Quarterly Review

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A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry

Homiletical Studies on Matthew Lections
Fred B. Craddock

Ecumenism Through the Eucharist
Roy I. Sano

The Ideology of Professionalism
A review by Henry Clark

Milton’s Eve as the Pattern for Mankind
Sharon C. Seelig

Plus articles on pastoral care and pastoral ministry
by Thomas A. Whiting and John Patton
QUARTERLY REVIEW
A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry

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Falling within the purview of the journal are articles and reviews on biblical, theological, ethical, and ecclesiastical 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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EDITORIAL

Our journal bears a subtitle that implies an effort to encourage thinking throughout the church. What exactly is our purpose? Communication might seem to be the best term for describing our intentions. Most of the time, though, communicating means simply writing and reading, talking and listening, so we might as well use those terms. Dialogue has some possibilities (though not “dialoguing,” which has no possibilities whatsoever), hinting as it does of Socrates and Buber. For that very reason, however, it’s intimidating and makes us hesitate. Can we achieve such lofty levels?

We can dismiss argument, since it conjures up lawyers and hairsplitters and table-pounders. Similarly with criticism—too negative, too academic, too limited. Our writers are bound to argue and criticize, but our overall purpose will be broader. On the “soft” end of the spectrum, there are conversation and discussion, but unlike some large corporations we have scruples against advertising ourselves as personal and familial when we’re not. We can also write off opinions, not only because they’re typically free of thought, but also because Mr. Wesley implied we don’t have to take them seriously.

While we’re refining our terminology, we invite our readers to respond to the articles and reviews in QR. We don’t mean exactly “letters to the editor,” though those are welcome, too. What we have in mind, rather, are responses that analyze a subject differently from one of our writers, or that add constructive comment to the discussion of major questions before the church. To that end we solicit your rebuttals, demurrers, extended notes, and well-articulated amens.

CHARLES E. COLE
The writer of these studies assumes he is engaged in conversation with those persons responsible for interpreting through sermons and lessons the Scriptures of the church. For this conversation to be fruitful, certain obligations are accepted by those involved. The writer will bring the results of careful investigations in the texts. The reader will recognize that certain exegetical decisions have been made and will acknowledge their necessity. Not everything that can be said can be said here. The reader will also have to make some exegetical decisions because not everything that can be said can be said there. Nor need it be. To underscore everything in a text is, in effect, to underscore nothing. The writer will call to the reader's attention the steps being taken in the process of exegesis. Being self-conscious about one's procedures is not essential to sound exegesis because listening to a text is an art as well as a science. However, a disciplined approach to the task is not only helpful toward clarity and confidence but is a real time-saver in getting past awkward starts and into the material. Routine can be dull, but it can also liberate energies that would otherwise be dissipated in trying to get under way. And finally, the reader must provide the particular context in which the text is heard and to which the sermon or lesson speaks. No writer can express fully and finally what a text says to a reader.

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Lections in these homiletical studies are taken from Seasons of the Gospel: Resources for the Christian Year (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).
This writer does not assume that all readers are using the lectionary. Those who are will also want to explore the lections from the Old Testament and the epistles for these four Sundays. But it is hoped that those who are not will find in these texts from Matthew a clear and appropriate word.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4

Lections


Exegesis and Exposition of Matthew 21:33-43

The first step in exegesis is to be certain of the text to be explored. Two matters are involved here. One, be sure the passage begins and ends at such points as to mark out clearly a text that is a unit, having its own integrity. It cannot be assumed that lectionary readings always do this. One simply checks for singleness of subject matter and for transitional phrases that indicate beginnings and endings. On both counts Matt. 21:33-43 is clearly a unit. Substantively, it is a parable with response and comment. Literally, “Hear another parable” in verse 33 and “Therefore I tell you” in verse 43 set the boundaries. Verses 45-46 are excluded because they serve to conclude the entire section beginning with 21:10 and not just our text. Two, look for any variants in the text that might be significant for the exegesis. The RSV and other good translations do not have verse 44 since it has very poor support in the Greek manuscripts of Matthew. Logically verse 44 does not follow verse 43 and is obviously a borrowing from Luke 20:18, where it functions as a closing comment similar to Matt. 21:43.

With this certainty as to what exactly is being investigated, one begins to read and re-read the text. The absence of commentaries and other aids at this early stage does not mean this exercise is merely preliminary and unimportant. It
is basic and indispensable. Here one opens all faculties of mind and emotion to receive the text. Here one joins the congregation that will come without commentary to the sanctuary to hear this text read and interpreted. What does the text say? During this reading jot down what is known and what is not known as thoughts and questions are prompted.

Here is a parable about a man who invests much time, care, and money in a vineyard, lets it out to tenants, and goes out of the country. At harvest time he sends servants for his fruit, but the tenants beat, kill, and stone them. Other servants, a larger number, are sent and they receive similar treatment. Finally the owner sends his son, thinking thereby to get respectful attention and obedience. But the tenants, thinking the death of the son would make them heirs, kill him.

At this point, the teller asks the listeners what they think the owner will do when he comes. The listeners are certain: he will kill those tenants and let out the vineyard to others. The teller (Jesus) now responds strangely by quoting Ps. 118:22-23, which is not about a vineyard but a building and about a stone rejected by the builders becoming the head of the corner. Apparently, the builders' rejection was countered by God in an act of triumph and vindication. But what has that to do with the vineyard, the owner, and violent tenants? Jesus now addresses the listeners' earlier judgment upon the wicked tenants. However, in verse 43 the subject is not a vineyard but the kingdom of God. Obviously this verse is not part of the parable but is an interpretation. How much more of this passage is interpretation? The parable itself probably ends at verse 39 or verse 40. The remaining verses are not only commentary but seem clearly to reflect postresurrection events. The stone being made the head of the corner is apparently a reference to the triumphant exaltation of the Son. And is not the kingdom of God passing from the listeners to another "nation" a reference to the church's move from Jews to Gentiles? In this same vein, it is not simply the commentary but the parable itself (verses 33-39) that seems to
carry allusions to actual historical events (sending of servants, killing of servants, sending the son, killing the son) some of which occurred after the time of the text. Clearly the owner of the vineyard is recognized, not as an anonymous "certain man" common to parables, but as God. This is especially obvious if one recognizes that verse 33 is taken directly from Isa. 5:2, in which God is the builder of the vineyard.

All this raises the question whether this parable is really a parable. If the story is not really about a vineyard owner and his tenants but about God and Israel and the kingdom and Gentiles, then this is an allegory. Did Jesus offer an allegory or was a parable later allegorized? If Jesus told it this way, reciting future history as accomplished fact, to what purpose? To irritate and intimidate the listeners? To prove to his disciples and us that he knew everything? That hardly seems worthy. Since all this was past history when Matthew wrote, maybe the story as we have it is Matthew's explaining to his readers the meaning of what Jesus had earlier said to his listeners. Can we know what Jesus actually said that has been interpreted this way? And if this is a Matthean interpretation of Jesus' parable, why tell it? To say, "Jesus said it would end like this"? To make the Christian reader feel good by attacking the Jews? Is this church indulging in a little antisynagogue polemic? Is Matthew's account of the kingdom being taken from Jewish tenants and given to Gentile Christian tenants an exercise in triumphalism? How is the reader of this passage supposed to respond? Is it a time to applaud (we have the kingdom) or to weep (many have lost the kingdom)? Is the reader to say something or do something?

The text stirs, provokes, raises questions, and sends the reader to the larger context for help in understanding the message intended. At this point in exegesis, commentaries and other study aids will prove helpful. If the lectionary has been followed, substantive work in Matthew's Gospel has probably been done already, and that should inform and
enrich the exploration of this passage. If not, then it is important to back away from the immediate text and reflect upon the perspective and principal accents of this Gospel before focusing upon the specific setting of 21:33-43.

Because it is the nature of a Gospel to contain a series of stories each of which presents that Gospel in miniature, it is not surprising that several of the major emphases of Matthew are found in the text before us. As the owner expected fruit from his vineyard, so does the whole Gospel express the expectation that God's people will bear fruit. The theme, "Thus you will know them by their fruits" (7:20), runs through the entire book. It is not saying "Lord, Lord" but doing the will of God that really matters (7:21). It is not simply hearing Christ's words but doing them that establishes one firmly on the rock (7:24-27). Bearing fruit is righteous obedience to the will of God. The moral and ethical earnestness which is to characterize the people of God is unavoidably plain in Matthew. Whoever teaches otherwise is guilty of lawlessness and is a false prophet contributing to moral decay (7:21-23; 24:11-12, 24).

A second emphasis throughout Matthew is the reminder to the readers that there will be a time of accountability, a day of judgment. It is sharply put in our text: "When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" (verse 40) But no less sharply is the point made in other Matthean parables: tares will be burned, guests without wedding garments will be expelled, unprepared maidens will not attend the wedding party, servants who bury the talents will be cast into outer darkness, and all who fail to attend to hungry, naked, lonely, and imprisoned will be exiled into the place reserved for the devil and his angels. The Lord's instruction to the church is underscored and reinforced by vivid images of "that day."

A third and final theme found both in our text and in the whole of Matthew is that of continuity and discontinuity between the Christian community and Israel. Even though
Jesus had declared that his purpose was not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them (5:17, 18), this Gospel reflects a condition in which the distance between synagogue and church has reached the point of open antagonism. If Matthew's Gospel is properly located in Antioch, Syria, about A.D. 90, then the book records the church's situation in a center of the Gentile mission at the time Judaism is sharply defining itself in terms of traditions, canon, and institution. After a long and bitter struggle, Jerusalem had fallen to the Romans in A.D. 70. The Christians had not joined in defense of the city, but fled across the Jordan. Apparently Matthew understands the destruction of Jerusalem as God's judgment upon the wicked tenants (21:5-7). There is no question that for Matthew the Jewish leaders are the tenants who brought no fruit from God's vineyard (Isa. 5:2; Matt. 21:33), the builders who rejected the stone that became the head of the corner (Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42), the stewards from whom the kingdom was taken in order to be given to others (Matt. 21:43).

The interpreter will want to be cautious here lest the severity of tension between the synagogue and the church which prevailed in Matthew's time and place be imposed upon the relationship between Jesus and the Judaism of his day. That much of what Jesus said and did widened the gulf between him and Jewish leaders to the point of animosity and finally death is clear. But the student of this text will notice here and elsewhere the reflection of conditions that developed after Jesus' death. For example, neither flogging Christians in synagogues (10:17) nor the acceptance of Gentiles into the church (21:43) occurred during Jesus' ministry. It is the nature of a Gospel to retell the story of Jesus so as to address the church of the writer's own time, but the interpreter must be careful in attempting a historical reconstruction not to collapse the time of Jesus and the time of the writer as though they were one and the same. This would be unfair to both church and synagogue.
When one moves from the larger to the more immediate context of 21:33-43, one discovers an intensification of those themes which have been described as characteristic of the Gospel as a whole. This interpretation is not surprising since Jesus has now left Galilee (19:1) for Judea, the scene of conflict, arrest, trial, and death. In fact, the entrance into Jerusalem is preceded by the third and final prediction of the passion: “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day” (20:18-19). This statement announces the onset of “Jerusalem winter,” which extends from the entry into the city (21:1) through the final public discourse (26:1) to the death itself (27:50).

The passage we are exploring is the second of three parables placed immediately after the cleansing of the temple (21:12-17), the cursing of the fig tree (21:18-22), and the question of Jesus’ authority (21:23-27). It is significant that these parables are directed at the religious authorities in their own territory, the temple (21:12, 14, 23). The first parable (21:28-32) is a true parable in every sense: a simple story about anonymous persons engaged in everyday activities. It fits the context of Jesus’ ministry with no intrusions of symbolic language, allegorical interpretations, or reference to conditions of the postresurrection church. In fact, comments following the parable concern responses by sinners and righteous persons to the preaching of John, not Jesus. The parable has to do with repentance and the kingdom of God, central themes in the preaching of both John and Jesus.

On the face of it, our lection is very similar to the above: both consist of parables with commentary, both are vineyard stories, both are addressed to the condition of resistance to the kingdom, in both the kingdom of God (not “of heaven” as is usual in Matthew) is the subject (verses 31, 43). However, characteristics within the parable as well as in the commen-
tory which follows make it quite clear that 21:33-43 has
different presuppositions and reflects circumstances quite
different from those implied in the preceding parable of two
sons. Quite obviously it is Matthew and not Jesus who has
placed these two parables together.

This observation moves the exegetical process directly to
the text of 21:33-43. Matthew’s account is enlightened by
looking at it beside the parallels in Mark 12:1-12 and Luke
20:9-19. Both Mark and Luke understand this parable to be
distinct from what precedes it, as is indicated by transitions:
“And he began to speak to them in parables” (Mark 12:1);
“And he began to tell the people this parable” (Luke 20:9).
Only Matthew has the parable of the two sons, and he seeks
to join this parable to it by modifying the transition to “Hear
another parable” (21:33). Thereafter, Matthew is very close to
Mark but with several noticeable variations.

Mark’s “servant” sent by the owner is in Matthew
“servants.” Matthew very likely has the mistreated and
martyred prophets of Israel in mind. Unlike Mark, in
Matthew the listeners incriminate themselves in responding
to the parable. Matthew also alters Mark’s reference to the
son being killed and cast out to the son being cast out and
killed, a change in the story to make it fit the historical facts of
the crucifixion. And then Matthew adds the summary
comment (verse 43). The fact that Mark opens the parable
with the elaborate description of the owner preparing the
vineyard, the description taken directly from Isa. 5:2,
indicates that the parable is already on the way to becoming
an allegory. A parable is a self-contained story, the meaning
of which is found within its own action and characterizations.
An allegory does not have its message in itself but in that
beyond itself to which it refers. By using Isa. 5:2, which
concerns God and Israel, Mark and Matthew alert the reader
that the story to follow is not about a man who owned a
vineyard but about God and the people of God. And as we
have seen, Matthew extends the allegorizing process by
altering details in the story to fit historical reality. In Matthew's hands, the parable becomes an allegory pointing to a God who invested heavily, to prophets who were abused by those to whom they were sent, to God's Son who was killed by God's people, to the destruction of those people, and to God's transferring the kingdom from Israel to Gentiles.

To isolate a parable from its context is usually not difficult. As a rule, parables are left fairly intact, told and re-told with little alterations to their interiors. Changes appear in the comments at the beginning and at the close of parables. Here, however, the parable itself has undergone internal modification, making it very difficult for the interpreter who wishes to recover the story "as Jesus told it." It is the general opinion of scholars that Luke's record is more parable-like in this case. However, even more free of internal elaboration and interpretation is the account of this parable in the Gospel of Thomas, Logion 65:

He said, "There was a good man who owned a vineyard. He leased it to tenant farmers so that they might work it and he might collect the produce from them. He sent his servant so that the tenants might give him the produce of the vineyard. They seized his servant and beat him, all but killing him. The servant went back and told his master. The master said 'Perhaps they did not recognize him.' He sent another servant. The tenants beat this one as well. Then the owner sent his son and said, 'Perhaps they will show respect to my son.' Because the tenants knew that it was he who was the heir to the vineyard, they seized him and killed him. Let him who has ears hear." (Trans. T. O. Lambdin.)

The preacher or teacher who feels confident that the story as Jesus told it can be recovered may wish to develop the message in the original parable rather than the message in Matthew's interpretation. Such a procedure is certainly not out of order nor in violation of the New Testament as the church's Scripture. However, the burden is on the interpreter not only to isolate the story Jesus told but to set that story within the intention of Jesus' message and ministry. Such a
pursuit is beyond our present exercise, but the parable (if the Gospel of Thomas properly renders it) does stir some thoughts that could be fruitful. For instance, the story is in many ways as old as Eden when tenants first tried to become owners, where creatures first refused to accept their places as gifts of the Creator, where the refusal to be faithful stewards eventuated in murder. Being faithful and fruitful in the life and role given to us is certainly not absent elsewhere in Jesus' teaching.

However, it seems the better course to listen to the text as we now have it, to hear with Matthew what Christ is saying to the church. After all, biblical texts move forward toward us not backward away from us. The most striking feature of this text is the tension between the synagogue and the church, tension which is not only presupposed but increased. What is to be heard in that? Surely more than historical interest is being served by a story which indicates that in Matthew's time and place the mission to the Jews is over. At least this account does nothing to continue any effort to convert the Jewish community to Christianity. On the contrary, it would, if heard or read by Jews, more likely alienate than reconcile. Nor does it seem reasonable that this passage is offered solely for the purpose of explaining that the fate of Israel was the direct result of mistreating God's Son. That such an interpretation of the fall of Jerusalem was held by Matthew as well as other Christian writers is clear, but what was the point of telling it? Is the writer giving his church a cheap lift by criticizing the Jewish community and quietly celebrating the transfer of the kingdom "from them to us"? One would hate to think so, even though the tactics of triumphalism have often soiled the mission of the church.

It is more likely that this text is offered as encouragement and confirmation to a church that follows a crucified messiah and whose members even now are being delivered before councils, governors, and kings and who are being flogged in synagogues (Matt. 10:17-18). How was the church to
interpret mistreatment and acts of violence against itself? Is this God's punishment for those who have turned to the heresy of Christianity? Matthew answers clearly that the things that have happened are within God's will. So did the prophets write (Isa. 5:2; Ps. 118:22-23) and so did Jesus himself speak (Matt. 21:33-43). Painful as the story has been and is, still this is the Lord's doing: the rejected stone is the head of the corner and the kingdom has been taken from the disobedient and given to those who will bear fruit.

But in that assurance is a sharp warning. In fact, warnings may be more evident in Matthew than words of encouragement. And the warning is this: unless the new tenants bear fruit, the kingdom may again be transferred. The Christians are tenants, not owners of the vineyard. There is no room for chauvinism; it is not a case of Gentile now being favored over Jew. After all, says Matthew, both Jews and Gentiles are persecuting the church. It is rather a case of the owner still expecting the vineyard to produce fruit, which Matthew understands as righteous living, human caring, and courageous witnessing.

The final step of exegesis is to return to the biblical text and read it again. This reading, benefitting from the investigations that have been done, will not be as the first. If initially the text was viewed from a distance, observing what was said and done, it is not so now. A first impression might have confirmed old feelings: the Jews rejected, punished, and killed those whom God sent. To teach and preach from that distance could feed, however unintentionally, anti-Semitism in the church. A second reading after careful study may effect a more direct appropriation of the text, warning the church against tragic history being repeated, this time by Christians. These experiences of the text may be compared to viewing old newsreels of World War II. At first one may sense a revival or perpetuation of animosity toward Germans and Japanese. A second look, however, could prompt the viewer to ask if the greed, fear, prejudice, self-interest, and unexamined nation-
alism which once were attributed solely to the enemy are not alive and well among us.

Likewise here, Matthew is not telling war stories, nourishing hatred of Jews with reminders of martyrdoms and Golgotha. Rather, the text addresses the church, the tenant of God's vineyard, and asks, where is the fruit? Has fruitfulness been replaced by resistance, even to the point of violence, against all messengers who call for personal and social righteousness? Or has what small yield there is been kept to pay for repair and maintenance of the vineyard?

Once the preacher or teacher is not a teller of stories about disobedient Jews but is a listener to stories told to disobedient Christians, the emphasis in interpreting this text can be placed at one of two points: (1) the prophetic call for a return on God's investment, for the living, caring, and witnessing which Matthew calls "fruit"; (2) the word of encouragement conveyed by the fact that God does not destroy the vineyard. God is not defeated. That which is marvelous in our eyes is that God has made use of the throwaway, the rejected stone, and has appointed to tend the vineyard those who had once been regarded as nobody.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

Lections

Isaiah 25:1-10a  Philippians 4:4-20  Matthew 22:1-14

Exegesis and Exposition of Matthew 22:1-14

The exegetical procedure followed in the preceding section will provide the framework for the discussion of this lection. However, attention will not be called to each step here as was done previously. The intent in that discussion was to make the reader conscious of process in order to stress the need for disciplined and deliberate effort in listening to a text. Whatever the method one uses for exegesis, it should be used
with enough regularity to be habitual. With habit comes more fruitful use of time, more freedom for exploration, and more delight in the task.

