedicate their arduous labours in securing a definitive text and explication of his writings. The results of this study of thousands of manuscripts, this collation of thousands of editions of five hundred Wesley publications large and small, will be many corrections, many conjectural emendations, making some sense out of what has hitherto remained nonsense, or (more frequently) better sense out of what was poor sense—for Wesley was too busied about his primary task to give adequate care to his publications, and was frequently served poorly by his copy editors, his printers, and his proofreaders. The total volume of major change, however, will be comparatively small. The really important thing will be that at last we shall be assured that we have (as near as is humanly possible) the exact words of Wesley's considered judgments in front of us, allied with his revisions and other variants, and these supported and illuminated by scholarly introductions and footnotes. Thus we shall be able to consider his ideas and practices untrammeled by doubts about authenticity, and shall therefore be able to assign to him more readily his true place in the varied spheres of thought and action which consumed his time and energy through sixty-five years dedicated to improving the human condition. By the end of this century we may indeed have unfolded most of the new knowledge about John Wesley, and be nearing the time when it will be possible to see him whole.

NOTES

1. It is, of course, too early for anything like a complete bibliography of these writings. For the previous years the most complete listing is the dissertation by Sandra

2. For details on membership, or to purchase back or current issues, write to Wayne E. Caldwell, Th.D., Secretary-Treasurer, 215 E. 43rd Street, Marion, IN 46952.


6. Unfortunately these corrections were largely lost, because Wesley first issued them in errata sheets too often missing from the bound volumes of his Works, and then in a revised edition of his Journals, overlooked by Jackson and discarded by Curnock. See Frank Baker, "'Aldersgate' and Wesley's Editors," London Quarterly Review, vol. 191 (Oct., 1966), pp. 310-19.


10. In 1974 N. L. Kellet prepared a dissertation at Brandeis on "John Wesley and the Restoration of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the Church of England in the 18th Century." For a glimpse of the textual problems, the methods used, and the resulting edited text, see Rowe, The Place of Wesley, pp. 117-33.
A LUTHERAN–UNITED METHODIST STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

INTRODUCTION

As participants in the Lutheran–United Methodist bilateral consultation, which has met six times since 1977 and has now concluded its work, we report with gratitude to our churches the pastoral, liturgical, and evangelical concord and concern that we have discovered in our discussions.

It is fundamental to this report to note that our Lutheran and United Methodist churches acknowledge Scripture as the source and the norm of Christian faith and life, and share with the whole catholic church in that Christology and that trinitarian faith which was set forth in the ecumenical Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. We also share the biblical Reformation doctrine of justification by grace through faith. We are agreed that we are justified by the grace of God for Christ's sake through faith alone and not by works demanded of us by God's law. We also recognize the common emphasis on sanctification as a divinely
promised consequence of justification. We affirm that God acts to use the sacraments as means of grace. As heirs of the Reformation, we share a heritage of scriptural preaching and biblical scholarship. We also share a hymnic tradition, care for theological education, and concern for evangelical outreach.

We have continually recognized the validity of the acts of baptism administered in accord with Scripture in our churches. While this recognition testifies to our considerable agreement in doctrine and practice, it rests finally upon the shared acknowledgment of baptism as an effective sign of God’s grace. First and foremost, baptism is God’s gift, act, and promise of faithfulness. The entire life of faith and even our attempts to articulate a common understanding of God’s prior act of grace are but a response of praise and thanksgiving.

The acknowledgment of God’s gift as validly bestowed in the acts of baptism administered in United Methodist and Lutheran churches entails the recognition of the shared benefit of the work of the Holy Spirit among us. Thus we are called to confess the scandal of whatever disunity or party spirit may still exist among us and between us, lest we be found to despise God’s gift. Our unity in Christ and in one Spirit is the unity of those who have been washed and forgiven, incorporated into Christ’s death and resurrection, and called together for witness and service in his world until he comes again. This unity made manifest in baptism is an inauguration and foretaste of the rule of God in all of life.

Thus we are offering to our churches the following affirmations, implications, and recommendations as tangible expressions of our hope that our churches and congregations will seek further means for achieving a fuller manifestation of our God-given unity in Christ, of our sharing in one Spirit and one baptism.

AFFIRMATIONS

1. We accept as valid all acts of baptism in the name of the Trinity using water according to Christ’s command and promise (Matt. 28:18-20).

2. We affirm that baptism is the sacrament of entrance into the
LUTHERAN-UMC STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

holy catholic church, not simply a rite of entrance into a particular denomination. Baptism is therefore a sacrament which proclaims the profound unity of the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-28). Baptism is a gift of God for the upbuilding of the Christian community.

3. We affirm that grateful obedience to the divine invitation obliges all believers to be baptized and to share the responsibility for baptizing.

4. We affirm that baptism is intended for all persons, including infants. No person should be excluded from baptism for reasons of age or mental capacity.

5. We affirm with Scripture that God gives the Holy Spirit in baptism:

   - to unite us with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:12);
   - to effect new birth, new creation, newness of life (John 3:5; Titus 3:5);
   - to offer, give and assure us of the forgiveness of sins in both cleansing and life-giving aspects (Acts 2:38);
   - to enable our continual repentance and daily reception of forgiveness and our growing in grace;
   - to create unity and equality in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-28);
   - to make us participants in the new age initiated by the saving act of God in Jesus Christ (John 3:5);
   - to place us into the Body of Christ where the benefits of the Holy Spirit are shared within a visible community of faith (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:13).

6. We affirm that in claiming us in baptism, God enables Christians to rely upon this gift, promise, and assurance throughout all of life. Such faithful reliance is necessary and sufficient for the reception of the benefits of baptism.

7. We affirm that baptism is both the prior gift of God's grace and the believer's commitment of faith. Baptism looks toward a growth into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). By this growth, baptized
believers should manifest to the world the new race of a redeemed humanity, which puts an end to all human estrangement based upon distinctions such as race, sex, age, class, nationality, and disabling conditions. In faith and obedience, the baptized live for the sake of Christ, of his church, and of the world which he loves. Baptism is a way in which the church witnesses to the faith and proclaims to the world the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

**IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Baptism is related to a Christian community and (except in unusual circumstances) should be administered by an ordained minister in the service of public worship of the congregation.**

   We agree that baptism should not be a private act. In communities where United Methodist and Lutheran congregations exist, they can support one another as they resist pressure for private family baptisms. Normally, for reasons of good order, the ordained officiate at baptisms, but any person may administer the sacrament in unusual circumstances.

2. **Lutherans and United Methodists agree that prebaptismal instruction of candidates and their parents (or surrogate parents) is of crucial importance.**

   Therefore, we encourage ministers and congregations to take this instruction seriously and to support one another as they resist pressure to minimize such instruction.