Matt. 22:1-14 is definitely a single unit of material which may be used for teaching and preaching without fear of violating the integrity of the text. It is separated from preceding material by a typical Matthean transition: “And again Jesus spoke to them. . . .” Equally typical of Matthew is the concluding line: “For many are called but few are chosen.” Proverbial sayings like this are found throughout Matthew as closing comments and help account for the similarity of much of Matthew to the wisdom tradition in Israel.

There are those who would argue that the parable originally ended at verse 10, verses 11-14 having been added by Matthew either as an original elaboration of the parable or as the addition of a portion of what had once been a separate parable. This argument usually proceeds from the assumption that the very similar stories of a banquet and rejected invitation found in Luke 14:16-24 and Gospel of Thomas 64 more nearly represent the story as Jesus told it, and neither Luke nor Thomas have a parallel to verses 11-14 in Matthew’s account. We shall have occasion later to look at Matthew in the light of the other two stories, but at present it is enough to say that sermons or lessons on Matthew must include Matthew’s conclusion. Whether these verses are Matthew’s creation or are taken from another parable, as they now appear in the text, they end the story begun in verse 2 about a king, a wedding feast, and the guests of the king. Logical and theological problems created by this conclusion will be addressed in due time.

The reader of Matt. 22:1-14 is told at the outset that what follows is a parable told by Jesus to certain unidentified persons. The parable is partially interpreted or applied by the expression, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to. . . .” And to what is the kingdom compared? A grand and
festive occasion; the prince is marrying and the king is giving a wedding feast. Preparations are completed, servants are sent to tell those invited, but the guests refuse. Other servants are sent but the guests not only refuse to come, they make light of the invitation, some going off to attend to other matters while some mistreat and kill the servants. The angry king destroys those guests, burns their city, and reissues the invitation, this time extending it to all who could be found in the streets, good and bad. The wedding hall was filled, but the king saw one in attendance without a wedding garment. Speechless and without excuse, the man was thrown out at the king's command.

Even upon the first reading, several matters demand more attention. Most noticeable, perhaps, is the striking similarity of the parable to the one preceding it, the story of the wicked tenants. The king parallels the vineyard owner, the guests who refuse to attend parallel the wicked tenants, and bringing in other guests parallels giving the vineyard to other tenants. In both, waves of servants are sent; in both the servants are mistreated and killed; in both severe punishment is meted out; in both something is expected of the newly invited, in the one case, wearing a wedding garment and in the other, producing fruit. Do we have here two parables that mean the same thing? And if a parable is a story cut from ordinary life, has not this one suffered some exaggeration? Hardly lifelike, for example, is making light of a king's invitation, or sending so many servants to call the guests, or the senseless killing of the servants, or bringing troops to execute the guests and burn the city while a prepared meal is waiting, or throwing out a guest brought in off the street because he had no wedding garment. And why speak of those brought in off the street as "both bad and good"? That expression injects into the story a moral quality quite unrelated to wedding parties and guest lists. And the man thrown out is not simply rejected; the servants are to "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness;
there men will weep and gnash their teeth." Obviously the
man is not simply tossed out of the party; he is being
punished. And obviously the man is not simply being
punished; he lands not in the street but in hell. A parable says
what it says but an allegory says something else. The story,
while seeming to be about a wedding feast and guests, is
really about something else. Matthew makes that clear.
The closing line, "For many are called, but few are
chosen," could hardly have been the ending of this story.
There is no contrast between called and chosen, nor is there any
between many and few. The many and few cannot refer to the
original guests and to the street people who did attend
because the story closes with a hall full of guests. And the
king's tossing out one man certainly did not reduce
many to few. The truth in this closing proverb lies either within itself or
in another context because the preceding story does not move
to such a conclusion.
The preacher or teacher who has already worked through
the preceding story (21:33-43) may feel at this point that this
passage is clear, being a duplicate (even with quite different
imagery) of the parable of the wicked tenants. There is some
truth in that judgment. Contextually what has been said of
the preceding parable can be transferred without alteration to
this passage. The parable of the marriage feast is the last of
the three parables against Israel, set by Matthew in the
context of Jesus' final weeks of debate, conflict, arrest and
death. Appropriately, the clash with the religious establish­
ment occurs in Jerusalem, in the temple. Internally, this
parable does seem to have been interpreted by the one
preceding it. In both, Matthew's tendency to interpret
parables by allegorical and moral elaborations is quite
evident. Details of the stories conform, contrary to the usual
pattern of parable content, to historical events such as Israel's
rejection of prophets and of early Christian missionaries, the
destruction of Jerusalem, and the movement of the church
toward a predominantly Gentile constituency. However,
instead of turning from the parable as one which merely repeats what has already been said, let the interpreter look more carefully at the text itself. There may yet be a word there to be discovered, heard, and said.

For exegesis to be both fair and fruitful, it is essential that one not approach the text negatively. For example, we have spoken of Matthew's allegorical and moral expansions within parables. If this fact is taken as an act of violating or distorting or obscuring a story Jesus told, if Matthew is viewed as one who "changed" the message, then the interpreter is already operating with diminished respect for the text. Such procedure assumes that the real Gospel lies behind the Gospels, that God's Word is not the text we have but that "untouched by human hands" pure quotation of Jesus yet to be recovered, that in the study of Christian documents, earlier is always better than later. A more positive approach is to see Matthew doing what Jesus did: addressing his hearers. He is doing what a Gospel writer does: he interprets Jesus' message for a new time and place. To have quoted exactly, without comment, to a church in Antioch, Syria, what Jesus had said to Jewish leaders in Jerusalem two generations earlier could have been irresponsible or even misleading. Of course, the church did not and cannot abandon its obligations to preserve the tradition from Jesus, but to have done so or to do so by abdicating the obligation to interpret that tradition as the word of the Lord for here and now would mean the Bible is not the church's Scripture but the church's idol.

Having this in mind, the student of Matthew is now free to probe for any source Matthew may have used, not for the purpose of "getting back to" anything, but in order better to understand by his use of that source what Matthew is saying. In this regard, many scholars take Luke 14:16-24 to be an earlier form of the parable of the feast. This may well be the case. Luke's parable is certainly simpler (a man, not a king; gave a banquet, not a marriage feast; sent a servant, not servants; without acts of violence; no punishment of the
improperly attired, etc.), has more dramatic unity (three excuses), and preserves more direct discourse common to parables. Luke’s story is also much more realistic. This is evident not only in the absence of murders, retaliation, and troops burning a city while a meal waits on the table, but also in the excuses made by the guests. Their excuses have the weight of reason and are in sharp contrast to Matthew’s “they made light of it.” In other words, for Luke the invitation comes amid worthy alternatives while in Matthew the invitation comes to arrogant, critical, and belligerent guests. The Gospel of Thomas (Logion 64) shares in Luke’s simple realism but with variations, the most noticeable being that the original guests were all from the business world. The parable ends in Thomas with a very strong anticommerce and business bias: “Businessmen and merchants will not enter the Places of My Father.”

All this is not to imply that Luke has preserved the story as originally told. On the contrary, even Luke’s chaste account reflects certain characteristics of that Gospel’s theology. For example, Luke places the story in a series of parables given by Jesus to his host and to guests at a dinner party in the home of a ruler of the Pharisees. Meals are at the center of the theology of Luke-Acts. Also in Luke, to the banquet are invited “the poor and maimed and blind and lame.” These are the special objects of God’s love and to them belongs the kingdom. And the process of allegorization may have already begun in Luke with the servant being sent into the city streets (Jews) and then out into the open country (Gentiles). But even if Luke’s account is not exactly as told originally, looking at Matthew alongside Luke makes more noticeable the special features peculiar to Matthew. These accents help us to hear what Matthew says is the message of the Lord to his church. To these we now turn.

In Matthew, the banquet is now to be understood as the great eschatological feast, the messianic banquet. This may not have been the focus when Jesus told the story because he
often referred to his presence, his ministry, as a festive occasion (Matt. 11:19); in fact, as a wedding feast (Matt. 9:15). But in Matthew’s interpretation for his readers, the banquet is future not present. This fact is clear in that the story line of the parable follows the history of salvation not simply up to the death of Jesus and the time of the church (as in the parable of the wicked tenants, 21:33-43), but beyond the destruction of Jerusalem to the sending out of Christian messengers. In other words, the parable assumes the banquet will take place after the Jewish rejection, after the destruction of Jerusalem, and after the Gentile ingathering. That the banquet is at the end time is also clear from the closing scene. Binding, casting into outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth are images of the final punishment. This parable, then, joins others in Matthew (the weeds, 13:24-30; the ten maidens, 25:1-13; the talents, 25:14-30, plus others) in calling the reader’s attention to the final judgment.

This is no minor theme for this evangelist. In fact, the reminders of judgment not only appear frequently in Jesus’ teachings, but in Matthew’s arrangement the final public message of Jesus is on the subject of the last judgment. “When the Son of man comes in his glory . . .” (25:31-46). Nor is Matthew alone in this conviction concerning accountability to God. To be sure, the first Gospel, with its constant attention to ethical seriousness and to righteous conduct as the behavior of those in the kingdom, draws more frequent and more dramatic scenes of the final day before God than do most writers. But the entire Bible conveys the unwavering conviction that history and human life have direction and purpose. There was a genesis of all life; there will be an end to all life. And it is God who finishes history and to whom all are responsible.

And what, according to this parable, is the basis of judgment? Quite likely, as Luke has reserved, the single issue originally was how persons responded to the banquet invitation: some said no and some said yes. But for Matthew
it is not enough simply to accept the invitation. The messengers invited as many as they could find and they brought into the king’s great hall both the bad and the good. That was as it should be; everyone is invited, regardless. However, being invited is not to be interpreted as the occasion for coming on one’s own terms, coming as one wishes. An open invitation is not an announcement of no standards, no expectation of the guests. This is the point of the closing episode (verses 11-14). Shocking as it may be to us, the story assumes that all guests, “both bad and good,” understood the banquet was in the king’s palace, in honor of the prince, on the occasion of the prince’s wedding, and called for appropriate dress. The wedding garment, in kingdom talk, is new life, righteous conduct.

The preacher or teacher will want to be careful not to increase the difficulty of the closing scene by importing unconsciously a line from Luke. The guests from the streets, in Luke’s account, are “the poor and maimed and blind and lame.” To bring that group into Matthew’s story and then have the king expect everyone to wear a wedding garment would be painfully unjust and make the story unbearable (there is no evidence that it was customary to provide wedding garments for guests, even though this is often said to soften the story). As all familiar with Luke know, for that writer the inhabitants of the kingdom are the nobodies: the poor, the oppressed, the hungry, the indigents of the street, the powerless. But Matthew addresses a church plagued by lawlessness, ethical irresponsibility, and moral laxity. He, therefore, looks at the guests in terms appropriate to that church: the bad and the good.

It would be unfair to Matthew to say that his purpose was to clean up Luke’s banquet. However one may gauge the success of his effort, the evangelist is struggling with the nature of the Gospel as a word both of grace and of judgment. For all his concern for right conduct, Matthew has not lost the word of grace. “Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite
to the marriage feast as many as you find” (verse 9). “And those servants . . . gathered all whom they found, both bad and good” (verse 10). There is at this point in the story no selectivity, moral or otherwise; but Matthew knew how easily the word of grace could become cheap and melt into soft permissiveness. He knew that without demand, grace is no more grace; that for those who presume upon grace, forgiveness does not fulfill righteousness but negates it. Matthew apparently is addressing a church that had lost the distinction between accepting all persons and condoning all behavior.

When the preacher or teacher returns to the text for a final reading, it is quite likely that the narrative unity which is expected of a parable will have receded before the more dominant impression made by Matthew’s interpretive handling of the story. Matthew offers the “parable” in three distinct movements: first, verse 1-8 relate how it was. Here Matthew allegorizes the parable to document his reading of history: the rejection of prophets and Christian missionaries, resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem and Israel’s loss of place at the messianic banquet. The preacher will probably not wish to linger in this first movement since Matthew has turned a parable into history. Second, verses 9-10 announce how it is. Here reader identification is immediate. We are the invited, the strangers, the nameless ones brought in off the street. Here we are, the bad and the good, sitting at the king’s table. Why? How? It certainly is not because we are good since the bad are beside us; it certainly is not because we are bad since the good are beside us. The reason lies solely in the king who issued the invitation. This is the good news, incredible and beyond calculation. Third, verses 11-14 warn of how it will be. It is expected that a guest respond in ways that properly honor the host and the occasion. Here is the Exodus again: deliverance from Egypt followed by the commands at Sinai. Here are justification and sanctification again: called by grace to the obedience of faith.
Protestants have a tendency to wallow in grace. Some are immobilized by a fear of doing anything lest they be accused of seeking salvation by works; some, by a fear of genuine piety lest they be accused of seeking salvation by merit. Those who bless their indolence with the soft sounds of "Amazing Grace" may be startled by the king's question: "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?"

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

Lections

Isaiah 45:1-7  I Thessalonians 1:1-5a  Matthew 22:15-22

Exegesis and Exposition of Matthew 22:15-22

The preacher or teacher of this lection can be confident of its unity and can do the exegesis without fearing that the passage has been fragmented by the lectionary or that the isolation of this text damages what precedes or what follows. The boundaries are clear. "Then the Pharisees went . . ." (verse 15) is a clear break from the preceding parable, which had its own conclusion. And verse 22b, "and they left him and went away" is obviously the end of the episode. In fact, this is exactly the expression used by Mark to conclude the parable of wicked tenants (12:12c), which in that Gospel immediately precedes the question of tribute to Caesar (12:13-17). Such concluding sentences serve to "round off" a text, making it more portable for use in a variety of settings in the life of the church. Quite possibly this text had a life of its own in the teaching and debating of the Christian communities prior to its present location and use in the Gospels. Both the form and content of the story argue for such a prior history. The form is a "pronouncement story," a unit of material that has as its center a pronouncement of Jesus. In such stories, the narrative portion is subordinate to the pronouncement and usually recounts the barest essentials as
a cradle for the saying of the Lord. That saying is the primary content and the reason for preserving the story: Jesus has spoken on a matter of major importance for the church.

The reader of Matt. 22:15-22 is told at the outset that what follows concerns an attempt at verbal entrapment. One knows, therefore, to expect a clash of wits, or a question-and-answer exchange, or a question met with a question, or possibly a citation of Scripture countered with another citation. Jesus is the target and the engineers of the scheme are Pharisees. Even though the general context of Jerusalem and temple remain, not priests (Sadducees) but Pharisees are at work here. That is important. What is their quarrel with Jesus? Has Jesus violated their territory or their beliefs? Is a question about tax to Rome a Pharisee concern? Maybe the political nature of the question accounts for Herodians accompanying disciples of the Pharisees. Precisely who are Herodians? The hostility of the group is thinly veiled by compliments to Jesus' person (he is true or genuine), his teaching (it is the way of God presently truthfully), and his relationships (he does not play favorites nor compromise himself to gain the favor of the powerful). These pretending-to-be seekers ask a big question. Is it lawful? What law is even in question? Certainly not Roman since Rome imposed the tax. Then we have a possible clash of laws.

Jesus is obviously in a "no win" situation, whether he answers yes or no. Jesus knows full well their malicious intent in testing him. Would "tempt" be a good synonym for "test" here? If so, then this is a temptation story and the evil one is at work. Jesus asks for a coin. Does this mean he had no money, or was he by this means ensnaring them? Their having a Roman coin would be silent testimony to their being in Caesar's realm. Then again, maybe their bringing the coin implies they had to go find one. To Caesar, Caesar's; God, God's. Is that an answer or a clever maneuver? If it is an answer, then is Jesus recognizing two realms, secular and sacred, political and religious? If so, surely the two realms are
not equal in demands for allegiance, nor mutually exclusive.
The delegation marvels. At what? His answer? His seeing
through their trap? His cleverness? They walk away but the
reader of this lection remains with a hand in the air and a list
of follow-up questions.

This is the point to back away and see the passage in
context before moving in more closely in order to hear, if
possible, the message Matthew brings from Jesus Christ to
the church.

We have already become familiar with the context in which
Matthew places the four lections being considered here, and
there is no need to repeat what has been said. However, the
visibility of the structure of this section could provide an
opportunity for a preacher or teacher to help listeners
understand what a Gospel is, thereby correcting a popular
notion that a Gospel is a biography with chronological
continuity. Just as Matthew collects in chapter 13 eight
parables with no intention of leading a reader to think Jesus
gave all of them at one time, so here Matthew has gathered
the accounts of Jesus’ most substantive debates with the
religious authorities. When and in what order these events
occurred is not the primary concern of the writer. This is not
to say none of these encounters occurred at the end of Jesus’
life. On the contrary, one would expect the greatest tension
and most serious issues to appear as events build toward
Jesus’ death. But just as one can see the pedagogical value for
the early church in collecting parables in groups, so one can
see the polemical value of gathering into one large unit the
issues that were debated between the church and the
synagogue.

The lection for today is the first of four question-and-
answer encounters between Jesus and Jewish leaders.
Following the question of tribute to Caesar there is the
question from the Sadducees concerning the resurrection
(22:23-33), the Pharisees’ question about the great com-
mandment (22:34-40), and finally, Jesus’ question to the
Pharisees: "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" (22:41-46). These four confrontations are set between the three parables against Israel (21:28-22:14) and Jesus' scathing apology against the scribes and Pharisees (23:1-36). In order to hear these words of Jesus, the reader is asked to stand in a public place in Jerusalem. At the time of this story, Jerusalem is living not only in the light of the temple but in the shadow of the judgment hall of Rome's governor, Pontius Pilate.

Matt. 22:15-22 follows the basic outline in Mark 12:13-17: questioners came to Jesus with flattering lips and hostile intent; they pose the question of paying taxes to Rome; Jesus perceives their evil design; Jesus asks for a coin and involves his opponents with a question; Jesus answers their question; they marvel and go away.

The questioners are Pharisees, the Jewish party which dominates this entire section of Matthew with the exception of the one encounter with the Sadducees (22:23-33). This is not at all surprising since the Pharisees were the major party of Judaism to survive the wars with Rome and were the representatives of Judaism in Matthew's day. Because the Sadducees were the priestly party and ceased with the destruction of the temple, recalling debates between them and Jesus could have little practical value for Matthew's church. However, debates between Pharisees and Jesus had immediate transfer value to debates between synagogue and church. The base for Pharisaic activity was the synagogue, the most durable and powerful institution of Judaism. At the heart of the synagogue was the Torah, the sacred Scriptures, and its interpretation for the life of Israel was a principal business of the Pharisees.

Their plan to entangle Jesus is to be carried out by a delegation of their own disciples (an unusual reference; see also Mark 2:18) and Herodians. Pharisees and Herodians are a strange league, joined by Mark here (12:13) to entrap Jesus and at 3:6 to destroy him. Herodians were the supporters of the Herod dynasty, in the present case Herod Antipas. Since
the Herods held power by Rome's permission, they were supporters of Rome's tax. The Pharisees, however, smarted under this and all other Roman intrusions into Israel's life. Even though their opposition was not feverish and openly hostile as was that of the Zealots, still their coming with Herodians to Jesus represented a no and a yes to the tax question. Whatever Jesus' answer, someone would be very displeased. But that was the point of sending such a delegation with such a question.