3. **The Christian community has the responsibility to receive and nurture the baptized. When infants or children are baptized we regard it as essential that at least one parent, surrogate parent, or other responsible adult make an act of Christian commitment to nurture them in the Christian faith and life.**

   There may be circumstances in which the refusal of baptism is appropriate because this condition has not been met. Both United Methodist and Lutheran pastors can support one another by respecting and interpreting the action of one of them who has refused to administer baptism.
LUTHERAN-UMC STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

Sponsors (or godparents) may support the parent, surrogate parent, or other responsible adult in this act of commitment but are not substitutes for such a committed individual.

4. When a Christian family is partly Lutheran and partly United Methodist, the nurture of the baptized child is of primary concern. Here an opportunity also exists to display Christian unity in the midst of diversity.

It is important for one congregation to assume primary responsibility to nurture the child in the Christian life.

Where one parent is more active than the other, it is recommended that the sponsoring congregation be the congregation of the more active parent.

It is recommended that the prebaptismal instruction be given by the pastor of the sponsoring congregation; or joint instruction under both pastors can take place, as this will enrich both traditions.

5. We believe baptism is not repeatable.

Because we understand baptism as entrance into the church, we do not condone rebaptism of persons on any grounds, including those related to new Christian experience or change of denominational membership.

Since United Methodists and Lutherans recognize one another's baptism, we violate the integrity of our faith, pervert the meaning of baptism, and impair our relation with other baptized Christians if we rebaptize.

6. When instructed persons have made their profession of faith for themselves in baptism, their Christian initiation requires no separate rite of confirmation.

Baptism is sacramentally complete even though the baptized Christian looks forward to a lifetime of Christian instruction and growth through regular reaffirmations or renewals of the baptismal covenant.

7. We respect each other's practice of confirmation.

We rejoice that both communions have an appreciation for
the lifelong need for a pastoral and educational ministry. The baptized should be given frequent opportunity to reflect upon the meaning of their covenant through confirmation, sermons, curricula, and other such means.

While orientation to the history, liturgy, and practice of the denomination and of a particular congregation is appropriate for persons who transfer from one of our denominations to the other, a further confirmation rite should not be required.

8. Baptism witnesses to Christian unity, and therefore it enables transfer between our denominations.

Because we believe that baptism is the fundamental initiation into the church, we affirm our oneness in Jesus Christ as taking precedence over our denominational divisions.

When persons transfer their membership between our denominations, they should not feel that they have thereby broken their earlier baptismal and confirmation promises. Pastors should provide opportunity for those transferring to make public reaffirmation of their baptism with the new congregation and denomination in an appropriate manner.

Each denomination affirms the pastoral and nurturing ministry of the other denomination and gladly commits members to the care of the other denomination when its own denomination does not provide an adequate congregational family for those members.

Because we are baptized not into a denomination or into a particular congregation only but into the one church of Jesus Christ, therefore in communities where both Lutheran and United Methodist congregations exist, efforts may be made to share mutually in baptismal celebrations, thereby showing forth our essential unity.

9. United Methodist and Lutheran theology and practice allow baptism to be administered in various modes, including immersion, pouring, and sprinkling.

We agree that whatever mode is used, baptism is an act in
which the use of water is an outward and visible sign of the grace of God. The water of baptism, therefore, should be administered generously so that its sign value will be most effectively perceived by the congregation.

10. The celebration of baptism should reflect the unity of the church which baptism proclaims.

Because in baptism the contemporary church is united to the historic church, baptismal rites should draw upon the ancient traditions of the church and also should serve to illustrate the catholicity of the church in our time. We recommend that in addition to the normative trinitarian baptismal formula in accordance with Matthew 28:19, the celebration of baptism include the renunciation, the Apostles' Creed, and the prayer of thanksgiving over the water.

We urge the common development of liturgical formulations for the rite of baptism by the liturgical agencies of our respective churches.

CONCLUSION

This document represents the consensus of the undersigned members of the dialogue team after three years of intense discussion and prayerful deliberation. We commend it to our churches for their study and action. We hope it will serve as an impetus and resource for dialogue among Lutheran and United Methodists in local communities and throughout our churches.

Washington, D. C.
December 11, 1979

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Lutheran Designations:

AELC—Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches
ALC—The American Lutheran Church
LCA—Lutheran Church in America
LCMS—The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

NOTES

1. The statement is reprinted here with permission, copyright Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. and the Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns of The United Methodist Church.
2. See the statement of the World Council of Churches, One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry.
WHAT WOULD LUTHERANS AND UNITED METHODISTS TALK ABOUT IF THEY WERE TO TALK?

ARTHUR J. LANDWEHR

The ecumenical impulse created not only Vatican II and the Consultation on Church Union but also a bevy of bilateral conversations. Over the past fifteen years the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. and the United Methodists have had such conversations. Both have had bilaterals with the Roman Catholic Church. The Lutheran Council has had conversations with the Anglicans, the Orthodox, and the Reformed churches. Not until the spring of 1977 did The United Methodist Church and the Lutheran Council meet to talk.

The Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. is composed of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), The American Lutheran Church (ALC), The Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the most recent addition, The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). United Methodists and Lutherans met to discuss baptism and to explore mutual agreements and points of difference, both as they related to orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

Baptism was chosen because it is basic for entrance into the church and because it is being widely discussed within both denominations. Both use water in administering baptism for sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. The traditional formula, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” is common to both rites. But where would they go with that?

Methodologies used in the analysis of any puzzle are important. The methodology determines the character of the results one achieves. Traditional ecumenical methodologies used in dialogue have usually begun with Scripture, or creeds, or expositions of particular historic episodes. It would have been tempting in this instance to have begun with a historical and

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theological analysis of Luther’s and Wesley’s understanding of
baptism. Then comparisons could be made, which would either
close or widen the two centuries between them. From there the
journey into the contemporary period could begin. This long,
laborious historical-theological trek is filled with risks that
challenge the wisdom of the enterprise itself. The likelihood of
repeating history and failing to uncover new possibilities is
high. While deepened understanding of another’s position from
a historical perspective is a decided plus, such understanding is
not likely to demand moving toward new positions.

In this dialogue the methodology began with orthopraxis.
Each church body presented a survey of practice within its
church. What do you do? became the question to give insight
into What do you believe?

This approach proved beneficial very early. Unspoken
presuppositions each had of the other were quickly exposed.
“Methodists are nice people but really have no theology,” so
go one stereotype. “Lutherans are nice people but are
theological fossils,” went another. To speak of praxis early
allowed for these unspoken presuppositions to surface and
encouraged a dynamic candor. Candor of the highest quality
was one of the major strengths of our discussions from the
beginning to the end.

“What do you do?” Liturgical practice, ecclesiastical polity,
the meaning of church membership, the use of creeds, pastoral
practice, and other matters were shared in a systematic way.
From this experience certain insights emerged. United Methodists
know theology! Lutherans were not fossils! This brief
introduction to each other demonstrated that in practice the
commonalities between the churches were greater than any had
hoped for. Both churches baptized, preached the Word,
administered the sacraments, and ordered their life for
evangelism and mission. Furthermore their praxis was theolo
gically based.

United Methodists confessed to some practices that were not
normative for them. Baptizing a second time, “dry cleaning”
baptism (faking it where there is no water in the font!), and other
deviations from orthopraxis were noted. Lutherans also
admitted to some “innovations.” In one congregation the
The ritual of baptism practiced by United Methodists derives from an understanding of baptism as a rite of initiation. A child, youth, or adult is baptized into the church of Christ, not into the denomination. Baptism takes us into Christ's holy church, and confirmation marks reception into a particular denomination of Christ's holy church.

Lutherans hold a similar view but place baptism in the context of the Word: "Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in water." It represents the ongoing life of the Christian. Thus it becomes the basis for ethical action in the world. Christian baptism is lived out in the world.

What is significant is evolution away from an emphasis placed by both denominations in earlier years upon the fallen nature of humanity for which baptism was the cure. Both churches are moving toward an understanding of the benefits of baptism in one's life as it is lived in the world. For United Methodists this has meant an evolution of emphasis away from their nineteenth-century concept of conversion as the main event in the spiritual journey, to baptism as a sacramental sign celebrating the covenant already offered the baby or affirmed by the youth or adult.

Baptism then distinguishes the Christian by initiating the baptized into faithful obedience to Christ. As Klaus Penzel stated, "Holiness is not separation from life; divine service cannot be divorced from human service, nor the altar from the supermarket."

Only after much discussion about orthopraxis were Luther and Wesley mentioned. Comparing these two theologians, who had two different agendas in two different cultures and in two different periods of history, is almost ludicrous. Luther develops his argumentation against the backdrop of the Roman Catholic Church and Scholastic theology. Wesley does his
theology out of an Anglican framework in the context of Deism. Albert Outler's observation that Luther is a disjunctive theologian and Wesley a conjunctive theologian states the distinction succinctly.

Penzel assisted the dialogue by offering a way to transcend these two classical positions. Again, methodology is pivotal. Historical reductionism, which would assert that Methodism and Lutheranism are what they were originally, leads to the dead-end of making historical relics normative for the present. On the other hand, historical relativism, which would define them in a context that they are everything they ever have been, denies them their basic foundations in revelation.

Penzel's first step to transcending these two positions was to take on the challenge of making the "experienced order" of separation between present ecclesiastical bodies conform to the "conceptual order" of the biblical faith in one Lord, one baptism, one church. The divine gift of unity is already given in Christ. It is now a matter of appropriating that unity not only for the sake of the church, but also for the purposes of the gospel which is given for the sake of the world.

The United Methodist/Lutheran dialogue from the standpoint of orthopraxis and orthodoxy had difficulty with a common sphere of discourse. The problem in part centers in the difference between Lutheran confessionalism and United Methodist denominationalism. This explains why Lutherans have an easier time relating to Roman Catholics and Reformed while United Methodists relate to other denominations more easily.

Lutheranism is born with a passion for doctrinal truth, while United Methodism embodies a compassion for persons and the truth of love. Lutheran doctrinal emphasis leads "confessioinalists" to assert that the chief differences in churches is doctrinal. The denominations tend to think differences between the churches are institutional and practical. United Methodists, however, have a unique posture, which tends to hold both a confessional principle and a conciliar principle in creative tension.

Ecumenical priorities for each church are therefore different. Lutherans do not believe institutional matters have anything to do with the essence of the church. Therefore, they seek doctrinal
BAPTISM STATEMENT COMMENT

concurrence in ecumenical dialogue. United Methodists find the ecumenical thrust leads to a rearrangement of institutional and practical matters. Yet when it comes to the praxis, Lutherans, who confess together, are widely divided on their understandings of authority and the proper interpretation of Scripture. Within Lutheranism itself is the need for what Penzel called "reconciled diversity." This would bring together confessional identity and ecumenical fellowship. It also would enable the confessional principle of Lutherans to be inclusive and to think of themselves as a confessional movement within the church. The "connectational principle" in United Methodism contributes a form for theological pluralism to develop in which neither dogmatism nor indifferentism is encouraged.

Lest one neglect doctrinal matters, one must emphasize points of doctrinal intersection. It soon became clear to dialogue members that Luther had strong strains of sanctification in his theology. United Methodists could not claim sole possession to this doctrine. Wesley, on the other hand, saw repentance as the porch of religion, justification by faith as entrance to the house of salvation, and sanctification as living in the house. Justification by faith and holiness of heart go together. Therefore Lutherans had to understand that Wesley did not introduce a new Pelagianism.

It soon became clear that a consensus was emerging at a relatively fast rate among the United Methodists, the ALC, and LCA churches. Because the AELC joined the discussions in 1978, following their split with the Missouri Synod, their contributions were not very forceful but were supportive of the emerging consensus. Also apparent was the fact that Lutheran confessionalism was deeply in trouble between the three Lutheran churches and The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. This became actualized when one of the Missouri Synod representatives voted no and two others abstained in the call for approval of the consensus document.

The implications of this consensus statement for the ecumenical family are many. The power of the sacrament of baptism as a uniting force among the Christian church is overwhelming. Rural and essentially small churches that make
up the majority of congregations for both denominations could cultivate new opportunities for easier acceptance of one another into membership. Many churches require reconfirmation. This perspective of baptism puts confirmation in another light and makes reconfirmation unnecessary, if not prohibitive. From a pastoral perspective this should be an advantage.

A firm acceptance of this understanding of baptism would have implications for mutual sharing in the eucharist—exciting for some, intimidating for others. An examination of what baptism implies offers opportunities for table fellowship. Penzel's idea of "reconciled diversity" comes into play and could be drawn upon should such a mind prevail among the ecclesiastical bodies.

Finally it must be mentioned that the issue of authority is one that contains a knotty issue for further dialogue. The Lutheran sola scriptura really translates into sola scriptura and the Book of Concord. The assumption is that there is nothing in the latter that is not in the former. United Methodists speak of the primacy of Scripture, with reason, tradition, and experience as added linchpins of authority.

The theoretical issues created by these different bases of authority are variegated. However, if the dialogue implements a methodology that concerns itself with orthopraxis such imminent danger signs might be overcome. It is how one uses the Bible, how one applies scriptural truth rather than sloganizing about it, that becomes definitive for dialogue.

At a time in which denominations are tempted to the laager mentality, bilateral conversations offer the openness necessary to express the unity God gives in Christ, and to further theological inquiry. This document is available to local church study groups for further reflection and comment. At the grass-roots level we have reason to believe some new things can happen between Lutherans and United Methodists!
IT SEEMED GOOD TO US . . .
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT!