Posing as truth seekers, they address Jesus as "Teacher." Interestingly enough, this is not a term in Matthew's Gospel by which Jesus' disciples address him. Rather, enemies and unbelievers use this title. Also interesting is the questioner's use of "what you think" (verse 17). This may be irony or sarcasm since the expression, "What do you think?" was, according to Matthew, a favorite way Jesus introduced a teaching. The flattery is transparent to Jesus and he knows what Matthew has already told the reader in verse 15, that their intent is evil. Had Matthew not so informed us, we might have been deceived by that which Jesus saw as a disguise.

"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" The translation "lawful" may be too strong. The phrase can also be translated "Is it permitted" or "Is it proper." That may have been the question: not the legality of Rome assessing a tax but whether it is permitted or proper for a Jew to pay that tax. The tax in question was probably the Roman poll tax, levied in A.D. 6, still in effect and the occasion for bitter clashes between Romans and Zealots.

Verse 17 makes it clear that Jesus perceives the occasion as a time of temptation. The word translated in the RSV as "malice" is the common adjective meaning "evil," which when used as a noun means "the evil one," that is, Satan. For example, the Lord's Prayer petitions: "And lead us not into temptation, / But deliver us from evil" (the evil one, Matt. 6:13). Also "put me to the test" can be translated "tempt me." The word is most often
translated "tempt," as in the Lord's Prayer and in Jesus' experience in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11).

The difference between "test" and "tempt" is immense in the way one understands Jesus' perception of the situation. If he is being tested, then we have here a game of wits, of minds, and, at its ugliest, a trap, so that in the presence of both supporters and opponents of the tax, Jesus will be forced to make enemies by his answer. The consequences, of course, would not be inconsiderable. But if Jesus is being tempted, then the evil one is working through these questioners to lure Jesus into a position in his ministry that would be in service to the prince of this world and not to God. Recall the wilderness temptations which preceded Jesus' ministry: food (stones to bread), miracles (leap from the pinnacle), and political power (the devil offers the world). All these had to do with ministry and the nature of the kingdom. Or again, when Jesus first began to speak of his own suffering and death, Peter rebuked him. Jesus recognized in Peter's rebuke more than the voice of a friend but the voice of temptation. "Get behind me, Satan!" (16:21-23). If Satan worked through a friend, then surely opponents could be the instruments of temptation, as Matthew often points out (16:1; 19:3; 22:35; 23:15). Even if one grants that the translation "tempt" may introduce too directly the ultimate conflict, Jesus versus the power of Satan, still the passage conveys more than a battle of minds among differing interpreters of religious and political responsibility. Jesus is confronted with "evil," not just "a tough question."

The teacher or preacher will want to be deliberate and intentional in portraying the scene. On one level, one can cheerfully conclude Jesus is of keen mind and again outwits his opponents. On another level, one can face the painful truths which we repeatedly encounter in the stories of Jesus' ministry: evil is very real; it approaches often in beautiful disguise (flattery); its agents may be persons who understand themselves to be religious leaders; no response is clear and simple; doing God's will in any situation demands discern-
ment and responsible decision. It is difficult to believe Matthew preserves this story to enable his church to appreciate how clever Jesus was. In Antioch, Syria, near the close of the century (if that was the time and place), Rome was still powerfully present, the tax was still due, and Christians were still struggling to know if there was any place for obedience to Caesar among those living for the full entrance of the kingdom of God.

When the coin (denarius) was brought, Rome became visibly present. Coins from this period (A.D. 14-37) have been recovered and, in addition to an image, bear the words: "Tiberius, Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, high priest." The narrative portion of the text ends with Jesus holding the coin and looking at it. Then Matthew gives the pronouncement which was the reason for preserving the story: "Render (give back, return) therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (verse 21).

What are we to understand by this word of the Lord? Surely it means more than keeping Roman coins and Jewish coins separate. And certainly it cannot mean that there are two separate realms in which allegiance is owed and these are not to be confused. There are not two Lords but one. Jesus will make it clear in our next lection: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (22:37). Whatever is granted Caesar must come under that first and greatest commandment.

Then is the saying in verse 21 really an answer to the question of paying tax to Caesar? It is not an answer if by answer is meant quoting something Jesus said as though that called for no interpretation, no struggle for its appropriation in a particular time and place, no decision on the part of his disciples. Scripture does not properly function that way, not even pronouncements of the Lord. Regarding Scripture as authoritative does not prohibit the church struggling with its meaning; it demands it. Paul demonstrates this when faced with questions about marriage in Corinth. He responds first with the word of the
Lord: the wife should not leave the husband nor the husband, the wife (I Cor. 7:10-11). Then he begins interpreting this word of the Lord as it bears upon the condition of a Christian man or woman having a pagan spouse (I Cor. 7:12 ff.). In similar fashion, the church in the first century and every century since has quoted this word of the Lord concerning civil duty and then labored to interpret its meaning in a variety of contexts. Paul did in Rom. 13:1 ff. as did the writers of I Pet. 2:13 ff., I Tim. 2:2, and Titus 3:1. By the time Revelation was written, the attitude of Rome toward the church had changed radically and "render to Caesar" was interpreted anew (Rev. 13:1 ff.; 18:1 ff.). The church may be disappointed that she has here no "timeless truth" to quote, thereby dissolving all complexities into a simple answer. But why should his disciples be exempt from the testing, the struggling, the demand for discernment that marked Jesus' entire life?

The question of a Christian's responsibility to Caesar is difficult enough when made the subject of prayerful discussion among the concerned seeking God's will and ways to support one another. When the question is posed as a way to trap someone, to condemn someone with the label of "liberal" or "fundamentalist" or "activist" or "peacenik," then seeking the way of God in the world gives way to malice. Under such conditions new questioners replace the old, but the business is the same: agents of the evil one come not to seek and know but to tempt and destroy.

Now read again the text. If it remains no more than a battle of wits, then applause for Jesus is response enough. If, however, the Pharisees who come to test him become for Jesus the disguised voice of temptation as he faces a clash with established authority, then complimenting Jesus on his answer is hardly adequate.

The preacher or teacher may choose to attend to either of the two major impacts of the passage. One impact is in terms of method: what is the nature and purpose of Christian
discourse? How and to what end do believers engage one another about the faith? Listening to the text and to much of the religious talk so prevalent today, one would get the impression that it involves right answers and wrong answers; trick questions that cause one to feel trapped; code words to separate insiders from outsiders; clever maneuvers; witty putdowns; Scripture quotations that impale the opponent; simple solutions that close conversation. However, Jesus moved the discussion to another level, that of a soul struggling with the will of God amid many loyalties. This level lies beyond wit, games, and traps. The other impact is that of the issue: the responsibility of Christians toward secular authority. That God is sovereign over persons and institutions is not an issue, but the place of Caesar under that sovereignty is. Solutions are simple for those who call Caesar "Lord" just as they are for those who call Caesar "Satan." In other words, if the state is to receive either total obedience or total opposition, the lines of action are clear; but if the church *can at times support* and at times *must resist* the state, then the struggle is on. And the struggle is not ended by a decision in one case but is renewed with every assault upon conscience and faith. Nor was Jesus himself exempt. In fact, he was finally quite alone, both church and state conspiring against him. One can hardly imagine a heavier demand: to be called upon to obey God, not simply in the face of political wrath but without the support of the community of faith. But it still happens.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25**

_Lections_


Exegesis and Exposition of Matthew 22:34-46

Those who have been taking seriously the need to determine early the boundaries of a text will be quick to see
that Matt. 22:34-46 does not consist of one unit but two. The two units begin similarly: "But when the Pharisees heard . . . they came together" (verse 34) and "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together" (verse 41). The first unit ends at verse 40 and the second at verse 46. In fact, verse 46 ends the entire question-and-answer section and not simply the account contained in 22:41-46 ("And no one was able to answer him a word . . ."). Mark had used this ending at the close of the questions put to Jesus (12:34) and Luke after the Sadducees' question about the resurrection (20:40), rather than after Jesus' question to his questioners, as Matthew has done. Two other factors divide this lection into two distinct units: one deals with Old Testament commandments while the other concerns christology, and one presents Jesus answering a question while the other presents him as the questioner. Understandably, therefore, some lectionaries end the Gospel lection for this Sunday at 22:40.

It will be important for the preacher or teacher to decide quite early whether only one or both the stories in this text will be used for lesson or sermon. Separating them, as we have noted, would do no violence to either, and certainly each is of such substance as to deserve its own treatment. If the whole lection is to be considered, then some method needs to be chosen which does not divide the lesson or sermon in half. As a suggestion, why not focus primarily upon 22:34-40, using 22:41-46 as a christological affirmation concluding the entire series on debate and conflict? The comments that follow will take this course.

According to Matthew, the Pharisees came again to Jesus. They heard how he silenced the Sadducees on the question of the resurrection. Since Jesus' position on resurrection was like their own, were the Pharisees encouraged, or did Jesus' "success" against the Sadducees challenge them even more to tempt him into some unpopular or heretical position? The Pharisees "came together." A new and striking expression. Is the plot thickening, or is the pressure upon Jesus becoming
more official? Which is “the great commandment”? With hundreds of laws bearing the weight of divine command, the question is surely a lure into the heresy of simplification. And yet it is a good question, especially when one is overwhelmed by the sheer number of regulations. What is the heart of the matter? Everything in the Scripture hinges on total love of God and love of neighbor as oneself, says Jesus. The two commands are alike, he says. How so? Do not the two compete with each other? Does not church history reveal that full attention to the one means violation by neglect of the other? Is the solution an equal expenditure of time and resources? How does one love God anyway?

Again the Pharisees gather together, but now Jesus turns questioner. The subject is christology: whose son is the Messiah? This answer is clear and predictable but it is not clear whether Jesus agrees or disagrees. In either case, Jesus has something else in mind. He uses Ps. 110:1, assuming it was written by David and that the expression of “my Lord” refers to the Messiah. Is Jesus forcing the Pharisees to choose between Messiah as son of David and Messiah as Lord at God’s right hand? Or is it the case that both titles are correct and a choice is not possible? Maybe the Pharisees had not previously associated Ps. 110:1 with the Messiah. Is Jesus teaching them something new, or forcing them to see that they, too, cannot answer some questions easily, or simply taking the initiative in order to turn the tables and end the grilling? The effect is silence, since those who cannot answer find it difficult to keep asking. And Matthew’s church: what did they hear and understand in all this?

To begin to deal with these and other questions prompted by the text, it might be helpful to review discussions of context in the exegesis of the preceding lections. There is no need to rehearse that here. Suffice it to say that three parables against Israel have been followed in Matthew by three questions from Israel to Jesus, concluded by one question from Jesus to Israel. Israel cannot answer, and the entire
section is closed. Matthew follows with Jesus turning from Israel’s leaders to the multitudes and to his disciples and pronouncing woes upon the scribes and Pharisees (23:1 ff.). The shift from chapter 22 to chapter 23 is very significant. The audience for Jesus changes; he no longer talks to but talks about the religious leaders. Our lection represents, then, Matthew’s portrayal of the two final encounters of Jesus and official Judaism before Jesus turns to the crowds, then to his disciples, and finally to the cross. Jesus and the Pharisees can meet because they hold a common heritage and embrace common sacred texts. The tension arises in the interpretation of that heritage and those texts.

Matt. 22:34-40 has parallels in Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:25-28. Even though Luke agrees with Matthew that the one questioning Jesus was a lawyer seeking to test (temp) him, Luke has located the story earlier as preface to the parable of the good Samaritan. Mark has the question about the first commandment come from a sincere scribe whom Jesus commends. Only Matthew has Jesus again confronted by Pharisees, which gives the occasion the character of an official meeting “at the top.” As was said earlier, this enables Matthew to transfer the message directly to the encounters between church and synagogue. The twice-used expression, “they came together” may echo Ps. 2:2: “and the rulers take counsel together, / against the Lord and his anointed [Christ].” On the matter of “putting to the test” and addressing Jesus as teacher, see the discussion of 22:15-22.

The question of the great commandment was not an unusual one, especially from one trained to know, classify, and interpret the law of Moses. Rabbis had long engaged in arranging the laws into various categories, including that of “weight” (light and heavy). In such efforts at classification it was inevitable that someone ask, which is the great (in Mark, first) commandment? Once opinion solidified in a group or party, the question became a tool for locating the position of an opponent.
Nor is Jesus' answer a surprise, especially the first part of it. The command to love God totally had been elevated to special importance in Judaism, as evidenced by the daily recitation of the Shema: “Hear, O Israel, . . . you shall love . . .” (Deut. 6:5). (Matthew uses the Septuagint, but substitutes “mind” for “might.” Mark and Luke have both “mind” and “might,” or strength.) In fact, in Luke’s account, it is the lawyer himself who provides this answer as a summary, along with Lev. 19:18, of “what is written in the law” (10:25-28). That Luke says the lawyer quoted Deut. 6:5 while Matthew and Mark say it was Jesus who did so should remind us that in many fundamental matters Jesus and the Pharisees, the church and the synagogue, agreed. This fact is too seldom celebrated. It is more often the case that Christianity is evaluated in terms of its difference from, its contrast with, Judaism, as though it must continually be described as “over against” the parent faith. In many ways the church reaffirms Israel’s faith. It must have been a real source of satisfaction to Matthew and to the Jewish Christians in his constituency to be reminded that in the great and first commandment, church and synagogue agreed at this profound level. Jesus came not to abolish but to fulfill.

Strangely enough, this passage and Luke 11:42 provide all that the Synoptics offer on the topic of our love for God. In fact, the New Testament as a whole speaks relatively little about it. Far more attention is given to God’s love for us, those ways in which God relates to us, making possible a response of love on our part. But how does one love God? How does one turn in single devotion toward God?

Love of God is certainly not achieved by turning away from other persons. On this the text is clear: “And a second is like it, You shall love our neighbor as yourself” (verse 39). Lev. 19:18 is joined to Deut. 6:5. The point here is not to credit Jesus with a new summary of life before God; these two commands had been joined by others before Jesus. Again, Christians should look not solely for what is unique about
their faith but what is fundamental. And for Matthew, beyond all doubt, love for others expresses the deepest intent of God's law. Love and mercy toward all persons, including enemies, extended without partiality, is the distinguishing mark of life in the kingdom (5:43-38; 7:12; 9:13; 12:1-8; 18:12-35; 25:31-46). On the other hand, the clear signs of heresy and apostasy are hatred for one another and love growing cold (24:10-12). It may be that Matthew's church was plagued by a kind of religion which turned away from human need in exercise of pure and total love for God (7:21-23; 25:31-46). If so, then it is likely Matthew recalled this scene from Jesus' ministry as a warning to the church. Israel's problem was not the lack of clarity as to those fundamentals upon which all the law and prophets depended. Rather her problem was the neglect of these weightier matters while giving full attention to sacrifices, ceremonies, legal details, and all the ways people attend to religious matters (23:1 ff.). And so Jesus addresses the church, but not with a new and better answer to the question of what is the great commandment.

It is striking that at the close of this unit (verses 34-40) Matthew does not "round it off" with one of his characteristic conclusions. There is no response, no summary, no proverbial saying, no amazement, no action. Why? If we continue to think of the text as the word of Jesus Christ brought by Matthew to the church, then perhaps that is reason enough. If in Matthew's time and place the church is beginning to busy itself with those activities which perpetuate religious institutions, to the neglect of the two commandments which are first and great, then the woes upon Israel (23:1 ff.) may come soon upon the church. In such case, the passage needs no formal closure. On the contrary, the old word is still the new word, awaiting full obedience.

The unit concluding this section (22:41-46) has parallels in Mark 12:35-37a and Luke 20:41-44, but with noticeable differences. In Luke the audience is not identified, but Jesus
is obviously speaking to one group about another: "How can they say . . . ?" (verse 41) In Mark Jesus addresses the people about the scribes: "How can the scribes say . . . ?" (verse 35) Only in Matthew do we have a direct confrontation and it is, characteristically, with the Pharisees. "What do you think of the Christ (Messiah)? Whose son is he?" (verse 41). One recognizes Matthew's often-used introduction, "What do you think," which was, as noted earlier, the expression used by Pharisees in addressing Jesus at the beginning of this fourfold question and answer session (verse 17). Now Jesus is the questioner but not in order to test or tempt. Again characteristic of Matthew, Jesus has those addressed answer his question rather than give a summary report as do Mark and Luke.

The answer given, that the Christ is the son of David, had strong, Old Testament support and was one of the commonly held views of the Messiah (Isa. 9:2-7; 11:1-9; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-18; Ezek. 34:23-24, and others). Is Jesus here rejecting that view? Probably not. Had Jesus rejected that view of the Messiah it is unlikely that the title "son of David" would have remained so much a part of the christology of the early church, including Matthew (Matt. 1:1-17, 18-25; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; Luke 1:69; II Tim. 2:8; Rom. 1:3). Does the interchange here reflect an identity crisis in Jesus? Probably not. Questions about Jesus' inner life and self-understanding reflect our psychological orientation about which the Scriptures show little knowledge or interest. What, then, is taking place in this encounter?

Rather than replacing one messianic title with another, Jesus is here building upon one image a larger and more adequate one. Whose son is he? This question is properly answered: "David's." The whole of this Gospel says so, but "son of David" does not completely answer the question. Son of David is not the term used of the Christ in the passion narrative nor is son of David the title used of the one
crucified. The expression is simply not adequate for conveying all that Matthew means when he says Jesus is the Messiah. The Messiah is not solely David's son; he is also David's Lord.

The use of Ps. 110:1 does not, therefore, counter the Pharisee's answer but enlarges it. The citation of this passage (Matthew uses the Septuagint) is in quite traditional and popular form; it is ascribed to David, who spoke in the Holy Spirit; that is, he was regarded as a prophet. Actually Ps. 110 is probably from the Maccabean period, eight centuries after David, but Psalms were related to David as Proverbs were to Solomon. Whether the rabbis had understood Ps. 110 messianically is quite unclear, but the early Christians certainly did. It is the most widely and most frequently cited (about 35 times) Old Testament passage in New Testament christological statements. Its most common Christian use is to proclaim the Resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ to God's right hand. Luke says it was the major supporting text with which Peter concluded his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:34-36).

The preacher or teacher will want to be aware of the location of this text in Matthew's Gospel. Here location is as significant an exegetical factor as internal analysis. In the preceding stories Jesus has been grilled and tempted. In the succeeding stories he will go to suffering and death. Between the two, Matthew draws the curtain and reminds the reader that the one being tempted and tested, the one soon to be betrayed and crucified, is exalted Lord at God's right hand. Matthew offered such an assuring word to the reader after describing Jesus' baptism: "and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased' " (3:17). Again, after Jesus' first prediction of his passion comes the transfiguration, "and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him' " (17:5). So here, the encounters end
with a triumphant note, and thereafter, no one dared to ask any more questions.

In fact, it is in this same vein that Matthew will conclude the Gospel: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me'" (28:18).

After working through this lection, the preacher or teacher may be more impressed than ever by how distinct and separate the two units (verses 34-40; verses 41-46) really are. It may also be evident at this time that since neither is subordinate to the other and since both are of major importance, wisdom dictates treatment in two sermons or lessons. If that is the case, a further word about the second unit might be helpful. Major attention in the preceding exegesis was given to the first unit dealing with the great commandment.

As was stated earlier, Matthew concludes the debate section with the exaltation theme, which gives the image of Christ as Lord at God's right hand (Ps. 110:1). The first of these four lections (21:33-43) also contained an exaltation theme drawn from the Psalms (118:22): "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner." The enthronement of Christ as Lord was frequently proclaimed by the post-Easter, post-Pentecost church, and rightly so. Matthew even speaks several times of Christ being worshipped. But it is important to notice that the exaltation of Christ never served to erase or deny his earthly ministry, his humiliation, suffering, and death. Christ's Lordship is proclaimed in the midst of service, conflict, and suffering. As Paul expressed it, the one exalted is the one who emptied himself and was obedient unto death. It is a distortion of the gospel for the church to try to celebrate Easter without Good Friday, to try to experience Pentecost without a cross.