DAVID L. TIEDE

What do you hope to accomplish? The question frequently put the members of the United Methodist and Lutheran dialogue teams on notice that such ecumenical discussions are currently met with general apathy, some disdain, and little expectation or sense of urgency. The reticence to consider yet one more merger or church union is fully understandable in this era, and the current consolidation of denominational positions amplifies persistent institutional disinterest in change, especially if it appears to be imposed from the top down. Members of this dialogue also discovered quickly that differences within the denominations were more obtrusive than those between them. After a few initial skirmishes in which blatant stereotypes were exposed, hope for accomplishing anything beyond another bland committee report that would "seem good" and offend no one ran at a low ebb.

Not that anyone should have been surprised. The long history of ecumenical councils, debates, and dialogues is replete with long sieges of plodding conversation, stalemates, and even setbacks. Romanticized depictions of that past may only obscure the humdrum humanity of earlier ecumenical discussions at the expense of blinding the modern community of faith to the work of the Holy Spirit in, with, and under the modest efforts of boards and commissions. Thus, for example, reading the Acts of the Apostles through rose-colored glasses may trivialize both the past and the present. Acts notes explicitly that the revolutionary full acceptance of the Gentiles without circumcision was neither eagerly sought by most of the church nor well received by all. The agreement that "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28) actually emerged from churchly

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turmoil and produced further controversy, as Paul's letter to the Galatians indicates. Even those in Acts who are depicted as supporting the new mission practice most actively did so because they did not wish to find themselves "withstanding God" (Acts 11:17).

The illustration is telling with regard to the United Methodist-Lutheran Statement on Baptism on at least two counts. First, the modest achievement of the statement deserves notice for the clarity it contributes to the common faith of these Christian traditions. Although one representative of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod issued a statement "dissociating himself," and the other representatives of that Synod abstained, all participants in the dialogue contributed directly to its composition. Classic Christian teaching on the evangelical dimension of baptism as God's gracious act allowed the group to steer a steady course without veering off into endless polemical disputation or arriving too quickly at trite agreements. As in Acts 15, the statement of accord has theological content, which has dramatic implications for the church's ministry.

Second, it was concern for the mission and ministry of the church that drew the discussion forward and required honest consideration of the meaning of baptism for the lives of the people of God in our congregations. Again, this concern was not unique to this dialogue. Since the Jerusalem council and down through the great mission conferences of the past century, such attention to the effective ministry of the church has been one of the critical marks of authentic ecumenical discussions. Nevertheless, whatever clarity of insight or courage of conviction this final statement may contribute to the lives of our denominations, it probably is founded in this pastoral concern.

At the risk of imposing my personal reminiscence on the reading of the document, I would propose that the commitment to ministry lies at the heart of the matter, both as it led the dialogue out of its initial impasse of theological debate and as it highlights the potential significance of the statement for the church. The pastors in the groups deserve special commendation for repeatedly bringing the perspective of reality and proportion to the discussion. The initial scriptural, theological, and historical statements that were presented for discussion
were helpful starting points and had an impact on the final statement. But attempting, for example, to write an initial statement on the New Testament teaching on baptism (which was my assignment) was a bit like trying to reinvent the wheel until the discussion surfaced pastoral practices of rebaptism, transfers of membership, and the refusal of baptism. It quickly became apparent that there was no need to create a new dogma or to mount a theological attack in order to reprove heresy. But there was a genuine cause for searching the Scriptures and reflecting together on classic Christian teaching regarding baptism in order that divergent baptismal practices in our congregations might be conformed as media of the gospel of divine grace and claim on the people of God.

The emergence of that concern was like a breath of air, or if you will, an infusion of the Spirit, in our discussion. We Lutherans tend to be very cautious about basing much of anything on our experience. We are thoroughly committed to moving from doctrine to practice. Yet the experience of this dialogue testified to the validity of the counterflow. Dogma and the professional theologians were requested to sit lightly on their magisterial roles and to serve in a ministerial capacity. Indeed, the commonality of faith shared by these denominations enabled the descent from the heights of lofty theological generality in pursuit of the interpretation of the complex particularities of pastoral care.

All of which experience and history are germane to a comment on the document because the statement is very intentionally a word to the churches rather than a pronouncement for them. Its emphasis upon the divine initiative in baptism relies upon and seeks to reinforce the classic ecumenical teaching and practice of baptism in our traditions. While resisting any magical view of the sacrament, the document stresses the lifelong claim on the baptized that is made in the rite as fundamental to Christian identity and salvation. In both the doctrinal and pastoral affirmations, the common needs of prebaptismal instruction and congregational participation are constantly in view.

It is now the heartfelt hope of the dialogue group that the denominations and congregations will appropriate all or parts of the statement as they prove helpful. Perhaps in some
congregations, the evangelical interpretation of baptism will assist pastors who are confronting pieties where the religious experience of the individual is claimed as necessary and efficacious for salvation. Perhaps another pastor will be contending with the indiscriminate practice of baptism either as a family ritual or as a magical insurance policy with no prospect of a lifelong bond having been instituted in reliance on God's promise. In each case, the statement seeks to support the clear witness of these Christian traditions to our solidarity of trust in God's promises. Clergy and laypersons of both denominations are encouraged to stand shoulder to shoulder in their faithful witness and mutual respect of one another as baptized Christians.

No doubt a great deal more could and should be said about the implications of baptism for our solidarity in the quest for social justice and for the manifestation of our unity in corporate ecclesiastical structures. Further discussion of the denominational differences that create obstacles to our common witness is certainly required by the very reliance on God's promises and obedience to divine commands claimed in the statement. This document is only a modest beginning.

Yet, founded in our common trust in God's promises, this little testimony counsels hope for the continued building of reciprocal respect, reproof, and encouragement. Mutual support between local congregations and clergy is encouraged with the intention of diminishing the effectiveness of those who would play pastor against pastor or congregation against congregation. The focus upon all of the Christian life as endowed with the saving benefits of baptism as received in trust is an effort to enhance the evangelical outreach of both denominations, emphasizing the personal and societal dimensions of salvation.

Whether the statement "accomplishes" any of these objectives or even assists in their accomplishment finally depends upon what the church guided by the Spirit does with the statement. Even ecumenical dialogues must let go and refrain from seeking to justify their own existence. Like the council in Jerusalem, we could not even claim complete agreement, and from Galatians it would appear that the dissenters received most
of the press coverage in the early church too. But we also remain confident that our effort will be fruitful for the church and that our testimony stands as more than another expedient report from a weary committee. Unlike the council in Acts, we did not face a divisive issue in the church where the experience of the direct intervention of the Spirit compelled the confession, “It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28). Nevertheless in full confidence that we too were led to deal with matters that are directly related to our common Christian vocation of witness in word and deed, we commend this statement to our churches with the confession, “It seemed good to us . . . and the Holy Spirit!”
The reviews in Quarterly Review are intended to do more than tell a potential reader what the contents of a book are and what the reviewer thinks of the book. The reviews are no less important than the essays in each issue, and are designed to be essays in themselves. Reviewers are encouraged to write not only about the books but what they represent in a body of literature and within a field of knowledge. Where possible, several titles of one particular genre will be included for comparison purposes. Like the essays, the reviews are aimed at stimulating the thinking of professionals in the church about the nature of ministry. To that end, some reviews will offer evaluations of works within a particular discipline each year, with an eye toward helping the practitioner select the most worthy. Others may review journals within a field.

BETZ AND SANDERS DEPICT PAUL AMONG JEWS AND GENTILES

Reviews by David J. Lull


Although Krister Stendahl's book Paul Among Jews and Gentiles (Fortress Press, 1976) is not among the books reviewed in this article, his title is fitting for a review of the books by E. P. Sanders and H. D. Betz. But, while Stendahl's interest is in Paul's attitudes toward Jews and Gentiles and their relationship, here we are concerned with the light these two recent books on Paul shed on the relationship between Paul's thought and religious-philosophical thought among Jews and Gentiles in the Greco-Roman world. Both books treat aspects of the

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connections between Paul and the intellectual culture of the Greek East during the period of the early Roman Empire. It is appropriate, therefore, to discuss both books, which are otherwise quite different in form and content, under this single topic.

The bulk of Sanders's book (Part 1, 395 pages) is devoted to describing the “pattern of religion” reflected in three bodies of Jewish literature of Palestinian origin: Tannaitic, or early Rabbinic, literature (nearly a third of the book), the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Sanders calls the “pattern of religion” that is common to all Palestinian Jewish literature, with the exception of IV Ezra, “covenantal nomism” (following W. D. Davies), which he describes as follows:

(1) God has chosen Israel and (2) given the law. The law implies both (3) God’s promise to maintain the election and (4) the requirement to obey. (5) God rewards obedience and punishes transgression. (6) The law provides for means of atonement, and atonement results in (7) maintenance or re-establishment of the covenantal relationship. (8) All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedience, atonement and God’s mercy belong to the group which will be saved. An important interpretation of the first and last points is that election and ultimately salvation are considered to be by God's mercy rather than human achievement (p. 422).

In Part 2 (less than one fifth of the book) Sanders examines the “pattern of religion” reflected in Paul’s views on soteriology, the law, and the human predicament. Calling it “participationist eschatology” (reminiscent of Albert Schweitzer’s “Christ mysticism”), Sanders describes this pattern in these terms:

God has sent Christ to be the saviour of all, both Jew and Gentile (and has called Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles); one participates in salvation by becoming one person with Christ, dying with him to sin and sharing the promise of his resurrection; the transformation, however, will not be completed until the Lord returns; meanwhile one who is in Christ has been freed from the power of sin and the uncleanness of transgression, and his behaviour should be determined by his new situation; since Christ died to save all, all men must have been under the dominion of sin, “in the flesh” as opposed to being in the Spirit (p. 549).

Sanders, comparing Paul and Palestinian Judaism, concludes that their “patterns of religion,” despite similarities, are quite different. For both, salvation is by “grace” and judgment is by “works.” Inclusion among those who are to be saved precedes those things one must do to maintain that status and is based on divine action rather than human achievement. The difference is that for Paul membership among those
who will be saved is conceived as a process of participating in a field of
force, "Christ" or the "Spirit," which transforms the very structure of
one's existence; that is, as transferring from the sphere of the "flesh" to
that of the "Spirit." In such a "pattern of religion" repentance and
atonement for transgressions have no place; and, in fact, the language
of repentance-atonement-forgiveness is virtually absent in the genuine
letters of Paul. For Paul, what is wrong with human existence is its
enslavement to the "flesh"; salvation is transferring from that sphere
and participating in the sphere of the Spirit. As Sanders puts it, the
problem with human existence is its failure to be "in Christ." For
Judaism, however, the problem is the failure to be a member of the
Sinai Covenant community; here repentance and atonement for
transgressions have a place, and there is no notion of transferring from
one sphere to another (Sanders leaves it up to the reader to make
modern sense of all this).

It is customary, following the influence of Rudolf Bultmann, to think
that Paul argued from the human predicament to its solution. This way
Paul's train of thought would be as follows: The problem of human
existence is the effort to base one's life on one's own achievements; the
law plays into the hands of this effort to secure one's life before God;
therefore, the solution is to be sought elsewhere, namely in Christ.
Sanders thinks, however, that Paul argued in the opposite direction,
from solution to human predicament. Then Paul's train of thought
would be: Since salvation is only in Christ, it cannot be in the law;
therefore, the human predicament must be beyond remedy by the law;
that is, it must be with the very structure of human existence itself.

With this understanding of Paul and with the interpretation of
Palestinian Judaism in the bulk of the book, Sanders seeks "to destroy
the view of Rabbinic Judaism which is still prevalent in much, perhaps
most, New Testament scholarship" (p. xii). Sanders attacks the canard
"that Judaism was a religion of legalistic works-righteousness" (p. 549)
and argues that Paul's "critique of the law is that following the law does
not result in being found in Christ" (p. 550). "In short, this is what Paul
finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity" (p. 552; Sanders's
emphasis). The social value of this exposure of the anti-Judaism in New
Testament scholarship (see also Charlotte Klein, Anti-Judaism in
Christian Theology, Fortress Press, 1975) alone makes the book worth
reading.

Sanders's stated "general aim" of his book is "to argue a case
concerning Palestinian Judaism (that is, Judaism as reflected in
material of Palestinian provenance) as a whole; ... [and] to carry out a
comparison of Paul and Palestinian Judaism" (p. xii). Nevertheless,
Sanders goes beyond these limits briefly and compares Paul with
non-Palestinian Judaism. He spends less than four pages discussing "Paul, Hellenism and Hellenistic Judaism" (pp. 552-56), which concern primarily Paul and Philo, with whom Paul's views are most closely compared. Yet nothing is said about Gentile "patterns of religion," and very little about "Hellenism" itself.

Sanders's conclusion is negative: Paul's "pattern of religion" is essentially different from Palestinian Judaism, and in relation to Hellenistic Judaism, where Paul is most similar, namely in his view of the plight of humanity, no one source for Paul's view can be found. The reason Sanders gives for this negative conclusion is the direction of Paul's thought from soteriology to the human predicament. Paul begins with the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus (salvation is exclusively in Christ), from which he inferred the problem of human existence, for whose description Paul drew from several diverse sources. In other words, Sanders views Paul's thought as soteriologically and christologically determined and not as determined by the thought-worlds of his intellectual culture, whose concepts Paul employed to explain the "reverse of his soteriology," from which they derive their meaning (pp. 555-56).

But is this an adequate historical model? How else did Paul understand the "meaning" of the death and resurrection of Jesus except in terms of the thought-worlds of his intellectual culture? We will return to this question after taking a look at Galatians by Betz, whose approach to Paul as a historical figure is quite different.