"Sit at my right hand until . . ." (NEB). The preacher would do well to pause over that word until. Christ is Lord; Christ is becoming Lord over all forces of evil. The exaltation of Christ is our song, but it is also our assignment.
AIDS FOR THE INTERPRETER OF MATTHEW


John Steinbeck described a travel experience across America with his dog. While in New England he worshipped at a small country church.

The minister, a man of iron with tool-steel eyes and a delivery like a pneumatic drill, opened up with prayer and reassured us that we were a pretty sorry lot. . . . Then, having softened us up, he went into a glorious sermon, a fire-and-brimstone sermon. . . . I began to feel good all over. For some years now God has been a pal to us, practicing togetherness, and that causes the same emptiness a father does playing softball with his son. But this Vermont God cared enough about me to go to a lot of trouble kicking the hell out of me.

And, Steinbeck concluded, "The service did my heart and I hope my soul some good." 1

This note is sounded in the lections found in Matthew 21 and 22. The parables mince no words. They demand something of us. The big question is how their message can fit into the minister’s pastoral concern.

Is judgment to be the theme of sermons? Is it therapeutic? Many preachers say not. They present the claims of Christ as those of love, leaving off the hard language of Scripture. Strong preaching that lambasts the sinner is still heard in the land, mostly from Fundamentalists, but in most of the mainline denominations the gospel message is much softer and more often than not emphasizes the grace and love of God.

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1 Thomas A. Whiting is superintendent of the Atlanta-Emory District, North Georgia Annual Conference.
There is a pragmatic reason for softer preaching also, since many preachers fear a dwindling congregation should they preach on such traditional themes as the judgment of God. After all, the budget has to be raised and the conference apportionments met! The effect is that many preachers avoid hard, evangelistic preaching. Others simply believe that converts will never be made and the already converted never sustained by scolding from the pulpit. Only the message of God's love can do these things.

The publishing houses have encouraged this tendency, demanding from their writers positive material and titles. Teachers of preachers have also been careful to instruct young divines to use more “do’s” than “don’ts.” This means that scriptural passages of consolation which promise the presence and power of God will be selected more often than parables of judgment.

While this approach has its merits, other pastor-counselors trained in modern biblical interpretation sense that redemption cannot take place without confrontation: The hard line must sometimes be taken in the pulpit. This does not mean that the pastor will forsake training received at a first-rate seminary or will harangue people with moral commands. It does mean the pastor should sense the value of preaching that the faithful have personal responsibility to God. The pastor may see this as part of the healing process.

In preaching on themes of personal responsibility, the preacher is wise to sense that many people want to be made to “feel their sins”—especially the already converted. Such people may long to draw closer to God and find, along with the British preacher John Hutton, that there is such a thing as the “blessedness of moral sorrow.” To know this condition one must engage in self-examination periodically, looking honestly at moral and spiritual failures. When sorrow over this state is sincerely felt, God seems wonderfully near. This, of course, means that one may find rich therapeutic value in prayer. Confession of sins is the open door to God’s
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forgiveness; it brings a sense of being loved and leaves the emotions stilled and the mind at peace.

It goes without saying that the professional minister must take these periodic journeys through the interior of his or her life. Failure to respond to God's love must be discovered, confessed, and forgiven if the minister is to come across as authentic. The one who stands in the pulpit will then appear as one who loves after having been loved and forgives as one who has been forgiven.

Henri Nouwen described this relationship when he wrote:

Thus the spiritual life of the minister, formed and trained in the school of prayer, is the core of spiritual leadership. When we have lost the vision, we have nothing to show; when we have forgotten the word of God, we have nothing to remember; when we have burned the blueprint of our life, we have nothing to build. But when we keep in touch with the life-giving spirit within us, we can lead people out of their captivity and become hope-giving guides.  

So the minister who receives by faith the grace of God in daily living will know that hard words like faithfulness and accountability are filled with grace also. These words will be applied inwardly as they are being spoken to the congregation. Shepherd and sheep will then be fed.

The minister must also handle the hard words of counseling in the study. People must be dealt with not only as a group on Sunday mornings but when they come one by one for relief in their distress. The minister may be moved by their pain, and the temptation will be to listen with feeling and support with no introduction of the hard questions. This is a time for listening to the one in need and of prayer or insight to help with the problems the person is facing.

The sessions should follow some order and movement and deal with the real issues. Gerard Egan has suggested a model for us. He writes of attending as a contribution to the setting for the sessions. For him it means that the counselor is all there in mind, body, and spirit for the client. This attentiveness to the client is elementary, but should not slip
into an easy acceptance of what one hears. The client must also be confronted. "Counselors who are afraid to put demands on the client are ordinarily poor attenders." As Egan also states, "If the helper is warm and accepting whenever the client engages in self-pity (poor-me talk), it is quite likely that the client will continue to wallow in self-pity." He suggests that individuals tend to repeat what is rewarded, like a whining child that is appeased. So confrontation must take place at some point in a spirit of empathy and caring concern.

When this is undertaken it will mean that the client may be led to discover what motivates him or her and how this affects the client and others. These attempts at self-discovery may reveal any tricks or deceptions of the client which impede the attainment of new health.

Sometimes one stands in awe before the possible transformation of a life that seems so confused and unhappy. Rollo May expressed this in a fine book on counseling:

The transformation from neurosis to personality health is indeed a wonderful process. The person rises on the force of hope out of the depths of his despair. His cowardice is replaced by courage. The rigid bonds of his selfishness are broken down by a taste of the gratification of unselfishness. Joy wells up and streams over his pain. And love comes into the man's life to vanquish his loneliness. He has at last found himself—and found his fellow men and his place in the universe. Such is the transformation from neurosis to personality health. And such is what it means, likewise, to experience religion.

The three parables treated in the homiletical studies for this edition, while dealing with issues related to the kingdom, allow us to see the guilt of those who might be called the offenders—the wicked keepers of the vineyard, those who made light of the invitation to the wedding feast and the one who refused to wear the wedding garment, and those who drew a false dichotomy between tribute paid to God and Caesar. The pastor-counselor will know the importance of the guilt feeling and will use this knowledge for the good of the counselee.
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Paul Tournier sensed the value of the guilt feeling when he claimed that “a guilty conscience is the seasoning of our daily lives.” It prods us by making us unhappy with who we are or what we have accomplished in order that we achieve more. Thus, in this sense, feeling guilty will be good for us.

But guilt may also be deadly. What is necessary is that we should learn to distinguish between false guilt and true guilt. True guilt is a feeling of condemnation we might have over some very real failure in our lives. Being real, it can be dealt with. False guilt is neurotic in nature and much harder to understand and relieve. The pastor-counselor must accept the guilty person while at the same time looking beyond that to a more hopeful what-might-be.

Within the religious context, it is important that the counselor help clients understand the nature of God. A sense of judgment, for example, needs to allow for the interpretation that God is no tyrant, but is a loving Spirit, ever with us. Judgment might seem hard initially, but it may be an act of God’s love. Judged by God to the point of being miserable, a repentant person may see ultimately that this is but God’s nudging of a beloved child to a more meaningful and abundant life. Note that I say “judged by God”—not by a pastor-counselor who wishes to play God. The counselor’s task is simply to create the conditions in which this act of grace might occur.

Grace does not mean, however, that we are dealing with a permissive God. Unfortunately the understanding of grace in common practice seems to have left us with this view. Grace is an act on God’s part, and interpreting it is an important ingredient in the counseling process. It means that we receive something we do not merit, the forgiving love of God. Or, in Paul Tillich’s marvelous words, a person can be “accepted in spite of his being rejected.” Tillich was right when he sensed that an awareness of this acceptance changes everything! That loving acceptance in counseling begins with the
attitude of the counselor. He or she accepts unconditionally those who come, both good and bad, and provides for them a supportive presence. But, as we have already observed in the counseling model provided by Egan, this act of acceptance of the client cannot mean that we disregard the failures in that life. Some do. W. H. Auden caricatures the extremity suggested by Steinbeck: "I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really the world is admirably arranged." So grace is weakened and made cheap.

Was this not true of the man who entered the banquet hall without the proper wedding garment? He was not the first choice of the rich man. He was numbered among those "good and bad" found on highways and in hedges. He did not deserve to be there at all, and but for the kindness of the rich man he would have missed the whole event. That is God's way with us. Richard Niebuhr in a personal letter wrote that he often wished he could return to the moment when he first understood what it meant to be justified by faith in Christ. Many of us have had this experience. Grace initiated the meeting. Had that not been so it could not have taken place. God's willingness to love and accept us as we are (or invite us to the feast!) begins everything. We only respond in faith.

But the whole thing may have a hollow sound if we don't have on our proper wedding garment. Being accepted without being responsible gets us nowhere. We are accepted as we are, but this act of love for us should not grant us license to do as we please. Rather a response to such free-flowing grace on our part is implied in the gift itself.

When seen psychologically, grace and judgment may appear to the person first as an awareness of being loved unconditionally by God and by the pastor-counselor in his or her attending. Judgment occurs when the client senses a personal failure to respond adequately to the image of God that is within.

Look now in some greater depth at accountability. That is explicit in the lections selected for this study. The picture
Some Hard Questions

Painted of God seems to have been lifted from the Old Testament—the judge, lawgiver, and covenant maker, one who makes covenants, is faithful to them, and expects faithfulness from the covenant people. This seems to have been written into the very structure of things from the beginning when God created the earth and instructed Abram and his children to keep the covenant.

God's hand is like that—judging and loving! Read the Old Testament. Find God instructing the chosen people, covenanting with them, leading and caring for them. Then see God repenting of placing such trust in them. See them as they suffer in their disobedience under judgment. The picture is one of austerity and tenderness—and accountability.

The use of the covenant or contract may have helpful implications in our dealing with those who seek our help. Even the pop therapists know the value of the contract. Werner Erhard, the screen star who created est, makes much of it, as do many medically trained therapists. Its strength lies in its clear definition of the problem the client needs help with and the agreed-on procedures and schedules to bring this about. The client can then be called to an accounting if the counselor feels the client is avoiding confrontation of the problem in some point. Nothing unsavory or morally reprehensible which may surface during the therapy will cause the therapist to condemn the client. The focus is on the contract and working within it.

A minister friend has told me of a counselling experience with a potential suicide with whom he had established a contract to attend a certain number of counselling sessions. When the man called one night threatening to take his own life, my friend sought to be reassuring as best he could and then insisted that the man could not take his life because he had an appointment the next morning which was part of the contract! There was a great deal of anxiety about that person on my friend's part and much relief when the client showed for the appointment. A risk is involved here, but firm
demands may work. A therapist told me recently of her success with a threatened suicide. The endangered person wanted to load on her the guilt for the suicidal act that was contemplated. "I won't let you make me feel guilty for that," the therapist insisted. "You will have to carry that yourself." Somehow that reached the distressed person. It induced such a sense of personal responsibility that the suicide was averted.

Alcoholics often get their best help when they are dealt with firmly. Recently I saw a movie presented by a well-known psychiatric hospital which depicted this firmness. The chief character was a man who was an alcoholic but would not admit it. He was on the verge of losing his job, his family, and his status in the community. The movie showed how a person might overcome alcoholism as a result of the combined efforts of employer and family. At a conference involving all parties, the man was confronted in a caring but firm atmosphere with the fact that he would lose his job and his family if he did not accept his condition and seek professional help. The session was so structured that the man, though now cornered and made to face reality, saw the action as that of those who loved him. He agreed to enter the alcohol rehabilitation unit of a psychiatric hospital. Here again, a covenant relationship was established with good results.

This approach can save us and all human beings from missing out on the wonderful life God has planned for us. Bonaro Overstreet has reminded us that "to be human is to be recurrently in grave danger: in grave danger of missing out on the promises of life by trying to avoid the issues it presents and the tests to which it puts the emotional economy of each of us." The presence of some demand upon us, as hard as it might seem to be, cuts through the effort to escape confrontation and comes to the real issues. Here the chances for healing greatly increase. This happens within the Christian context when theology presents a God who loves
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and accepts us as we are but does not wink at our sins.

This hardness of the gospel and its demands for responsibility find action in the outside world in the parable concerning tribute paid to God or Caesar. It is beyond the place of worshipful devotion that much of our Christian commitment must be lived out. Here the strong words of the prophet are often heard describing our deplorable state or warning us about one to come. Malcolm Muggeridge has provided such a voice in what may be a modern classic. Describing our world he lays upon us these words:

It has become abundantly clear in the second half of the twentieth century that Western Man has decided to abolish himself. Having wearied of the struggle to be himself, he has created his own boredom out of his own affluence, his own impotence out of his own erotomania, his own vulnerability out of his own strength; himself blowing the trumpet that brings the walls of his own city tumbling down, and, in a process of auto-genocide, convincing himself that he is too numerous, and labouring accordingly with pill and scalpel and syringe to make himself fewer in order to be an easier prey for his enemies, until at last, having educated himself into imbecility, and pollinated and drugged himself into stupefaction, he keels over, a weary, battered old brontosaurus and becomes extinct.

Is this modern defeatism pleading on the part of an old man who writes beautifully but who sees only the hopeless corruption that is about him? Or is this ringing truth? There seems some overstatement here but also much to be believed.

In rendering unto Caesar what is his, we have often failed to render unto God what belongs to God—which is our full commitment. The result is that we have paid a price. Political corruption has marked our age. Sexual promiscuity has endangered the covenant of marriage. Economic slavery is still practiced toward the poor. It is a sad state caused by our own doing. God's punishment upon us is that like Adam and Eve we are shut out of our Eden.

In such a condition there is help. The stone rejected may yet become the cornerstone of our world's life. While we must continue to live with the pain of our sinfulness there is
grace. When understood and accepted, this means the acceptance of who we are that we might become what God wishes us to be.

NOTES

4. Egan, p. 44.
The dismembered Body of Christ can be re-membered in many ways and at numerous points. This paper explores the contributions our understanding and practices of the Eucharist, or the Lord’s Supper, can make to ecumenical relations between United Methodists and Roman Catholics. Mutual ventures in this area have been conducted for nearly a decade and a half by various Methodists and Roman Catholics. The 1967-70 Joint Commission produced what will be called here the 1970 Denver Report; the 1972-75 Joint Commission wrote the 1975 Bristol Report. The British participants dominated both reports, although United Methodists from the U.S. were conspicuous in the 1970 and 1975 World Methodist Councils which reviewed and received both reports. A dialogue team between United Methodists and Roman Catholics in the U.S. was organized in 1977 and is scheduled to produce a final report of its work in 1981.

An observation in the 1975 Bristol Report describes the results of these joint ventures and suggests procedures for this paper. The report says the discussions have been “a little like ascending a spiral staircase, coming back again and again to the same points, but at another level with a wider horizon.” The agreements articulated in both reports will help establish our locus in the ascending staircase of ecumenism; the lingering disagreements summarized in the reports will suggest directions in which we must move for...
further discussion and experimentation, if we are to rise to closer ties and broaden our horizons of witness and service. The worldwide ecumenical discussions on the Eucharist have covered numerous topics. As in the 1970 Denver Report and the 1975 Bristol Report, this paper will be limited to two topics, namely, sacrifice and sacramental presence.3

Here I hope to promote critical reflection on the reader's current faith and practices, as well as a careful reading of and constructive experimentation with the forthcoming report of the 1977-81 dialogue team. Should this paper prompt these responses, the ecumenical intentions will be served.

SACRIFICE AS ANAMNESES

The 1975 Bristol Report summarizes four uses early Methodists had for the word sacrifice. Because Roman Catholics were able to support these views, consensus describes where we are in our discussion of this critical issue. Sacrifice refers

*first,* to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross; *second,* to our pleading that the benefits of his sacrifice would be made effective here and now because Christ now lives to make intercessions for us; *third,* to our offering of the sacrifice of ourselves in union with Christ who offered himself to the Divine Creator (adapted from Bristol nn. 65-66).

However, the 1975 Bristol Report also mentions a deepening difference. It withdrew the 1970 Denver agreement on "re-enactment of Christ’s sacrifice" in the Eucharist (Bristol n. 63; Denver n. 83, 1.2). I will argue that while "re-enactment" may be excessive, an offering of Christ’s sacrifice can be affirmed, so long as it is reinterpreted as anamnesis, or re-membrance or re-presentation.

We could rise to a new level of agreement concerning such sacrificial acts in Holy Communion if we take several steps: *first,* remind ourselves of the role played by sacrificial language in early Methodism; *second,* demonstrate the
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affinities this practice has with New Testament views on eucharistic action as anamnesis; third, review the recent ecumenical recovery of these New Testament and early Methodist views. These three steps can demonstrate the affinities that early periods of the United Methodist heritage have had with historic moments of the church and with a considerable body of current thought concerning the Lord’s Supper. After outlining directions that can move us upward toward a higher level of agreement, I will suggest horizons for joint efforts which this agreement makes possible. I turn now to the three steps.

Step 1. Sacrificial language in early Methodism. Historical studies of the Wesleyan eucharistic theology and practices have uncovered an extensive use of the notion of sacrifice in the faith and life of John and Charles Wesley. For the immediate consideration, it is important to note the uses made of the second meaning of the word sacrifice listed above, namely, sacrifice as “our pleading that the benefits of his (Christ’s) sacrifice would be made effective here and now because Christ now lives to make intercession for us.” Two illustrations are offered—one, the passages from an essay, On the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice, by Daniel Brevint, which John Wesley abridged and adapted as introductions to various sections of eucharistic hymns by his brother Charles; and, second, quotations from the hymns Charles wrote and John approved.

Daniel Brevint wrote of sacrifice as a “remembrance” when we “present” and “offer” Christ to God, and this amounted to “suing” God. “Remembrance,” “presentation,” and “offering” are particularly noteworthy for the two steps which follow.

This Sacrament, by our remembrance, becomes a kind of Sacrifice, whereby we present before God the Father that precious Oblation of His Son once offered. “And thus do we every day offer unto God the meritorious sufferings of our Lord, as the only sure ground wherein God may give, and we obtain, the blessings we pray for. . . .” To men (sic) it is a sacred Table where God’s minister is ordered to represent
from God his Master the Passion of His dear Son, as still fresh, and still powerful for their eternal salvation. And to God, it is an Altar whereon men mystically present to Him the same sacrifice as still blessing and suing for mercy. And because it is the High Priest Himself, the true anointed of the Lord, who hath set up both this Table and the Altar, for the communication of His Body and Blood to men, and for the representation of both to God; it cannot be doubted but that the one is most profitable to the penitent sinner, and the other most acceptable to his gracious Father (Sec. VII, par. 2. Boldface added; italic is Brevint’s).

We can understand very well why Brevint’s words appeared as introductory comments to various sections of the Wesleyan hymnal. Charles Wesley wrote such words as the following examples concerning our act when we “again . . . present” or re-present the Lamb that was slain and now becomes High Priest for us.

To us Thou hast Redemption sent;  
And we again to Thee present  
The Blood that speaks our Sins forgiven,  
That sprinkles all the Nations round;  
And now Thou hear’st the solemn Sound  
Loud-echoing thro’ the Courts of Heaven (no. 121).

While affirming that the sacrifice of Christ has a once-for-all character, Charles Wesley speaks of a “kind of sacrifice” (Brevint), an “offering” which “we present before God.”

Angels and Men might strive in vain,  
They could not add the smallest Grain  
’T augment thy Death’s Atoning Power,  
The Sacrifice is all-compleat,  
The Death Thou never canst repeat,  
Once offer’d up to die no more.  
Yet may we celebrate below,  
And daily thus thine Offering shew  
Expos’d before thy Father’s Eyes;  
In this tremendous Mystery  
Present Thee bleeding on the Tree  
Our everlasting Sacrifice (no. 124).