Betz's commentary, as the subtitle of the Hermeneia series (recommended as a whole to the readers of this journal as the best available in any language) indicates, represents a "critical and historical" approach to the Letter to the Galatians. The introduction (33 pages) includes, besides the traditional introductory matters, a detailed literary analysis of the argument in the letter according to "the conventions of Greco-Roman rhetoric and epistolography" (pp. 14-25), a concordancelike outline of "traditions and doctrinal presuppositions" in Galatians (pp. 26-28), and a summary of Paul's "theological argument in Galatians" (pp. 28-33). In the analysis of the letter (288 pages), Betz provides a translation of the Greek, compared in the notes with the RSV, NEB, and JB, at the beginning of each section of the letter, followed by a general analysis and then a detailed interpretation, verse by verse, of each section. Interspersed are fourteen discussions of special theological and literary problems that arise at various points in the interpretation of Paul's letter.

The footnotes contain extensive references to primary ancient texts, biblical and nonbiblical, to help situate Paul's thought within the
intellectual culture of the Greco-Roman world. These notes also situate Betz’s interpretation within the history of exegesis. Finally at the back of the commentary, in addition to a selective bibliography and indexes, Betz provides the texts from which he reconstructs the theological position of Paul’s opponents in Galatia (pp. 328-35; for a summary of their position, see pp. 5-9): namely, texts from Josephus, the Kerygmata Petrou, and Justin Martyr, as well as II Cor. 6:14-7:1, which Betz regards as an “anti-Pauline fragment” (see his article in JBL 92 (1973), 88-108).

According to Betz’s literary analysis, Galatians combines features of the “magical letter” (see the curse in 1:8-9 and the blessing in 6:16), the “heavenly letter” (see the “angel from heaven” in 1:8 and the “angel of God” in 4:14), and the “apologetic letter,” examples of which are found in antiquity. The formal characteristics of the “apologetic speech” guide Betz’s outline of the body of Galatians into the introduction of the “cause” of the letter (1:6-11), the presentation of the “facts” leading up to the crisis in Galatia (1:12-2:14), a summary of the points of agreement and the disputed issue, and an anticipation of the following line of argument (2:15-21), then the main arguments themselves 3:1-4:31), followed by an argument in the form of ethical advice pertinent to the Galatian problem (5:1-6:10). Framing Paul’s “apology,” and giving it the form of a letter, are the epistolary prescript (1:1-5) and postscript (6:11-18), which also contains a recapitulation of Paul’s main arguments in the letter.

The crisis in Galatia, Betz argues, is the result of efforts by Jewish Christians (missionaries?) to persuade Gentile Christians in Galatia that salvation in Christ requires their obedience to the law, of whose commandments the requirement of circumcision is singled out for special attention. Paul’s message to the Galatians is a defense of their Spirit-given salvation, which Paul summarizes by the term “freedom” (see 5:1, 13 and the allegory in 4:21-31), a status and life they would lose if they submit to circumcision and take up a life of obedience to the law (see esp. 5:2-4).

Elsewhere (in my dissertation, The Spirit in Galatia, forthcoming from Scholars Press) I have argued that Betz uses (unawares) Max Weber’s theory about the “routinization of charisma” to explain how and why the Galatians were open to the persuasion of Paul’s opponents. Betz’s view is that, when the initial period of pneumatic enthusiasm (see 3:1-5) had worn off, the Galatians discovered that Paul had left them. In their opinion, without adequate means for coping with the problems of daily life, especially with “transgressions” (see 6:1), and that when they heard Paul’s opponents’ statements about the law, they were tempted to adopt its way of dealing cultically as well as ethically with
“transgressions.” However, Betz’s Weberian explanation misinterprets the evidence of the letter. Not only did the Galatians continue to think of themselves as “pneumatics” (6:1), so that their “initial period” of enthusiasm had not worn off (in 3:5 Paul refers to experiences of the Spirit as continuing in the present), but they already had received ethical instructions from Paul at their baptism (see 5:21), so that they had not been left without any code of ethics and any means of dealing with transgressions (the point of 5:13–6:10 is that they are to continue relying on the Spirit, as Paul had already instructed them).

On the whole, however, Betz’s more precise placement of Paul’s thought in relation to Gentile religious and philosophical thought, as well as in relation to Judaism, results in an explanation of the events in the Galatian churches and of Paul’s views on the law that is more adequate historically than Sanders’s attempt to relate Paul merely to various forms of Judaism. Betz relates Paul’s views on the law in Galatians to the devaluation of city laws and the emphasis on the “law of nature” or “unwritten law” in the Socratic tradition, and to the Stoic concept of degeneration from ideal origins in history. According to Betz, the former Gentile view on law was also applied, but differently, to the law in Judaism by Philo; and the latter Stoic view of history may have been applied to Judaism prior to the Maccabean revolt by the “Hellenistic reformers,” who tried to rid Judaism of its “particularistic” laws and customs, and to integrate it with Hellenistic culture (see pp. 166–67; for the latter, also see p. 139).

In conclusion, the value of Sanders’s book is his exposure and dismantling of the anti-Jewish view of Judaism in New Testament scholarship and his alternative to the Bultmannian interpretation of Paul. The importance of Betz’s commentary is his effort to place Paul within Gentile as well as Jewish religious and philosophical thought in the Greek East during the period of the early Roman Empire. Sanders’s book is needed because the categories for understanding the New Testament as well as Judaism are loaded with anti-Judaism; and Betz’s book is needed because the tendency is to treat Paul in at least partial isolation from his own intellectual culture.

But both of these correctives should be pushed even further. What is needed is a more thorough comparison of all sides of the controversy over the law within earliest Christianity, and between Christianity and Judaism, and the various Gentile views on law in the Greco-Roman world. For it is generally taken for granted that, while Paul’s critique of the law was non-Jewish (if not anti-Jewish), his opponents’ affirmation of the law was strictly Jewish. But both sides of the law-issue in Galatia have parallels in Jewish and Gentile views on law. Paul’s views on the
law can be compared with Jewish views in the "Hellenistic reform movement" prior to and during the Maccabean period, and with Philo (and even Hillel?), as well as with Gentile philosophical views on law. Likewise, his opponents' views on the law have parallels not only in Judaism but also in Gentile philosophical views on law. For example, Dio Chrysostom, a first-century (C.E.) Cynic-Stoic philosopher, expressed the common view that no city could survive without law (see Oration 73-2). And Plutarch, a first-century (C.E.) Platonist and at times also Cynic-Stoic, wrote Lives praising Lycurgus and Solon as lawgivers par excellence, while criticizing the antinomianism of Epicurean philosophers (see Against Colotes 1124D-1125B). Gentiles, therefore, were not all antinomians, nor did they all hold views on law similar to Paul's; indeed, most Greeks and Romans during the period of the early Roman Empire affirmed the necessity of law as much as any Jew, or as any of Paul's opponents, did. One could even say that the emphasis on the law in the sense of commandments (nomos) is as much a result of "Hellenistic" influence as was the effort to rid Judaism of its particularistic laws and religious customs, just as one could say that both views are equally "Jewish," at least before the emergence of "normative" Judaism in the period after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

These observations point to the need to dismantle not only the categories used by New Testament scholars to view Judaism but also those used to describe "Hellenism." In the end we will have a clearer picture of the intellectual culture of the New Testament and a clearer picture of the New Testament as a part of that culture as well. The books by Sanders and Betz have cleared the way for the carrying out of this task.

THE CHURCH AND THE TWO-CAREER MARRIAGE
Reviews by Rosemary Skinner Keller


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A good friend recently gave my husband and me a cartoon of a clergyman performing the wedding service of a young man and woman. The caption contained the minister's words to the couple, sealing their marriage: "I now pronounce you a two-spouse working household."

The humor of the cartoon struck me immediately. I had not stopped laughing, however, before a nagging question arose. Is the church saying anything more than that to the two-career couple? Since my initial reaction, the question has taken different forms. As the church seeks to address the quality of family life in its congregations, is it helping dual-career couples relieve the stress and overcome the perils inherent in their intense and pressure-filled lives? Does it make any difference in a two-career marriage if both partners are Christian? Is the church helping dual-career couples develop a vision of marriage different from that advocated by secular society?

In the churches my husband has served for the past twenty years, we have seen the nature of congregational life change radically. The nuclear family, with the husband as sole wage earner, the mother as full-time homemaker, and at least one child at home, is no longer the dominant model. It is more the rule than the exception to have families with both parents employed outside the home, families with single parents, childless couples, and single persons. Yet these diverse family units have this in common: They seek the church as a larger family in Jesus Christ.

My own daily experience adds a further dimension. Teaching at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, I see the startling change in the nature of clergy families since the time of our seminary experience and the early years of our marriage. Clergy couples make up a significant portion of the seminary's enrollment; the spouse of a clergyperson is more likely than not to be pursuing his or her own career; the term "clergy wife" is seldom used, with "clergy spouse" being the appropriate expression; highly capable women are serving in increasingly large numbers with men in ministry; and more single persons, both divorced and never married, pastor congregations than was conceived possible in the past.
TWO-CAREER MARRIAGE

If churches are to speak to the needs and realities of their memberships and of the communities of which they are a part, they cannot continue to think of the family primarily as the traditional nuclear unit. Rather, they must seek to address the diversity that characterizes the household of God on the local scene. Some recent books raise significant issues for pastors and congregations who would begin to deal seriously with the presence and needs of the many two-career couples in their midst.

The Two-Career Marriage by G. Wade Rowatt, Jr. and Mary Jo Rowatt, is the first book that proposes to deal directly with the dual-career relationship from a Christian perspective. Part of the Christian Care Books series edited by Wayne Oates, it is an introduction to the two-career life-style. It can be used by lay people in personal study, by pastors in counseling, or by marriage support-groups in local churches.

The book could be useful to couples in which both partners are employed but have not yet confronted the necessity of personal changes in work responsibilities at home. It could lead persons to struggle with role stereotypes and to seek a life-style that offers freedom from some of the narrowly defined prescriptions that society has imposed on women and men.

The Rowatts' book points in two directions. First, it introduces practical guidelines to aid a couple in working through the daily difficulties of a two-career marriage. Second, it recognizes the church's responsibility to clarify and teach values that do not merely reinforce secular standards, but provide a biblical and theological foundation for a two-career life-style.

Primarily, the book focuses on guidelines to deal with the personal issues and problems of the dual-career life-style. It identifies and considers ways to alleviate sources of stress inherent in a two-career marriage. The authors give practical suggestions to enable the entire family to share responsibility for functions previously accepted as part of the woman's role.

The Two-Career Marriage also explores ways to enhance the quality of life for the whole family. Persons who have been strongly influenced by the ideas underlying Marabel Morgan's Total Woman, should consider a basic thesis of the Rowatts—"The freedom for self-expression in a vocation liberates a total woman to give more of herself in family interaction." Growth opportunities are also open to the man in a dual-career marriage. Freed from expectations of the macho image, he is released to be a caring and loving person—and to find those expressions valued as a part of masculinity.
In their final chapter, the authors point to the response the church should make to two-career marriages. "The evils of restrictive attitudes about females and males need to be replaced by a full theology of persons based on both the Biblical teachings and the attitudes of Jesus toward men and women." Unfortunately, the Rowatts do not deal with these biblical teachings. Many readers to whom this book might appeal have had a strong dose of theological justification for the separation of male and female spheres, and they need help in developing a fuller biblical vision.

In specific ways, the book falls short in establishing a theological base for mutuality and equality. The writers view the dual-career marriage as a two-way covenant between partners; but they give no attention to the purpose of God in the covenant. The Rowatts also indicate the economic advantages of a two-career marriage, which may free the couple for a more giving way of life; but they do not introduce the values basic to a simpler life-style, which could counter the acquisitive, affluent goals that secular society presses on all who would listen.

Other books develop in more depth the practical guidelines and theological foundations upon which a dual-career marriage may be based. The most useful book to deal with down-to-earth problems and realistic possibilities of growth is Francine and Douglas Hall's *Two-Career Couple*. Though written from an avowedly secular viewpoint, the book focuses on important values the church can build upon, as well as some it can question.

The authors recognize that career involvements have too often consumed men in their traditional work roles. The danger inherent in a two-career relationship is that careers will engulf both the woman and the man unless limits are consciously set. To be successful in both profession and family requires sacrifice and stamina. Whether the marriage relationship is sustained and grows depends, first, on how committed both partners are to their relationship and to both careers. It depends, second, on how self-consciously the partners deal with the stresses and practical issues of their complex life-style. The fruits of the commitment are in the daily sharing and support given to each other.

The Halls advocate a "protean" life-style, based upon couples' commitments to gain greater control of their lives. Partners should shape their values and decide how to invest their time and energy, rather than letting institutions of employment make the sole determinations. The protean life-style would reject upward mobility as a standard of success, affirming instead a sequence of fulfilling work
experiences for both individuals. Couples must develop a new meaning for success, based upon satisfaction, enjoyment, and involvement in their roles, rather than titles, salary, and admiration of others. The protean life-style involves a conscious effort to combat workaholism. Success at work may mean personal failure in relaxation, love, and family life. Partners must consciously build time together into their lives and not be manipulated by seductions of promotions, travel, and entertaining in their careers. The possibility of relocation becomes a question of life-style choice. Will career benefits really offset the other partner's loss and the psychological strains on the family?

These basic characteristics are necessary to sustain a two-career life-style—a shared set of priorities, mutual support, skill in problem solving, flexibility, and willingness to adjust career demands to family needs. The Halls conclude that most two-career couples have begun to change their expectations of the woman's and man's roles. Now they need to adopt new patterns that will incorporate their changed outlooks into daily life. This book gives concrete help to those who are willing to look closely at their relationship—where it is now and where they would like to take it.