Or again, concerning our “offering,” Wesleyans sang:
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With solemn faith we offer up,
And spread before thy glorious Eyes
That only Ground of all our Hope,
That previous bleeding Sacrifice,
Which brings thy Grace on Sinners Down,
And perfects all our Souls in One (no. 125).

Yet one further illustration of what we “present” before
God, as an “offering” which is called a “memorial.”

All our Names the Father knows,
Reads them on our Aaron’s breast.

He reads, while we beneath
Present our Savior’s Death,
Do as Jesus Bids us do,
Signify his Flesh and Blood,
Him in a Memorial shew,
Shew up the Lamb to God (no. 118).

The act of presenting the victim-become-intercessor before
God amounts to being a “plea”; the offering which places the
High Priest before the Divine Being constitutes a “supplica­
tion” for the accomplishment of what it is the Christ stands
for.

He ever lives above
For me to intercede,
His all-redeeming love,
His precious blood, to plead (MHB, no. 368).*

Father, God, who seest in me
Only Sin and Misery,
See thine own Anointed One,
Look on thy beloved Son.

Turn from me thy glorious Eyes
To that blood Sacrifice (no.11).

Thus, in the Wesleyan strand of the United Methodist
heritage the church’s “sacrifice” of the Lamb does not repeat
the sacrificial death of Christ. However, the “offering,” the
“re-presenting,” of the “memorial” of Christ is made to God,
and this constitutes our "supplication" or "plea" for salvation in unison with the reigning "Intercessor." Because Christ's intercessions and the church's supplications are heard, we can speak of the benefits of his passion made present to believers. In this way, it has become more appropriate to speak first of sacrifice and its cognates before turning to sacramental presence.

How we might reappropriate this aspect of our heritage can be discussed after we have taken the next two steps. I turn next to the way these themes appear in the thought and practice of the early church.

Step 2. Affinities between the early church and United Methodist heritage. As is known by those familiar with eucharistic theologians in the last several decades, anamnesis is the biblical term for the eucharistic sacrifice described above. Several quotations from that towering landmark in modern eucharistic studies, The Shape of the Liturgy, by Gregory Dix, will make the affinities obvious.

Dix writes the following concerning the meaning of the command of Christ, "Do this in remembrance (anamnesis) of me" (I Cor. 11:24; Luke 22:19, variant).

It is not quite easy to represent accurately in English, words like "remembrance" or "memorial" having for us a connotation of something itself absent, which is only mentally recollected. But in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, anamnesis and the cognate verb have the sense of "re-calling," or "re-presenting" before God an event in the past, so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects.7

Dix tells us this use of the term continues into the second century and that it was intended to be distinguished from "repetition." The early church was accustomed to identify the offering of the eucharist by the church with the offering of Himself by our Lord, not by way of repetition, but as a "re-presentation" (anamnesis) of the same offering by the church "which
is His Body"... "The passion is the Lord's sacrifice, which we offer."9

But what is offered is more than the re-presentation of Christ in his passion and death. Dix argues that

before the end of the apostolic age itself . . . His sacrifice was something which began with His Humanity and which has its eternal continuance in heaven. . . . What the Body and Blood of Christ were on Calvary and before and after . . . are now in the eucharist, the anamnesis not only of His death only, but "of Me"—of the Redeemer in the fulness of His offered Self.9

Several comparisons can be drawn between the United Methodist heritage and the early Christian practices. What Dix understands as anamnesis is in substance the meaning which "sacrifice," "offering," "presenting again," etc., had for John and Charles Wesley.10 What is remembered or re-presented is different. Whereas the Wesleyan hymns focus on the death, Resurrection, and ascension, current prayers are likely to include the earthly life before the passion and the eschatological dimensions concerning his coming again. Further the growing appreciation for narratives and recitals in piety and theology has made it possible to place the central act of redemption in the context of God’s mighty acts in creation and earlier phases of salvation history. Because the comprehensive rehearsal of God’s gracious deeds is re-presented in the prayer, it is appropriately called "The Great Thanksgiving." To speak of it as the "Prayer of Consecration" comes from a time when the presence of Christ was focused on the elements; today the participation of the faithful in the story of creation and redemption, which we recall in word and deed, makes God present to us. The offering, re-presentation, and sacrifice make presence possible. Hence, as stated above, this paper follows the contemporary practice of moving from sacrifice to presence. Having illustrated the affinities between the United Methodist heritage and the early Christian church's practices, I turn
to a comparison of these two with current ecumenical consensus.

Step 3. Review of the ecumenical affirmations of these New Testament and early United Methodist views. In 1975, the World Council of Churches published *One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry.* The statement has a range of participation unmatched by any other formulation of faith and practice. Despite the questions which we may raise and complaints which we can register, the 1975 World Council statement articulates clearly the central role of *anamnesis* in an adequate understanding of Holy Communion. The view we found in the United Methodist heritage at one of its most flourishing moments is in line with this broad-based World Council formulation that says *anamnesis* includes

the whole of God’s reconciling action in him [Christ]. . . all that He has accomplished for us and all creation (in his incarnation, servanthood, ministry, teaching, suffering, sacrifice, resurrection and Pentecost) is present in this *anamnesis* as is also the foretaste of his *Parousia* and the fulfillment of the Kingdom. The *anamnesis* in which Christ acts through the joyful celebration of his Church thus includes representation and anticipation. It is not only a calling to mind of what is past, or of its significance. It is the Church’s effective proclamation of God’s mighty acts. By this communion with Christ, the Church participates in that reality.

Besides the consensus established among Protestants, Anglicans, and Orthodox in the 1975 World Council statement, we can observe the use of the concept of *anamnesis* to express what has been meant by sacrifice in Roman Catholic documents. The *General Instruction on the Roman Missal, March 26, 1970,* makes clear use of the concept of *anamnesis* in its guidance to the faithful in their implementation of Vatican II teaching found in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* and *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.* Speaking directly of *anamnesis,* the *Instruction* states:

The sacrifice of the Cross and its *sacramental renewal* in the Mass are, apart from the differences in the manner of offering, one and the same.
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The three steps suggest considerations which admittedly require expansion for a fuller case. However, what has been outlined here suggests the way a reinterpretation of the problematic concept of sacrifice as anamnesis can place the United Methodist heritage in line with biblical views, as well as with recent insights recovered in ecumenical statements and Roman Catholic official teaching. If the views of our heritage are in broad consensus with such a variety in history and contemporary perspectives, we have a basis for a sense of a new level of agreement in the spiral staircase of ecumenical dialogue. It also brings into view a wider horizon for mutual ventures. I will only mention two basic moves at this point.

First, if what is meant by "sacrifice" is what the ancient church and contemporary eucharistic theology and piety mean by anamnesis, we should introduce the word into modern languages, including English. Koinonia has virtually become an English word, as agape already has. The word Eucharist, without translating eucharistia as giving thanks, is gaining wide acceptance even within Protestant circles. Even if we call it the Lord's Supper to remind ourselves of the host and initiator, we can also speak of it as the Eucharist because the central act is thanksgiving.

The word sacrifice has been used to communicate more than a careful use of the word would warrant. The overextended use of the word sacrifice has contributed more than its share toward making the sacrament of unity, or Holy Communion, a sacrilege producing divisions. It has led to language which becomes offensive when we are supposed to be "perpetuating" the sacrifice of the cross, as the Instruction says, or refers to "re-presentation" as "immolating" Christ again, as stated in the Mysterium Fidei by Paul VI, which is quoted approvingly in the Instruction on Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, May 25, 1967. However, United Methodists will
need to re-examine the lines in Charles Wesley's hymns, such as the "sacrifice" in which the "Lamb is crucified afresh" (no. 126). One gathers that in certain stages of our interpretation of the eucharistic act, the language related to sacrifice communicated much of what the ancients rightly meant by *anamnesis*, but that unguarded uses of this language have introduced problematic notions. Introducing "anamnesis" as an English word in the rubrics of our liturgical books as well as in more popular theological discussions and piety is no guarantee against additional distortions. However, it does mitigate the disagreements which have held United Methodists and Roman Catholics from reaching higher levels of agreements in the 1975 Bristol Report. Since such translations as "memorial" are too weak, and "re-presentation" apparently seems to be inelegant to many, anamnesis is better left untranslated and introduced as a term for modern languages. Such introductions would offer pastors opportunities to enrich the church's eucharistic faith and practice and relate us to a broader Christian community, including communion with saints in our heritage and the ancient church.

Second, if we agree that anamnetic action, or re-presentation of God's saving deeds in Jesus, has a crucial place in Christian life, we need to find appropriate ways to express it adequately. As any work of art needs a setting, so too, in piety, an act needs a context. Individual ingenuity and experimentation in the liturgy may produce periodic stellar performances for momentary consumption. But members of a historic community on a long pilgrimage require a steady and reliable means of interacting with the Divine and each other. A century of biblical studies, historical research, and theological reflection, conducted internationally and ecumenically, has uncovered a basic pattern which was established early but was submerged and distorted with sentimental accretions and historic debates. The basic pattern places anamnesis in the flow of action within the Great
Thanksgiving, and in turn places the eucharistic prayer in the context of the total action of the Lord’s Supper. It also indicates the way anamnetic action illuminates other parts of the service.

A convenient summary of the basic pattern appears in *Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists*, with samples which follow the outline produced in *The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper: An Alternate Text, 1972* and *We Gather Together: Services for Public Worship.* A comparison of these United Methodist outlines and samples with developments in Roman Catholic practices will reveal the close affinities, suggestive of consensus we now have, with others too numerous to list at this point. An outline of Roman Catholic practices can be found in *The General Instruction* nn. 54-55, and four samples appear in *The New Eucharistic Prayers and Prefaces.* United Methodists would do well to take part in Roman Catholic liturgies in addition to studying Roman Catholic practices. The renewal of the Roman Church is in large measure a recovery of vitality of liturgies, even among their charismatics, much as United Methodism in the Wesleyan movement was to a great extent a recover of vitality in the Lord’s Supper. Thus, unity through the Eucharist is more than theological consensus, but a shared vitality in eucharistic practices as well. If we experience the lived reality of the church as a cohesive Body of Christ through study and practice of the Eucharist, we will be doing more than tampering with words when we introduce anamnesis into the vocabulary, or engaging in more than fascination with formats as we use historic patterns as guides for our celebrations today.

**THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST**

*Balancing Word and sacrament:* Since anamnesis involves re-presenting the person and work of Christ to God for our salvation, and since that act contributes toward making the effects of the work of Christ present, the discussion of
anamnesis preceded the discussion of the presence of Christ. A summary of agreements on topics related to the presence of Christ appears in the 1975 Bristol Report.

Christ, in the fullness of his being, human and divine, is present in the eucharist; this presence does not depend on the experience of the communicant, but it is only by faith that we become aware of it. This is a distinctive mode of the presence of Christ; it is mediated through the sacred elements, which within the eucharist are efficacious signs of the body and blood of Christ (Bristol n. 54).

If this summary of agreements indicates where we are on the spiral staircase of eucharistic discussion between Roman Catholics and United Methodists, a few additional lines suggest directions in which we might move for higher levels of agreement for wider horizons for practice.

In the 1975 Bristol Report n. 57, we read: “We do not wish to set word and sacrament over against one another. While there are different emphases, we both affirm that wherever Christ is present he is present in his fulness.”

We might say there is a distinction to be drawn between the agreed theology and intention, on the one hand, and practice and sentiment on the other. That is, in thought and intention, both parties would like to strike a balance between the presence of Christ in the Word and sacrament, but in piety and sentiment United Methodists still favor Word over sacrament, and Roman Catholics vice versa. In what follows, I will propose steps we can take for a higher form of agreement and wider horizons for action.

Sometimes it is helpful to distinguish between three kinds of canons in order to explain moves which are necessary. There is an orthodox canon we espouse as the correct form of belief and practice. In this case, the balanced view concerning the presence of Christ in Word and sacrament as adopted by both parties is the orthodox canon. However, this is to be distinguished from the operational canon. That is, there is a guide for faith and action which operates in a given situation. On the present topic, United Methodists are likely to place a priority on words over sacrament, as revealed in their
sentiments and behavior. The reverse priority or norm operates among Roman Catholics. There is, further, a functional canon we can consider. That is, we may articulate a guide or norm for eucharistic faith and practice which is particularly timely for a special purpose and a concrete situation. United Methodists who wish to create a community where they close the disparity between the balance espoused and the imbalances practiced will need to work more intentionally at recovering their heritage of eucharistic vitality in some of its most flourishing moments. The momentum behind the word-oriented preference in their own denomination and the powerful support it receives from their Protestant associates and the ethos of the cultural environment, do not need much attention. In order to counterbalance this prevailing pressure, however, United Methodists need more intentional, focused, and explicit effort in the direction of recovering sacramental vitality. What may appear to be an excessive push for a sacramental emphasis is a momentary highlighting of a functional canon so that the desired balance can be more nearly realized. United Methodists have recognized the central place which recital of God's mighty acts has in the proclamation of the Word and in witnessing. For them anamnesis has a crucial role as re-presentation of God's gracious deeds in Jesus; this is the enactment of Word in the sacrament. The Roman Catholics who adhere to the same orthodox canon but have an operational canon which reveals a proclivity for the sacrament need a functional canon elevating the proclaimed Word if they are to close the disparity between the balance pronounced and imbalance practiced.

In these ways, the distinction between various canons clarifies the direction we can move. The wider horizons this has surfaced include experiencing in concrete terms the wholeness of the faith we proclaim and an actual sharing in the lived reality of the eucharistic faith and practice with those from whom we have been separated. In this case, it
could provide a fund of experienced realities of our faith with Roman Catholics. It sets the stage for ecumenical ties and joint ventures in witness and service which could make more realistic the prospects of the dismembered Body of Christ becoming whole.

The 1975 agreement at Bristol concerning the presence of Christ in the Word and sacrament calls for one kind of response; the strong agreement on the fullness of that presence evokes a very different reaction.

Presence and absence in the Eucharist: In the 1970 Denver Report n. 83, the Joint Commission says, "Christ in the fullness of His being, human and divine, crucified and risen, is present in this sacrament." The 1975 Bristol Report n. 54 reaffirms this faith. Such assertions as "wherever Christ is present he is present in his fulness" (Bristol n. 56), though valid, can be misleading especially when in fact Christians at the same time look forward to another kind of fullness of his presence in the Parousia. At Denver, the Joint Commission acknowledged that they had not paid sufficient attention to the "whole eschatological and forward looking element in the Eucharist" (Denver n. 81). At Bristol, it was hardly corrected with one brief statement on the Parousia (Bristol n. 52, e) and with the omission of the proleptic quality in anamnesis or proclamation (Bristol nn. 63-66). Just as the dialectic between divine initiative and human responsibility is sought in the formulation of the presence of Christ (e.g., Bristol n. 54), a dialectic between presence of Christ and his Parousia (coming) should be articulated in future agreements.

The tension between the presence and the Parousia in our eucharistic faith came home to me in a Lord's Supper celebrated with prisoners of conscience in South Korea. The ancient confession of faith that Jesus Christ is Lord (Acts 2:36) reverberated in their hymns and prayers and glowed in their faces; but equally, the continuing cry of the faithful resounded from their depths and even wrenched their bodies in praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20; see also 1 Cor.
For them, Jesus will only be fully Lord of hosts when he finally prevails over the "hosts of lords" who presently tyrannize and exploit people. There will be a fullness in the coming Christ not known in the real presence which we know now. That vision sent them into mission, and as the church militant they contested "principalities and powers"—"until he comes." The United Methodists and Roman Catholics in liberation struggles have appropriated our heritage of sanctification and have asserted the sacramental presence. But they will not allow their eucharistic faith nor their vision of the Christ who is present in the world to turn this tradition into a sanctioner of the status quo. Their experiences in the struggles have uncovered a presence of Christ yet to come in the Parousia of Christ. In order to drive the point home in a time which speaks in an unbalanced fashion about the presence and at best treats tangentially the Parousia, we might consider speaking dialectically and paradoxically about the presence of Christ and the absence of Christ in the Eucharist.

When we allow the ease of "living in Zion" to make us reluctant or unable to name the "principalities and powers" operative in our society and churches, we make ourselves immune from doing battle against them. We turn the presence of Christ into idolatry, the symbols of his presence into fetishes, and God's call for mission against evil into sentimentality, if we remember it at all. We dismiss talk about qualities or dimensions of the Christ being absent from the Eucharist as blasphemy. If and when we finally speak of an eschatological dimension in our faith in general and the eucharistic faith at some particular point, we speak of it in isolation but not in juxtaposition nor as dialectically related to the real presence. Just as the church learned that a careless identification of itself with the kingdom of God led to idolatry and produced resistance to its own reform, so too, we now run into danger of idolizing the present situation and opposing those who push for changes. We now need a
formulation of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist which acknowledges a fuller presence in the Parousia.

When Paul said we are to proclaim the anamnesis of his death "until he comes," he was saying that the eucharistic acts are provisional measures. They too will pass away, despite our profound appreciation of them. To speak of another presence, or the absence of Christ in the Eucharist, is to suggest that the current fullness of the eucharistic presence will become obsolete!

If ever an agreed statement could be established on a balanced affirmation concerning the real presence and real absence of Christ, we would rise to a level which could open before our eyes horizons for new missional possibilities. We could be open to recognize all the places where he is not yet fully Lord, even if we affirm him as Lord. We will be launched into mission and ministries to

Loose the bonds of wickedness,
Undo the thongs of the yoke,
Let the oppressed go free, and
Break every yoke (Isa. 58:6, adapted).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has explored ways in which issues related to sacrifice and sacramental presence in eucharistic thought and practice might promote ecumenical relations between United Methodists and Roman Catholics. Three theological moves have outlined various agreements in the making and consensus within our grasp. These include (1) a growing mutual appreciation for anamnetic practices which can release God's redeeming presence, and this (2) mediated equally through Word and sacrament, while (3) recognizing the absence with his presence because of our expectations of that culminating Parousia.

Several implications for coordinated action have been drawn, such as (1) participation in unique though similar
ways in the shared appreciation of the power of anamnetic action, (2) distinctive steps which will mean greater approximation of the desired correlation between Word and sacrament, and (3) coalitions in missions and ministries designed to promote the reign of the Lord of hosts over the "hosts of lords" which prevail over us. These efforts can reflect the growing theological agreement and foster the re-membering of the dismembered Body of Christ and its effective witness and service.

NOTES


2. 1975 Bristol Report n. 80.

3. A good part of traditional eucharistic theology moved from sacramental presence to sacrifice; however, the order has been reversed by growing numbers as the insights of the early church are recovered. In his study, The Shape of the Liturgy, 2nd ed. (London: Dacre Press, 1945), Gregory Dix says, "We make the sacrifice dependent on the sacrament. . . . They make the sacrament dependent upon the sacrifice" (p. 246). Josef A. Jungmann, S. J., observes the same practice growing among Roman Catholic liturgiologists. From the beginning of the twentieth century, he writes, "a perspective has taken hold in which the action, the sacrifice itself, is emphasized and the Real Presence is seen in relation to this sacrificial action." The Mass: An Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Survey, trans. Julian Fernandez, S. J., and ed. Mary Ellen Evans [Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1975], p. 93.)


5. The quotations from John Wesley's extracts and adaptation of Daniel Brevint and the hymns from Charles Wesley are taken from Hymns on the Lord's Supper, With a Preface concerning The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice. Extracted from Doctor Brevint (Bristol: Printed by Felix Farley, 1745), the lst ed., as quoted in Rattenbury. Numbers enclosed in parentheses, thus, (no. 126), indicate the hymn number in the first edition of Hymns, unless otherwise specified.


7. Dix, p. 161. Italics is his. See also Heb. 10:3 and Lev. 26:7.

8. Dix, p. 162, quoting Cyprian. Italics is his.

9. Dix, pp. 242-43. Italics is his. Heb. 10:5-9:12, 24; and Eph. 5:2 are cited. See also Dix, pp. 245 and 264.

10. In elaborating his complaints against Rattenbury for using Dix's interpretation of anamnesis to analyze sacrificial language in Wesleyan hymns, Bergen cites hymns which simply validate Rattenbury's point. See Rattenbury's use of anamnesis, pp. 20 and 104, as well as hymns cited, for example, on pp. 119 and 120; and Bergen, pp. 87-89 and 242-49.
12. See, for example, Response of the United Methodist Church to One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognized Ministry (New York: Board of Global Ministries, 1977). The World Council is presently collating responses from regional consultations on the 1975 document.
13. One Baptism, par. 8.
15. Instruction, par. 2.
18. The dialectic between presence and absence appears in the Synoptics where Jesus announces he will not any more eat the bread and drink the wine with the disciples until the kingdom shall come (Luke 22:16, 18; Mark 14:25; Matt. 26:29). Luke seems particularly anxious to register the point. The disciples en route to Emmaus had Jesus open the Scriptures and even break bread, but he vanished without eating or drinking (Luke 24:13-35). When he does eat, it was broiled fish (Luke 24:42-43), clearly not the eucharistic meal with bread and wine. One might infer from the Lucan accounts that Jesus may be the initiator and host, but does not partake in the eucharistic meal itself. Or, to state it in words suggested in the text above, Jesus "absents" himself from the meal, ironically at the point which Christians have been most anxious historically to establish the presence. From Luke, therefore, we may articulate the dialectic between presence and absence by saying that Jesus is host but absent himself from the meal.
19. John Wesley's distinction between pledge and earnest, drawn from Daniel Brevint, illustrates this point. In Section V of his adaptation of Brevint's Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice, Wesley writes that "a pledge and an earnest differ in this, that an earnest may be allowed upon account for part of that payment which is promised, whereas pledges are taken back. Thus, for example, zeal, love, and those degrees of holiness which God bestows in the use of His Sacraments, will remain with us when we are in heaven, and there make part of our happiness. But the Sacraments themselves shall be taken back, and shall no more appear in heaven than did the cloudy pillar in Canaan. We shall have no need of these sacred figures of Christ when we see Him face to face, or of these pledges of that glory to be revealed when we shall actually possess it." As quoted by J. Ernest Rattenbury, p. 184. Italics in the original.
OUR GENERAL MOTHER:  
THE PATTERN FOR MANKIND

SHARON C. SEELIG

Given our increased recognition of the equality of the sexes and the increased emphasis on the intellectual and professional attainments of women, there seems only one possible reaction to Milton's portrait of Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Inferior, meek, submissive, source of all our ills, the "Mother of all Mankind" stands in sharp and irritating contrast to Adam, created so smugly superior by God and Milton: "For contemplation hee and valor form'd, / For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace, / Hee for God only, shee for God in him" (IV. 197-99). Such a portrait may in fact reflect a disturbing paternalism within the Christian faith itself; certainly the enthusiasm with which Milton presents it must disqualify him from our serious consideration today.

Or so one might think. But such thinking would, I believe, be a serious misunderstanding of both Milton and of the Christian faith. Eve, I am convinced, is not merely Milton's model for womanhood but his model for mankind. It is she who defines what it means to be truly human, for she embodies the cycle of fall and redemption even more fully than Adam. Words like meekness, submission, and softness may grate on all of us, male or female, as prescriptions for ideal behavior; but it is these words that Milton, if we will listen, would teach us to understand.

Let us begin near the end of *Paradise Lost*, with Adam's salutation to his spouse, which follows the repetition of God's promise of life:

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Whence Hail to thee,  
Eve rightly call'd, Mother of all Mankind,  
Mother of all things living, since by thee  
Man is to live, and all things live for Man.  
To whom thus Eve with sad demeanor meek.  
Ill worthy I such title should belong  
To me transgressor, who for thee ordain'd  
A help, became thy snare; to mee reproach  
Rather belongs, distrust and all dispraise:  
But infinite in Pardon was my Judge,  
That I who first brought Death on all, am grac't  
The source of life; next favorable thou,  
Who highly thus to entitle me voutsaf'st  
Far other name deserving. (XI. 158-71)

Eve's language and demeanor might seem to negate the  

case I hope to make for her. Although Adam treats her with  
the respect due a consort, she lowers herself, refusing even  
his high titles, much less those I would give her. Yet both  
speeches are true and appropriate to their speakers. Adam  
speaks as one believing God’s promise, Eve as one rightly  
penitent. Her delineation of her fault is exact; she weighs her  
transgression in the balance of the law. She speaks properly  
of what “belongs” to her—the titles of “transgressor,” of  
“snare”; she deserves “reproach,” “distrust,” and “dis-  
praise,” but she has been rescued by grace and “grac’t” with  
a new title—“the source of life.” She is not worthy of such  
grace, but grace by definition is that which cannot be  
deserved.  

But Eve did not always speak so humbly, nor was Adam  
always so kind. There was a time when she valued herself  
much more highly, when she chafed against submission.  
Even if she did not yet believe herself equal, as she stood  
before the tree of life from which she had just eaten, the  
possibilities seemed limitless:

But to Adam in what sort  
Shall I appear? shall I to him make known  
As yet my change, and give him to partake  
Full happiness with mee, or rather not,
Eve does not rest on the illogic of the phrase “more equal,” but moves on to ask “for inferior who is free?” It is for her, as for modern readers, a rhetorical question, but not so for Milton, who by the time Eve speaks these lines has amply warned us against her position. Even Satan himself, when it suited him, had declared that “Orders and Degrees / Jar not with liberty, but well consist” (V. 792-93); and Abdiel, whose name means servant of God, in speaking to Satan had explained more fully:

Unjustly thou deprav’st it with the name
Of Servitude to serve whom God ordains,
Or Nature; God and Nature bid the same,
When he who rules is worthiest, and excels
Them whom he governs. This is servitude,
To serve th’ unwise, or him who hath rebell’d
Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
Thyself not free, but to thyself enthral’d; (VI. 174-81).

The freedom and equality we so much prize, then, are in Milton’s eyes not only not ideal; they are unnatural. “God and Nature bid the same”: they bid hierarchy; they bid the service that is perfect freedom. Inferior who is free? Every man, every woman, every creature who has not debased self in the service of someone or something unworthy of that service. The question might be rather: who is not inferior? And the answer, that everyone who is not God is by definition inferior, that is, subordinate to some one or some thing in the great chain of creation.

Such a hierarchy is not merely a tidy or arbitrary scheme for ordering the universe; it is the natural consequence of the differences between one creature and another, between
angel and human, between human and beast. As Raphael explains to Adam, all of God's creation is good and necessary: good in that it proceeds from God; necessary in that each element performs a unique function:

O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not deprav'd from good, created all
Such to perfection, one first matter all,
Indu'd with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and in things that live, of life:
But more refin'd, more spiritous, and pure,
As nearer to him plac't or nearer tending
Each in thir several active Spheres assign'd,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportion'd to each kind (V. 469-79).

The emphasis here is on degrees, on participation in a single organic and divinely ordered whole, not as in the dialogue between Eve and Satan on superiority or inferiority. In the image of the plant, in which "from the root / Springs lighter the green stalk" (V. 479-80), all elements work to create the flower and the fruit, the glory of the whole (and glorious because it serves a still higher purpose, to feed and delight the human race); but clearly it is neither possible nor desirable that the universe should consist of fruit and flowers only. Although spirit is preferred to matter and reason to passion, God's creation could not subsist in the higher elements only; these should predominate over, but not vanquish, the lower. To say that Eve is inferior to Adam is not to make an invidious distinction but to describe her qualities: she is softer, weaker, more yielding, but she is no less necessary than he, no less good, no less perfect; she is simply woman rather than man.4

The pride by which Satan, Eve, and Adam fall is a denial of order, an improper attempt to rise above one's natural, divinely ordained level, whatever that may be. Satan tempts Eve to such aspiring pride with language inappropriate to her. She has by Adam rightly been called "Fair Consort" (IV.
610), “Daughter of God and Man, accomplisht Eve” (IV. 660); but by Satan “Empress of this fair World” (IX. 568), “Who should be seen / A Goddess among Gods, ador'd and serv’d / By Angels numberless” (IX. 546-48). “Empress” suggests tyranny and, like the other terms, ignores or usurps Adam’s role; such titles, making Eve primary, allow her to forget “how beauty is excell’d by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair” (IV. 490-91). Eve’s sin, her aspiration to godhood, is but the logical outcome of her listening to such language with no more than a half-hearted reproach.

The pride that seeks to disorder the universe is seen in the very verse and sentence structure of Paradise Lost, as Eve usurps and Adam abdicates his proper function. Proposing that they divide their labors, Eve says: “Thou therefore now advise” (IX. 212). “Disgusting dependence,” the convinced feminist might say, perhaps without noticing that Eve's apparently humble request is only the prelude to her detailed instructions to Adam, thinly masked as alternatives:

    Or hear what to my mind first thoughts present,
    Let us divide our labors, thou where choice
    Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind
    The Woodbine round this Arbor, or direct
    The clasping Ivy where to climb, while I
    In yonder Spring of Roses intermix!
    With Myrtle, find what to redress till Noon (IX. 213-19).

The references to the “Woodbine” and “clasping Ivy” remind us of the feminine role that is here being distorted, while the verb “redress” suggests in Eve a greater degree of officiousness than of reverence toward God’s creation.

Adam’s answer is at first mild, mixed with compliment and praise: “nothing lovelier can be found / In Woman, than to study household good, / And good works in her Husband to promote” (IX. 232-34); but his next words betray a doubt of himself, a lack of confidence in his role: “But if much converse perhaps / Thee satiate, to short absence I could yield” (IX.
247-48). Such a doubt, though modest and loving, is fatal; it puts human affection before divine order. Adam is on much firmer ground as he explains to Eve their mutual dependence: as she strengthens him to good, so he will do for her. They are both stronger together than apart; that this is so is no reflection on either of them; it is simply a truth of human nature.

But Eve will not have it so. She will be equal, independent, and self-sufficient. Not content to be "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (III. 99), Eve will be proof against all temptation. "How are we happy," she asks, "still in fear of harm?" (IX. 326) Adam's firm rejoinder, devoid of honorific titles and compliments, indicates clearly that human perfection differs from divine perfection: we are perfect in that we have been given all that it is appropriate for us to have, but our power is not limitless nor our security absolute. The human race, as Adam here realizes and as Eve refuses to do, is frail, radically and permanently insecure, and dependent on God. Paradoxically, after the Fall, Eve must teach Adam anew the meaning of his humanity, for then, even more clearly than before, the feminine role of dependence as portrayed by Milton is the role of all mankind.

After the Fall, Adam, created to be Eve's "best prop," becomes not strong but rigid, as he forgets his own instruction from God. After a brief period of illusory bliss, we find Adam no longer believing that "best are all things as the will / Of God ordain'd them" (IX.342-43), and loud in his denunciation of Eve:

This Woman whom thou mad'st to be my help,  
And gav'st me as thy perfet gift, so good,  
So fit, so acceptable, so Divine,  
That from her hand I could suspect no ill,  
And what she did, whatever in itself,  
Her doing seem'd to justify the deed;  
Shee gave me of the Tree, and I did eat (X. 137-43).
But before the most eager misogynist can rejoice, the Supreme Judge rejects Adam’s claim that it is all Eve’s fault, that woman is the source of all our woe. If Eve has mistaken her place, Adam has neglected his, and his fault is clearly the more serious:

Was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey
Before his voice, or was shee made thy guide,
Superior, or but equal, that to her
Thou didst resign thy Manhood,

Adom’d

She was indeed, and lovely to attract
Thy Love, not thy subjection, and her Gifts
Were such as under Government well seem’d,
Unseemly to bear rule, which was thy part

(X. 145-48; 151-55).

In contrast to Adam’s accusations and attempts at self-justification, Eve’s response is simple, honest, and deeply moving: “The Serpent me beguil’d and I did eat” (X. 162). Her accent, devoid of excuse and full of penitence, is the one Adam has yet to learn. She has moved beyond the time when “they in mutual accusation spent / The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning” (IX. 1187-88); he has not.

Adam’s peculiar virtues—his strength, his reason, his firmness—are of little use as he turns them against Eve. His speech becomes still more bitter, almost comic in its rigid intensity, in its exaggerations, in its willful forgetting of his own errors:

Out of my sight, thou Serpent, that name best
Befits thee with him leagu’d, thyself as false
And hateful;

But for thee

I had persisted happy, had not thy pride
And wand’ring vanity, when least was safe,
Rejected my forewarning, and disdain’d
Not to be trusted, longing to be seen
Though by the Devil himself, him overweening
To over-reach, but with the Serpent meeting
Fool’d and beguil’d, by him thou, I by thee,
To trust thee from my side, imagin’d wise,
Constant, mature, proof against all assaults,
And understood not all was but a show
Rather than solid virtue, all but a Rib
Crooked by nature, bent, as now appears,
(X. 867-69; 873-85).

Adam’s tangled syntax emphasizes the twisting and turning within his own mind that allows him to forget that he had begged the Creator for a fit consort, that he had warned Eve that she did not seem proof against all assaults, that he had been warned against considering her complete and absolute, warned against the effects of passion. Milton’s verse structure enables Adam to blame Eve triply—for her disdain, for her trustworthiness, for her disdaining to be mistrusted; and the unfixed past participles enable him to blame her for imagining herself wise as well as for his imagining her wise.

Through such complexity and ambiguity, one thing is clear: Adam will accept no part of the blame himself. Upright, arrogant, and self-righteous, his attitude is ominously reminiscent of Satan’s, who showed “that fixed mind / And high disdain, from sense of injur’d merit, / That with the mightiest rais’d him to contend” (I. 97-99); who found it shame “To bow and sue for grace / With suppliant knee” (I. 111-12). Whatever measure of perverse satisfaction Adam’s stony uprightness may give him, it is ultimately vain and fruitless, for he, like Eve, has sinned and must beg forgiveness. It is not reasoning and self-justifying but Eve weeping at his feet that brings him to it, as she begs:

Forsake me not thus, Adam, witness Heav’n
What love sincere, and reverence in my heart
I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,
Unhappily deceiv’d; thy suppliant
I beg, and clasp thy knees; bereave me not,
Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
Thy counsel in this uttermost distress.
Eve is utterly abject, utterly penitent, utterly dependent; she begs what she cannot do without. To say that hers is an unbecoming posture, one especially displeasing to modern women, or to say that after the Fall, more than ever, woman is subject to her husband seems to me to miss the point of this scene. Eve knows of course that Adam too has sinned and that he as well as she is at fault, but she takes upon herself the responsibility for her own sin; her own guilt and shame are her first concern. But she goes further and, too eagerly from the point of view of her own powers but rightly from the point of view of her sorrow and penitence, wants to bear Adam's guilt as well as her own. Her gesture, proceeding from her grief and the extremity of her need, is the only one that could soften Adam's heart:

She ended weeping, and her lowly plight,  
Immovable till peace obtain'd from fault  
Acknowledg'd and deplor'd, in Adam wrought  
Commiseration; soon his heart relented  
Towards her, his life so late and sole delight,  
Now at his feet submissive in distress,  
Creature so fair his reconcilement seeking,  
His counsel whom she had displeas'd, his aid (X. 937-4).

Whereas Adam in his uprightness is all too reminiscent of the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men, Eve resembles the publican who "would not lift up much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13 KJV). She anticipates Paul, who in penitence calls himself the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15) and the Psalmist, who cries to God: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Ps. 73:25) Her utterly desperate plight is that of all the race after the Fall, for whom, in Milton's view, there can be no hope of self-justification, only dependence on
divine mercy. Rational understanding of this condition is insufficient; one must by moved by it, as Eve is, before healing can take place. Her contribution, representing the element of human nature that, according to Renaissance dogma, is subordinate to reason, is vital, as necessary to the working of God’s grace as woman is to man, as plants to the chain of being, as body to life itself.\(^4\)

Although Eve’s solutions—to bear all guilt herself, to abstain from the fruitful joys of marriage, to commit suicide—are extreme and must be corrected and restrained by Adam, her penitence works an essential change in him. Softening toward her and reminding her of God’s mercy, Adam realizes that the two of them must kneel before God, exactly as Eve has knelt before him:

Milton’s closing to the tenth book repeats these lines in rhythmic cycle, suggesting, I think, the necessity of repeating (as often as sin is repeated) the act of contrition by which man and woman find grace before God and before each other. The words “with tears / Watering the ground” predict the efficacy, the fruitfulness of this sacrifice of the broken and the contrite heart; the promise is fulfilled in book 11 as we hear how “Prevenient Grace descending had remov’d / The Stony from thir hearts, and made new flesh / Regenerate grow instead” (XI. 3-5). The instrument of this grace is Eve, who, weeping, teaches Adam to repent and kneel with her before God. She is not a crooked rib but, as Adam has called her, part of his soul, a good and necessary part of mankind: for after the Fall it is not in the act of standing upright but in reverent kneeling, in meekness and submission, in modesty
OUR GENERAL MOTHER

and shame that grace is to be found. Eve's is not the truly feminine posture; it is the truly human posture.

For Milton the central question is not equality but relationship, and for him the central relationship of human life is marriage. Whatever his well-recorded failings toward the female sex, Milton shared the belief of many other Puritans that marriage is not a sacrament nor primarily a means for the procreation of children, but a provision for companionship, for things that a modern woman might hope to find in it. His views are if anything astonishingly idealistic, for he sees in marriage the best corrective in human terms for the effects of the Fall. In Tetrachordon, Milton emphasizes the mutuality of marriage and the deep human need for consolation:

We cannot therefore always be contemplative, or pragmaticall abroad, but have need of some delightfull intermissions, wherein the enlarg'd soul may leave off a while her severe schooling; and like a glad youth in wandring vacancy may keep her holidays to joy and harmless pastime: which as she cannot well doe without company, so in no company so well as where the different sexe in most resembling unlikenes, and most unlike resemblance cannot but please best and be pleas'd in the aptitude of that variety.

(Yale Works, VI. 597)

The rib of marriage, to all since Adam, is a relation much rather than a bone; the nerves and sinews thereof are love and meet help.

(Yale Works, VI. 612)

To women in marriage Milton assigns the high calling of consolation and support. He is not a misogynist but a Christian, and his potentially irritating definition of the nature of woman is in fact a definition of human nature, coupled with a resolution of some of the problems that nature presents. His ideal of harmony, far from posing a special threat to women, might well inspire those feminists who argue that equality for women does not mean adoption of masculine characteristics of which society already has a surplus, but rather the creation of a healthier balance
between the masculine and feminine in all of us, and in our society at large. Milton’s own insight, represented in the actions of his central characters, is not that Eve is at fault for kneeling, but that we are for not knowing how to kneel.

This reading of Paradise Lost differs from the familiar view of Milton as a misogynist and from notions of Paradise Lost as a poem in which Adam dominates. I do not wish to deny that Adam is the superior figure—for he possesses in greater degree the necessary and godlike faculty of reason—but rather to question the meaning of that superiority and to stress the complementary quality of the relationship between Adam and Eve as distinguished from notions of dominance and submission, which seem to me to miss the point. Paradise Lost, for all its emphasis on creation and on the Renaissance virtue of right reason—a blend of intelligence and conscience—is also a poem about grace, and grace demands not theological acuity—Adam’s potential strength—but humility and receptivity—the quality of Eve. To say that Adam is the prelapsarian pattern for humanity and Eve the postlapsarian model is to oversimplify, but that formulation suggests the more complicated truth that in both states masculine and feminine aspects are necessary to full humanity. Adam and Eve are not merely individuals—though they are that and splendidly so; they also represent aspects of human nature that, taken together, make up the ideal of full personhood. Just as according to Gen. 3:16, woman is more clearly subject to her husband after the Fall, so all human beings in Milton’s eyes have lost some of their glorious uprightness and independence, and in awaiting divine grace must emulate the feminine model. Adam retains his superiority to Eve, but she teaches him the indispensable lesson of what his relationship to God is to be.