Yet the questions remain: Is the church saying anything more than this to the two-career couple? Can it help persons establish values for a different vision of partnership than that offered by secular society?

Three recent books, written from divergent personal perspectives, suggest thoughtful theological implications for a two-career marriage: Women, Men, & the Bible, by Virginia Mollenkott; Partnership: Marriage and the Committed Life, by Edward Dufresne; and The Future of Partnership, by Letty Russell. While not one of these books focuses on marriage alone, each sees the union of Christians based on more than a covenant between two persons.

Virginia Mollenkott stands squarely within the evangelical tradition in terming herself a biblical feminist. "Perhaps the most disturbing feature of the many attacks on equal-partnership marriage," she writes, "is the assumption that the success of the marriage is almost entirely the responsibility of the wife." Offering an alternative to women and men who have been deeply influenced by The Total Woman, Mollenkott states,

Self-sacrifice is beautiful when it is done as Christ did it: in absolute freedom as an expression of the deepest drives of the personality and without any interest in recompense. But the self-sacrifice now being urged upon the Christian wife is entirely different. It is not a choice freely made but rather a course of action so deeply ingrained by socialization and so connected with divine approval that the woman actually has no choice (p. 40).
Such a course teaches nothing short of idolatry of men—worship of husbands—Mollenkott continues; but we are to revere and surrender ourselves unto God alone.

In *Women, Men, & the Bible*, Mollenkott develops her thesis that service to others is rooted in Christian submission to one another, in the thrust of Jesus, and in Paul’s understanding of equality of persons in the eyes of God. The author focuses on such texts as Ephesians 5:21-33, so often used to justify submission of wives to husbands. In the context of the preceding verse, chapter, and the entire Letter to the Ephesians, however, Christians are called to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. When Paul told husbands to love wives as Christ loved the church, the model of Christ was that of “self-emptying love” taking the form of a servant and born in human likeness.

Mollenkott’s insights regarding mutual submission in modern marriage have significant theological implications for two-career couples. Mutuality in decision-making is at the heart of such a marriage, with no assumption that either person should have the final word. Both partners are equally vital and valid in determining God’s will for the family. Mutual submission might mean that the more assertive and articulate partner should teach the less confident to present views more persuasively. Mollenkott makes an important contribution as a biblical feminist in the evangelical tradition.

In *The Future of Partnership*, Letty Russell explores theological foundations and new forms of human partnership from her perspective as a liberation theologian. Partnership of Christians in marriage is only one structure of the relationship to which the author applies her biblical and theological understandings. Others include ministry of the laity, clericalism, and Christian education. She helps Christians grapple with a basic stance for their faith—and challenges them to apply it to the most important areas of their lives.

Christians find the pattern for their relationships with others in God’s self-presentation to humanity as both Lord and Servant. Servanthood has been associated with lowly service to others; and lordship, with God’s hierarchical position over us. Russell focuses on the unity of these functions. God *chose* to serve, not to rule over us. Christ’s lordship came through his service of healing, feeding, and proclaiming the Word.

The liberating Word for Christians is that they have been created and redeemed for service in Christ’s name. True humanity, in terms of the New Creation which already has begun, is based on service, not on sexuality. Women and men are freed from defining themselves in terms of qualities previously prescribed as male or female.
Of the book's many implications for dual-career relationships, two may be noted. First, both partners must be sensitive to the gifts God has given them and must seek to refine those talents for greatest use. The abilities they have received may not be of equal value. Still, each partner is responsible for seeking the full humanity of the mate and the release of those gifts for service in Christ. Second, based upon God's self-presentation, they must create a way of life that includes serving each other and also those beyond the relationship, but without being subservient. Hierarchical relationships of power involving men and women are replaced by functional ones in which leadership can rotate from one mate to the other, depending on the goals, abilities, and gifts called for in a particular circumstance.

Henri Nouwen, who wrote the foreword to Partnership: Marriage and the Committed Life, terms it "a Christian spirituality for married people." His phrase exemplifies Edward Dufresne's purpose in writing the book—to reach beyond the distractions of married life and make partnership into an expression of commitment to God.

Partnership is a personal statement of what marriage means to the author, Edward Dufresne, a Roman Catholic pastoral counselor, and his wife Sandra, a United Methodist minister. Partnership is especially valuable to clergy couples or to persons who hope, through marriage, to merge their personal commitments into a creative life of service.

The Christian response to marriage has too often resulted in a tension between the world's affairs and the Lord's affairs. A profound ambivalence has been built into marriage for Christians. Persons normally become so involved in gaining wealth, power, and property to provide for their families that spiritual dimensions have little real meaning. Marriage needs to be freed from the "cultural prison of social status, material consumption, and compulsive self-interest"—commitments that make it impossible to dedicate one's life totally to Christ.

In Dufresne's analysis, the madness of the world is inescapable. It creates the monstrous anxiety in our minds that we never have enough—possessions, fulfillment, or time. Those who endeavor to commit their lives to Christ suffer the additional pain of knowing they are mad. This painful knowledge can be the starting point for resisting the "needism" of secular culture and seeking a simpler life-style.

Dufresne's vision has profound implications for two-career couples—particularly those who desire their marriages to be a life-style for ministry. The pressures of consumerism have a peculiarly insidious effect on dual-career marriages in a society in which increased economic power too easily leads people to convert luxuries into basic needs. Further, two-career couples never have
enough time—either for work or for relaxation. The author persuasively contends that partners need to scale down their ambitions as well as their style and standard of living. This need may be even greater for dual-career couples than for other married people. Their witness of a simpler life-style could be equally powerful as a ministry in Christ's name.

The two-career couple has been termed the most important single phenomenon of the twentieth century. Changes in the family can be more threatening—and more liberating—than in any other institution. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the home and place of work were one, with women and men working together on the farm. By the early nineteenth century, urbanization and industrialization helped create separate spheres for home and work, as men found their basic identity in the world, and women, within the home. A new pattern is emerging today which posits no separate sphere for either women or men. Rather, both can function together in the world and can share responsibility for the quality of life in the home.

Revolutions for human rights, including the sexual revolution, are at the heart of this changing perspective. The dual-career couple could be one agent in pioneering for a world without spheres—a world of wholeness for both women and men.

Of all the things the church can affirm about dual-career marriages, the opportunities it opens for wholeness, equality, and the development of both partners' gifts are among the most important. This does not mean, however, that the church should bless this form as the new standard for all. Rather, it should honor the diversity of family life, which is, and always has been, a reality.

Further, the church needs to raise some serious questions regarding two-career marriages for the next two decades of this century. Is it realistic to believe that couples in dual-career marriages can do more than handle their two careers and save some quality time for themselves? Does the two-career life-style leave the partners time or energy for ministry beyond their immediate families? In the long run, how will this life-style affect the institution of marriage and the care of children?

As a person committed in marriage to a two-career life-style, I raise these questions in the hope that the church will seriously confront them and begin to provide the help and support needed for this widespread expression of family life.