NOTES


3. "For" is a coordinating conjunction and "inferior," an adjective. The meaning is "who, being inferior, is free?"

4. The principle of plenitude, expressed in Plato's Timaeus and so warmly embraced by the Renaissance, demands the ultimate variety of possibilities and so necessitates differences in kind and in degree. See the classic discussion by Arthur O. Lovejoy in The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), chaps. 2 and 4.

5. That the latter point is made in Gen. 3:16 and articulated by Milton in Christian Doctrine (Milton's Prose Works, ed. Don M. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953, VI. 335) does not alter the case. Paradise Lost is a work in its own right, not a mere illustration of the principles of Christian Doctrine, and it is with the vision of Milton's great poem that I am concerned here. Joseph Summers, The Muse's Materia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 177-78, wisely notes that "Eve's attempt mirrors the redemptive action of the Son."

6. The notion is clearly expressed by Robert Burton in The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Holbrook Jackson (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1932), I.155: "The common division of the soul is into three principal faculties—vegetal, sensitive, and rational, which make three distinct kinds of living creatures: vegetal plants, sensible beasts, rational men." Burton also notes: "The inferior may be alone," (i.e., as in a beast or a plant) "but the superior cannot subsist without the other."


9. One may see the pattern in a single figure in Milton's Samson Agonistes, in which the protagonist, having gone from proud independence—what might be called the "masculine stance"—to useless doubt and despair, at last finds meaning in responsive submission to God's greater purposes.
THE DIALECTICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MYSTERY AND MINISTRY

JOHN PATTON

The minister stands between the mysterious and the commonplace, attempting to deal with the mystery of life and God. But mystery is not an end itself. It must be expressed through everyday acts of caring for the specific needs of persons. Mystery leads to ministry, but ministry exhausts itself in doing and must look for something that transcends it in order to give it meaning. There should be, then, in our pastoral work, a move from mystery to specific ministries and from those ministries back to mystery. Each is incomplete without the other.

This thesis is an amplification of an interpretation of Saint Paul made by Professor John Koenig. Koenig notes that on at least four occasions, Paul moves "from the exposition of an eschatological mystery to an appeal for charismatic ministry among his readers." A "mystery-to-ministry pattern" is fundamental to Paul's style of building up the church. Some thirty years earlier Ernst Käsemann also noted a mystery-to-ministry movement in Paul's writing. Divine gifts are not dividends to be spent in whatever way the recipient pleases. "For there is no divine gift which does not bring with it a task," says Käsemann, "there is no grace which does not move to action." The sense of in-touch-ness with the transcendent mystery of God is not, for Paul, an end in itself. It offers the power to give oneself in everyday acts of caring. The mystery of God leads to ministry to other persons. As Paul states:

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We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. . . . we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God (I Cor. 2:7, 12).

The hidden wisdom of which Paul speaks has to do with what God has prepared for those who love him. It is eschatological, the future influencing the present. Paul found his readers to be quite ready to revel in individual charismatic gifts but apparently not ready to understand these gifts. He was convinced that "the Corinthians must be led by the Spirit toward a greater understanding of the gifts God has given them." Going beyond knowledge to understanding would lead them to mutual service in the community—in other words, to hard work. Only mystery and ministry together, in alignment with the Spirit's work of enlightenment, can lead to this depth and growth—not one without the other.

The Corinthians apparently believed that they already possessed the fullness of divine life (I Cor. 4:8 ff.), whereas Paul was convinced that much of their present ecstasy was illusion because it had led to perverse behavior rather than useful work. In the passage dealing with mystery which is perhaps most familiar to us, "Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," from I Corinthians 15, Paul wrote almost ecstatically, but concluded practically: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (15:58). This mystery is intended not only to offer a future promise but to help Christians keep their feet on the ground. Mystery leads to ministry, and ministry without mystery lacks power and depth to endure the commonplace without boredom and frustration.

The impact of ministry on ministers today as well as in Paul's time is that ministry's demands tend to separate these two poles, and we are left, like the Corinthians, exulting in the power and specialness of our religious experience or, like most of us, spending our time solving personal or administrative problems without a continuing sense of religious meaning and purpose. I believe that awareness of ministry's
tendency to separate us from mystery or from needed acts of ministry can free us to maintain an appropriate tension and balance between the two poles of the ministry dilemma.

Although my own tendency is to get caught up in problem-solving and lose touch with the mysteries of life and faith, I believe that I share with most other ministers at least one dimension of the Corinthian problem—an overawareness of my specialness. Only occasionally am I accused of being too religious—of being so aware of the mystery of life and God that I lose touch with the grubby realities of life. I am, however, quite liable to get caught up in the awareness of my special theological knowledge, the special experiences of clinical learning which are a part of my particular ministry, and the privilege of being allowed to share in some of the deepest experiences of life and growth of other persons. Unaware, I begin to feel I possess a special gnosis, a particular gift of knowing the way things really are. I become charismatic in my own way, attempting to dispense my special brand of charisma—a twentieth-century Corinthian unaware.

Everybody wants to be special, and ministers are unusually susceptible to specialness. After all, their ordination sets them apart for a special task. In some form or another they are charged with handling and handing out the holy. Other persons minister, but the ordained are to exemplify ministry. They necessarily speak and interpret a special language. A person who, like Paul, must say to others, “Behold, I tell you a mystery,” has a difficult time believing that his or her knowledge of mystery is not a mark of special privilege.

The problem of specialness is that it gets us out of touch with other people, and we invariably pray some version of the Pharisee’s prayer: “Lord, I thank you that I am not like other people,” and proceed to believe that we deserve some kind of extra benefits. Corinthian charismatics were hard to get along with. Modern charismatics are equally difficult. Not because of their gifts, but because inevitably they or we
develop the feeling that there is something particularly deserving about us. Whether we speak in tongues or in one of the other languages of piety and special knowledge, we quickly claim a privilege that cuts us off from the everyday acts of love and charity demanded by ministry.

The demands of ministry on ministers lead to an “us and them” mentality which cuts the nerve or feeling out of ministry and the minister. Paul’s answer was not to deny special gifts, but to place them alongside other gifts; not to deny the mystery but to point to concrete human need in relation to which mystery becomes more meaningful. Those with charismata are not the only ones in the ministry business.

Sometimes, when I have become aware of my specialness, of my importance to other people, and of my unique gifts in my particular area of ministry, I am reminded of my fireman dream, which may seem familiar enough to many ministers that I will not need to interpret it.

I am a fireman. I am at the fire station when an alarm rings. It is time to go fight the fire, and I find myself looking on the floor of my closet for my pants, my raincoat, and my firehat. The alarm bell keeps ringing as I look frantically for the special clothing of my office. Finally, in a tangle of other things I find them, and run out just in time to leap on the truck carrying my pants, raincoat, and firehat in my hands. Apparently I am able to get dressed on the truck because the next thing I am aware of is how long it seems to take for us to get to the fire. When we finally arrive, another fire company has already put out the fire and is making repairs on the house. As I look carefully at the house, I discover that it is my own house—the firehouse we had left to go put out the fire. We have apparently been going around in circles and come back to where we started from. “He who has ears, let him hear.”

Although our claims to specialness might cause Paul to write the same Corinthian letter to some of us today, a more common impact of ministry on ministers is losing touch with
the mystery that leads to genuine ministry. We are more likely to be well-intentioned problem-solvers than charismatics—folk who spend a lot of time trying to help people, but who have lost touch with why. In his novel, *The Moviegoer*, Walker Percy notes: "The search is what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life. . . . To become aware of the possibility of the search is to be onto something. Not to be onto something is to be in despair." A minister needs to be "onto something," and for him or her that something is the mystery of life and of God. Without it there is despair indeed.

In *Ministry and Imagination*, Urban Holmes argues that a large part of the stagnation in the professional ministry today is a result of the failure to "image" the world and God in a way that captures the imagination and give rise to renewed search in both ministers and those whom they serve. All ministers, not just Paul, need to be able to say, "Behold, I tell you a mystery," and present their vision with imaginative power.

Jungian psychologist James Hillman speaks of "a search for the imaginal in the heart of things by means of ideas." Too often, however, this search lapses into the kind of theological thinking "where the most abstract notions about divinity are taken as literal dogmas." The mystery of which Paul speaks is lost and "the search" is over almost before it has begun. Life is not literal. It is never adequately described by dogmas, whether theological or psychological. It is metaphorical, with an inevitable double meaning. Its content is, as Freud said, latent and manifest, but, in contrast to Freud, our intent is not to translate one into the other and find the really real, the empirical—things as they are. Both meanings are required. Life is not, in fact, literal and clear. It is metaphorical and mysterious and has double meanings. The poster quotation on a colleague's wall reads: "Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved." Or as Hillman says about Freud:

"Our fundamental unease with Freud's theory is not that it cannot be verified but that it does not satisfy. We fail to fall for it not because it
empirically fails as a hypothesis about human nature, but because it
 fails poetically, as a deep enough, embracing enough, esthetic enough
 plot for providing dynamic coherence and meaning to the dispersed
 narratives of our lives.*

Our lives require mystery and some complexity. A meaning­
 ful life and ministry require a commitment to search.

 Probably the most exciting thing about the pastoral
counseling I do is when the nature of the counseling switches
to what I have called with students, “the exploratory mode.”
A person may have come in with any kind of presenting
problem, his job, his marriage, his grief. The efforts in the
counseling process are generally devoted to trying to achieve
some catharsis by unloading the problem on someone else
and by trying to find a solution to that problem. A significant
number of my counselees, however, get beyond that stage as
the process of therapeutic investigation gets them curious
about themselves. You can hear the change on an audio tape.
No longer are things simply this way or that way, right or
wrong; there develops a wondering about things and a letting
go of the need to have things one way or another. Although
there may be significant pain, along with the pain there is a
developing sense of wonder and curiosity at the mystery of a
life which is no longer seen as a one-dimensional.

One of the couples I work with comprises Jim and Joan.
They came to me originally for help with Joan’s depression
over their retirement in a strange city. Now that depression
has lifted, but they continue to come to share their visions
and dreams. My ministry is to join them in their search, Joan
tells one of her dreams. She is supposed to meet a friend on a
train going to McKeesport (which is where she grew up). She
misses the train, but instead of taking the next train to
McKeesport, she gets on the next train not knowing where it
is going. In doing so she goes past McKeesport and gets off at
the stop beyond, which is called “New Port or New Port
News or something like that.”

Looking for meaning in a dream appears to many people
whom I see a rather impractical activity, clearly not one immediately directed toward problem-solving. It is, however, a kind of paradigm for “the search . . . what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life.” It is usually an example of the exploratory mode of living or becoming curious about life’s direction without a frantic effort to control things. It involves being open to the mysteries which Paul and others may tell us about. The symbol of the new city in Joan’s dream, one which is beyond the home city, is reminiscent of many biblical symbols. The fact that it occurred in her dream and that she, Jim, and I had an opportunity to explore it together confirmed for all of us that she was no longer in despair, but “onto something.”

A major impact of ministry upon ministers is to strip them of their wonder at life and God. Paul sees ministry as growing out of mystery and presents a paradigm for us in his linking the rich mystery of faith with concrete acts of caring, neither complete without the other. He views the life of faith as a process of growth in understanding, not a static achievement. As Walker Percy might put it, because he is “onto something,” he is aware of the possibility of a search.

I conclude with another dream, because I believe that the use of this kind of material in the development of my theme may cause the reader to search and explore rather than try to pin down—to reach beyond knowledge to understanding. A woman of fifty-five comes to me because of her bondage to anger with her husband, who has disappointed her. She has lived for him and the children. Now the children have left home, and he has let her down. She brings in a dream. In the dream she comes home to find her house has been burglarized and precious antiques have been stolen. She is upset, angry, and quickly calls the sheriff to apprehend the thief. She waits for some time, but the sheriff does not come. Instead a truck drives up to her house, and men bring in other valuable possessions of hers which she has had in storage and has forgotten about.
MYSTERY AND MINISTRY

It is possible that for most of us there are still things in storage which can be rediscovered—still mysteries to be told about. The minister stands between the mysterious and the commonplace, attempting to deal with the mystery of life and God. Mystery leads to ministry, but ministry exhausts itself in doing and must look for something that transcends it in order to give it meaning. There should be, then, in our work, a move from mystery to specific ministries and from those ministries back to mystery. Each is incomplete without the other.

NOTES

THE IDIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONALISM

Review by Henry Clark


When Saul Alinsky was young, he taught criminology and aspired to a nice, respectable career as an academic. In those days, he says, professors assuaged their resentments about low salaries by indulging in the belief that they were morally superior to the corrupt, avaricious, uncultured businessmen and politicians who made a lot more money than they did. But he soon reached the conclusion that "the only difference between being in a professional field and in business is the difference between a ten-buck whore and a hundred-dollar-a-night call girl." 1

That's a hard saying, and those of us who are religious professionals (either ministers or teachers) are understandably ambivalent in our response to it. On the one hand, we know there is a lot of truth in it: even the church and the academy have their share of shameless careerists and outright mercenaries, and most of us would admit that pecuniary factors sometimes influence our decisions about "wider fields of service." On the other hand, though, we tend to feel—quite sincerely—that professionals are merely distracted from time to time by financial considerations, not devoted to the pursuit of personal gain in the way that (we imagine) nonprofessionals are. The motives, and the lives, of many professionals are unfairly maligned by Alinsky's crude aphorism, for many professionals do at least try to live up to the service ideal inherent in the very conception of a professional calling. If some of them make a better than average living—well, considering the long years of preparation and the strenuous demands of their work (not to mention their superior intelligence), they probably deserve it.

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Our resistance to the bluntness of Alinsky's imagery is similar to our misgivings about many of the claims of political and cultural revolutionaries in the sixties. Those of us who received our intellectual formation during the heyday of Reinhold Niebuhr's "Christian realism" learned that the cardinal sin of the religious do-gooder was naive utopianism (which was even worse than pietistic moralism). Thus we learned that equality was not a social goal worth seeking: the best we could realistically hope for was a "tolerable justice" in which the less-privileged classes developed enough countervailing power (e.g., in labor unions) to wrench a few liberal reform measures (e.g., the New Deal) from the hands of the powerful. If extremes of wealth and poverty could be mitigated, that was the best we could hope for—and if the pragmatic incrementalism which produced the Wagner Act and unemployment compensation could sufficiently improve the position of the "least advantaged citizens," then the inequalities of capitalism were justifiable.

We learned that representative democracy was a more satisfactory way of managing political life than what later came to be called participatory democracy. Given a political apparatus controlled to such a large extent by money and the media time money can buy, the best to be hoped for here is a wise and courageous heir of Edmund Burke—a William Fulbright or a Hubert Humphrey—who will exercise cultivated judgment to draft and pass laws which are better than what the constituents would have known to ask for, and who will make the compromises necessary to stay in office (e.g., signing the Southern Manifesto opposing desegregation, if that is required to allow him to continue his crucial role in the formulation of foreign policy). We were taught that the division of labor enshrined in clearly defined roles and carefully distinguished role responsibilities should be respected: the individual citizen, and groups thereof, must not rebel; instead, they should petition the magistrates, and trust the magistrates to straighten things out on their behalf.\footnote{We also learned to be duly contemptuous of "mass society" and "mass culture." To be highly educated (especially in the \textit{studia humanitatis}) was to develop an appreciation of high culture and a corresponding disdain for the superficialities of the Eisenhower era and its ludicrously complacent materialism. It followed that the revolt of the masses against elites and elite standards was as unfortunate in the realm of culture as unrealistic aspirations regarding equality or radical democracy were in the realms of economics and politics. Although value and wisdom in the life of the spirit were perceived by}
cultivated sensibilities rather than crude empirical sensory receptors, cultivation was attained only through *Wissenschaft*: so we learned that it was within the power of the professional person to define issues and crises. . . . And it was within the power of the professional to justify his actions, including the use of socially sanctioned violence, by appealing to a special knowledge called scientific fact. No metaphysical authority more effectively humbled the average person.

Each of these assumptions was challenged in the sixties. The struggle for racial justice asserted that equality of opportunity (as conventionally defined) was not enough; there should be equality of outcomes. The struggle for economic justice protested that “middle and upper-class people get a disproportionate return on the investment of energy they make in society,” and its demand for a more equitable redistribution of wealth was based in part on this claim. Enthusiasts for participatory democracy called for “one person, one vote,” and leaders of reform movements (e.g., Bob Moses) exiled themselves rather than allow themselves to become parties to a “cult of personality.” Spokespersons for distinctive subcultures rejected the attempts of “national urban society” to impose uniform standards of aesthetic or cultural style on the whole nation, and “self-determination in matters affecting us most closely” became a rallying cry for numerous interest groups, including consumer advocate groups which challenged the quality of goods and services being made available to them, the prices at which they were offered, and the authority of producers and providers to determine what would be offered and how much it should cost.

Liberal professionals (i.e., professionals who see themselves as liberals or progressives in political and economic affairs) typically regard these challenges with “Yes, but . . .” ambivalence. Yes, we want the least advantaged to be raised to a decent and humane floor of adequacy in regard to economic necessities—but we know that the prospect of differential rewards does produce extra effort, and we would hate to do away with either pecuniary or status incentives to greater diligence, creativity, and ingenuity. Yes, we agree that the public deserves to be better informed, and we believe in principle that it should have greater participation in policy-making, but in practice we credit the expertise of the highly trained specialist with greater wisdom than the fickle instincts of the common person. And even though we respect the right of groups with a special sense of identity to cling to their own (quaint?!) customs and preferences, we still believe in historically established standards of excellence in arts and letters, and
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we tend to feel that the superiority of these standards ought to be proclaimed.

As professionals, we tend to be very aware of the dangers of watering down incentives, diluting decision-making power, or undermining authority in those area where our expertise and leadership are applicable. We believe passionately in the importance of the contribution to society made by our profession, and we fear that contribution might be lessened if our independence (which means security as well as respect) were seriously compromised. We probably want our children to become professionals, too (for the same reasons our elders and teachers wanted us to a generation ago), and thus we contribute as parents to the very overemphasis on preprofessionalism in undergraduate education that those of us who are teachers deplore in humanities faculty meetings.

I begin with a sketch of the historical context within which we find ourselves precisely because I believe that most of the reflection on the place of the professions in contemporary American life—especially "applied ethics and the professions" as practiced by social ethicists and theologians—lacks both breadth and depth. Our thinking in this area can benefit greatly from a number of recent books on professions in America, the most noteworthy of which is Magali Sarfatti Larson's The Rise of Professionalism. In this Marxist examination of "how the occupations that we call professions organized themselves to attain market power," professionalization is understood as

the process by which producers of special services sought to constitute and control a market for their expertise. Because marketable expertise is a crucial element in the structure of modern inequality, professionalization appears also as a collective assertion of special social status and as a collective process of upward mobility. In other words, the constitution of professional markets which began in the nineteenth century inaugurated a new form of structured inequality: it was different from the earlier model of aristocratic patronage, and different also from the model of social inequality based on property and identified with capitalist entrepreneurship. In this sense, the professionalization movements of the nineteenth century prefigure the general restructuring of social inequality in contemporary capitalist societies: the "backbone" is the occupational hierarchy, that is, a differential system of competences and rewards; the central principle of legitimacy is founded on the achievement of socially recognized expertise, or, more simply, on a system of education and credentialing.3

Its meticulous historical and structural investigations provide documentation for the more overtly polemical attacks penned by writers such as Ivan Illich on the unintended havoc wrought by professionals
in high-technology societies; moreover, Larson's book is itself a quiet call to arms to socially conscious professionals who are sick of their alienated condition and eager to avoid playing along with prevailing inequalities and abuses in professional practice in the United States today.

Larson's argument may be summarized as follows. "The great transformation" which took place in the nineteenth-century rise of corporate capitalism had its counterpart in the rise of modern professionalism. Whereas a few practitioners of a few occupations (law, theology, and, to a much lesser degree, medicine) had enjoyed certain privileges because of services rendered to a small aristocracy (with which they maintained communication and curried favor by availing themselves of the classical education favored by this aristocracy), new opportunities presented themselves in the 1800s to a much larger group of workers with special knowledge and special skills as industrialization created a new potential market in the form of a modestly affluent middle class. What was needed (in each emerging profession) was the creation of a distinctive commodity based on special knowledge and skills, and the standardization of this commodity through an educational system which replaced apprenticeship by credentials and which unified both the production of knowledge and the production of producers of services with proper credentials in the modern research university. What Larson calls "the professionalization project" proceeds along the following lines:

In the context of the "great transformation," elite or community patronage was insufficient to guarantee the position and competence of growing numbers of practitioners in expanding markets. As these traditional warrants declined, two movements became visible. Their character and respective importance vary as a function of the larger social structure within which the specific professional projects developed. One movement attacks the privileges of exclusive groups of traditional professionals and their de facto or institutionalized monopolies over marks of professional distribution; simultaneously, the other movement attempts to regulate competition by reconstructing monopoly on different and much broader bases of control. The monopolistic goal of the professional project, which demands regulation and control of access to the professional market on the supply side, contradicts, therefore, the democratization potential inherent in the expansion of professional markets and in the challenge to corporate privileges.

As the above summary suggests, the parallel between the rise of professionalism and the rise of higher education (specifically, the large research university) is of the utmost importance. For Larson, the decline of the small sectarian college, which had emphasized religion
and the classics (in part because of their putative value in cultivating "mental discipline"), in favor of the "national university" during the 1880s is a perfect reflection of larger market trends. Thus, it is not surprising that "education is [now] the main legitimator of social inequality in industrial capitalism," for it creates "professional exchange value" through its monopoly of a system of instruction and credentialing, which appears to produce "objectively measurable" skills in standard products (trained professionals who have been schooled in organizational virtues such as obedience and self-discipline as well as in technical expertise). Larson makes much of the convergence of interests expressed in the vogue of "scientific management" from the early part of the twentieth century: this approach to the mobilization of the productive energies furnished by "hands" in factory or office also fitted in with the university's pretensions to value-free knowledge, "the one best way" in the teaching and learning of professional skills and attitudes in the name of whose authority all so-called quacks could be cast out and all recalcitrant recruits herded into line.

Historical movements like progressivism are also seen as significant in the rise of professionalism, particularly in the (predominantly twentieth-century) rise of what Larson terms "organizational professionals." This is a new category of professionals as the alternate pole of a continuum with traditional professions as the other pole and engineering somewhere in the middle; it is those professionals "generated by heteronomous bureaucracies, and primarily by the expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus of the state." Private-sector examples are associated with the "concentration of administrative and management functions under corporate capitalism" (as in hospital administrators, school superintendents, and management professionals); public-sector examples derive from the expansion of the state's activities into areas formerly served by private individuals and institutions (e.g., social workers, city planners, etc.). The Progressives imagined that properly trained officials (increasingly those in the public sector) could find a rational solution for most social problems, and this assumption naturally reinforced the power of groups and educational institutions which claimed to have the knowledge required for such solutions and as well as having mechanisms for producing experts who could apply this knowledge in real-life situations. Once again, scientific management was a myth that enhanced both the wish-inspired optimism of the public and the market position of the organizational professionals.

No attempt is being made here to outline the complexity of Larson's
thesis, nor am I attempting to do justice to her analysis of the distinctiveness of particular professions (notably medicine and law). What is especially important for thoughtful readers (most especially for readers of this journal) is the author’s stress on economic and status considerations as the source of professionalization and the root of the ideology of professionalism. All “knowledge professionals” (ministers and professors being among the most numerous and important groups in this category) ought to be aware of this ideology, and they have a special responsibility to debunk it and seek to mend the distortions it helps to sustain in our society.

“Ideology” is a word so frequently and so loosely employed these days that perhaps we ought to begin our discussion of the ideology of professionalism by reminding ourselves of the precise meaning (and the most important connotations) of the term. Formally, an ideology is a complex of ideas and arguments which legitimate and justify some existing pattern of behavior and the institutions through which this behavior is channeled. (In the scheme of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, an ideology is an “objectivation”; insofar as it is elaborated in metaphysical concepts by philosophy or theology, it is a “cosmization.”) Larson agrees with Berger and Luckmann in declaring that “ideology transforms [social] structures into personality.” Since Karl Mannheim’s seminal work Ideology and Utopia, the literature of the social sciences uses “ideology” to describe the world-explaining and institution-legitimating Gestalt of ideas that a privileged group uses to justify its societal position.

Most of the prevailing assumptions concerning professionalism in our society are ideological, for they are used (unconsciously, for the most part) to explain why it is necessary and right for professionals to enjoy certain goods (money, status, relative autonomy) not often enjoyed, or enjoyed to a much more limited extent, by other workers. The key elements in this ideology probably ought to be viewed less as separate entities than as three slightly different ways of describing the same attitudes so as to emphasize slightly different effects. The elements are individualism, elitism, and a psychology of entitlement (which often presents itself matter-of-factly as the notion of enlightened self-interest).

Self-discipline and self-reliance are essential virtues in the lengthy educational pilgrimage of would-be professionals, and those who finally secure their credentials are understandably proud of their accomplishments. They see their hard-won competence as the fruit of individual diligence, and they feel that society ought for its own good to protect and enhance it by not infringing on their independence and
by providing opportunities for further growth (new paradigms! hot discoveries! ever more useful and profitable applications!). So the forthright self-assertiveness of individualism develops rapidly into an elitist self-consciousness and a corresponding sense of entitlement. Elitism has at least three major dimensions. It is, first of all, an understandable and (in proportion) justifiable joi de faire in one's abilities to practice a useful and highly esteemed craft with excellence, maybe even a little panache. The accomplished professional is a virtuoso of some kind, and it would be strange if he or she did not take delight in virtuoso performances and accomplishments. The trouble, of course, is that the virtue and virtu (taste) of the professional with a wholesome sense of vocation may degenerate into the hollow virtuosity of technicians who have forgotten the ultimate end of their craft and devote themselves to practicing it in ever more elegant ways for its own sake. William F. May has noted that the obsession with technique or style on the part of many professionals often becomes an aesthetic ideal which dominates consciousness (and frequently leads to a squandering of talent and a misallocation of resources that could be used to contribute to human welfare). 12

As May also observes, professionals with a lively sense of their own abilities—their artistry!—sometimes then begin to view their service to humankind as an act of philanthropy. This moral fault is related, of course, to excessive individualism, for it arises in a mind which has not learned or remembered what the doctrine of covenant love has to say about the mutual obligation of all members of the human family to one another. When professionals forget what everlasting debts they owe to the community of scholars, teachers, students, patients, clients, and others from whom they have learned whatever they know, and in interaction with whom they have developed all their vaunted skills, they foolishly imagine that their competences are an exclusive possession which they are very generous to share with the common herd. 13

It is only a short step, of course, from the philanthropic mood to a psychology of entitlement which assumes that both decision-making authority and the privileges of wealth and status are the professional's just due. Since the professional is an expert, he or she should be the one who decides what the client needs and what the client should do. And for authority to be maximally impressive and effective, it must be accompanied by symbols of status—thus the material and life-style accoutrements befitting lofty social status come to be, not merely something pleasant the successful professional has a right to expect and enjoy, but an essential part of respectable professional stature. 14
What Robert Coles says of "the children of privilege" may also be said of conscientious professionals: their sense of entitlement is most assuredly not a cavalier assumption that the world owes them everything they want quite apart from their cultivation of excellence. They have pride and a commendable sense of honor, so they want to have a genuine contribution to make to society, and they are willing to work plenty hard—they just want the power and the privileges that ought to accrue to those who are excellent in rendering a vital service. Even with the best professionals, all of these ideological elements which we have sketched sometimes blend into a concept of enlightened self-interest which, despite its good consequences, has many dangers.

Historically, the concept of enlightened self-interest carries connotations of elitism and paternalism. It is a concept which implies that wise, virtuous, powerful persons should be willing, out of the goodness of their altruistic hearts, to give up some of their prerogatives and share some of their abundance with those who are less fortunate (because, in part, they are less meritorious). It is a highly gratifying posture to take; it suggests that one is a "generous benefactor" who is entitled to expect deferential thanks from the "grateful beneficiaries" of one's kindness. But if one has a keen awareness on the extent to which all citizens of modern states are victims of the kind of alienation which A. Touraine calls "dependent participation," this awareness may serve as a wholesome antidote to the paternalistic smugness which so often detracts from the effectiveness of even the best-intentioned do-gooders.

Larson's analysis of the ideology of professionalism includes a number of specifics not alluded to in the foregoing paragraphs, but each element in her argument is compatible with the three categories highlighted above. Individualism, for example, is expressed in and reinforced by professionalism's stress on the merit of the practitioner, and it is partly this aspect of the professional's self-concept (especially the desire for personal credit for virtuoso performance) that vitiates the professional's class-consciousness and makes him or her a poor prospect for unionization. The assumptions of individualism also influence diagnoses regarding what ails the client, for emphasis is placed on individual remedies, and "structural causes as well as collective action upon these causes, are relegated to a vaguely utopian realm." This particular point deserves to be asserted in Larson's own words:

Professional work conditions (and not only the general ideology) foster individualism. The professional's sense of power and authority flows not only
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from his actual command over special knowledge but also from his control over interpersonal situations. The first established professions—medicine, law, the ministry, and architecture—were typically concerned with the problems of individuals. Only indirectly did they define society as their client. Today, individualized service becomes an ideological remedy for the ills of a social situation, a screen for the social problems caused by the bureaucratic systems through which services are delivered—most notably in the medical and teaching professions.¹⁶

The bad effects of elitism are manifested in the professional’s idolatrous view of technology and technique as well as in her or his tendency to value (and protect) colleagues at the expense of clients or society at large. Seeing oneself as a virtuoso often leads to “an ethical sense of limited responsibilities” in which the social and political consequences of professional performance are either ignored or written off as someone else’s concern. Even where conscientious concern is present in the attitude of the professional, structural constraints often result in what Larson calls “powerless discretion.”¹⁷ Undue identification with the guild often means that the professional who sees things from the point of view of clients and puts their interests first is dismissed as a quack. But loyalty to the guild is inculcated by a host of social control devices ranging from economic and psychological dependence through the character of professional work itself (with the distinctiveness of language and style that make “talking shop” a peculiarly rewarding activity) to overtraining (which functions both to arouse the respect of the laity and to provide a basis for specialization).¹⁸

As for the psychology of entitlement, it is constantly reinforced by what Berger and Luckmann refer to as “the plausibility structures” of everyday experience. Professionals are typically protected from “the tyranny of the clock” which makes life on the job so miserable for so many millions of workers: not only do they enjoy great freedom to set their own work schedules, but they are usually free of the demand that “a given result should be obtained in a given time.”¹⁹ Moreover, as Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb observe in their heart-rending portrait of The Hidden Injuries of Class, professionals benefit from a number of symbols of deferential respect:

Deference in American society has this at its root: a calculation that someone else’s time is more valuable than your own, which seems to give the person the right to command your time in accordance with his needs. The most obvious example occurs in offices, where it seems right for secretaries to perform services for their superior, not because they respect him as self-sufficient or
because they are awed by his abilities, but because the superior's work is considered more valuable than her typing, and so his time more valuable than hers.  

Most readers will feel two strong currents of resistance arising within themselves against Larson's argument. The first is a more than trivial irritation with the jargon and repetitiveness which mar her style. It is curious that an author who deplores the elitist pretensions of professionals, and who wants to affirm the solidarity of all workers, should write in such a way that only a fellow sociologist or the most determined nonsocial scientist can apprehend the argument. Perhaps she is indulging herself in the joys of talking shop with other professionals.  

The other objection has to do with Larson's implied assumption that the ideological claims of professionals are fraudulent. A neoconservative would not be at all abashed by the "charges" leveled by Larson, for an observer of this persuasion would cheerfully contend that only a meritocratic society which rewards extra individual effort and ability with extra privilege and power can produce the competence and skills necessary to provide the greatest benefits of civilization. Of course professionals claim the right to special rewards, and if they deliver the services they profess to be able to give, they are entitled to these rewards, and society is getting a good deal in the bargain.  

But in view of the patent inadequacies and abuses which characterize professional practice today, any unqualified version of such a response is self-serving, and would tend in itself to confirm Larson's analysis. The fact is, Larson's perspective ought to be seen as being of the utmost importance for the "knowledge professionals" (in whose ranks are numbered those who preach and teach). Because it forces us to acknowledge the significance of social class privileges and power in the life and motivation of professionals, its unmasking of the ideology of professionalism has peculiar potency. No one who assimilates Larson's argument will ever again be quite so susceptible to conventional rationalizations for the excessive advantages claimed as their due by most professionals; moreover, the attentive reader will be ever hereafter aware of the dark side of the "virtues" so uncritically proclaimed as a justification for these advantages.  

Since preachers and professors are professionals themselves, they are also likely to be duped by the false consciousness of professionalism and involved in the injustices and irrationalities professionals are guilty of visiting upon society. Thus we need Larson's perspective for the good of our own souls. For even though we do not participate in the
most spectacular economic benefits of the class privileges enjoyed by some professionals, our ability to make use of her critical interpretation will be sorely limited unless we take its indictments to heart personally. 21

But the most exciting possibilities that come to mind in connection with this book and the insights it provides have to do with their potential influence on the professional and business leaders who belong to the constituencies whom we serve as pastors and prophets. If a recent Hastings Center series of studies on the teaching of ethics in higher education is correct in its central finding, a rare opening exists at this moment for those who seek to promote theological and moral reflection in such constituencies. There is currently a great curiosity about applied ethics and the professions (including management), and both ecclesiastical and educational institutions must make the most of this moment of high opportunity. To do so, we must devise learning experiences which probe much more deeply than most existing programs do into the assumptions (and the ideological functions of these assumptions) held by professionals. We must go beyond the typical case study approach, which tacitly accepts far too many givens and begs all the most sobering moral questions; rather, we must use cases in such a way as to generate policy proposals and social change strategies that will move us closer to those societal goals which "political realism" (even Niebuhr's "Christian pragmatism" as it flourished in the fifties) finds embarrassing and inconvenient: distributive justice which comes as close as possible to equality, meaningful democracy, and a healthy cultural pluralism which avoids both shallowness and snobbery.

The task of figuring out what it would mean to detach ourselves from the most alienating and immoral aspects of contemporary professionalism and to recover our true vocation calls for careful intellectual work as well as earnest psycho-spiritual resolve. We have to make intelligent judgments about the best kind of balance between the conventional wisdom of Establishment liberals and radical critiques, and we have to articulate goals and strategies which are not so idealistic as to be impracticable even as we seek to expand our culture's notion of what is "realistic" and our ability to expand the limits of the possible.

In making these judgments, however, we need to realize that our class position and our previous socialization (especially that portion of it which took place in graduate school) give us a distorted perspective, one which is likely to be persistently resistant to the one put forth by Larson. As Benjamin DeMott has wisely noted, most people have a "fallback self" which comes to the fore when they feel insecure,
uncertain or otherwise threatened. This self is the one which accepts all those definitions of respectability imposed by authority figures from childhood on, and wants to conform. In the case of professionals, regression to the fallback self means “falling away” from our highest ideals about the vocation of our profession in society, and settling for the safe, self-serving definitions of “professional excellence” which the elders of the guild have arrived at as a means of ensuring production of a standard commodity with high value in the marketplace.

If may be especially difficult to rise above the fallback self in asserting the social responsibilities of the professions during the coming decade, for many who come to programs in applied ethics with what they think is an open mind will be deeply affected (and infected) by the reactionary currents of neoconservative thought which are sweeping the nation just now. The external pressure they exert will be matched by internal pressures arising from the same anxieties all Americans feel as a result of inflation, the energy crisis, the decline of the Empire and attendant worries about our international prestige, etc. We will be very much tempted to succumb to the neoconservative mood ourselves.

That is why professionals who subscribe in large measure to Larson’s analysis will need to be in close touch with each other and enlist each other’s aid in setting situation-specific agendas of detachment and recovery of their calling. Individual commitments are necessary, and individual efforts at what Larson speaks of as “role contestation” are commendable. But purely individual decisions and actions will perpetuate the errors and weaknesses of excessive individualism, and thus will express the ideology of professionalism in a crippling way. Far better for the agendas of reform to be mutually agreed upon by cadres of professionals in a certain field or a given locale who can offer each other mutual support and rebuke. For example, it would be good for individual practitioners to fight against disproportionate economic privilege by lowering fees or contributing a substantial percentage of their time to the poor. It would be even better for a concerned group to join together in contributing all of their income beyond a certain ceiling to one or more funds designed to benefit the profession as a whole (by subsidizing socially useful research of the kind not likely to be funded by Establishment sources, for example, or by opening up the professions to candidates who would otherwise be excluded, or by encouraging qualified personnel to go to parts of the country or to specialize in services not favored by the market).23

As Larson points out, though, role contestation “involves the development of new norms and new criteria which are alien to the
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capitalist logic. Instead of competition within the higher reaches of
the working class, and between different segments of the middle class,
it will require dedication to human solidarity in a much broader sense.
In the words of "a political collective formed by professionals and
technicians" with which Larson closes her book:

The autonomy and the "intelligence of the whole" traditionally vested in
professional work appear to be, now, uncertain privileges. To build or defend
monopolies of competence and access does not protect these intrinsic qualities.
For this, professional workers, in solidarity with all workers, must find the
means of claiming and realizing the full human potential of all work.19

NOTES

1. Saul Alinsky, "The Professional Radical: Conversations With Saul Alinsky,"
p. 105.
p. 105.
4. One used to hear this assertion at church conferences on special change during the
late sixties.
5. Larson, pp. xv-xvii.
10. Larson, p. 179.
Rep., 6 (December, 1975).
13. May.
14. William Casey, "The Physician's Profession Role: Changes in the Last Four
Decades," Paper presented to faculty research seminar on "Humanities and the
Professions" at the University of Southern California, February 20, 1980. Mimeo-
graphed.
16. Larson, p. 236.
Quoted by Larson, p. 235.
21. If any reader thinks I am being too harsh on religious professionals, let him or her
drop in on the next annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Granted that
most of the talk about jobs and the fate of the humanities in higher education is
legitimate and terribly necessary, one cannot help but be struck by the fact that this
convention looks and sounds pretty much like any other convention of middle-class
professionals: it takes place in the same kind of hotel, people dress, eat, and drink about
the same, and most of the conversation one hears (from those who already have jobs) is
likely to be filled with the same kind of one-upmanship—reports of publications, grant
proposals, slick deals to reduce one's teaching load, institutional politics, etc.—that

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would manifest itself in a crowd of lawyers or executives. One might never guess that this group of professionals is supposedly dedicated to ends more worthwhile than moving from the status of a twenty-buck whore to that of a fifty-dollar-a-night call girl.

22. Charles W. Powers proposed the creation of such funds at a Society of Religion and Higher Education seminar in 1973.
23. Larson, p. 244.
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