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**Contents**

**Editorial**
Science, Technology, and Faith .................................................. 331

**ISSUE THEME:**
**Science, Technology, and Faith**

Science, Religion, and the Sacred Depths of Nature ......................... 333
  *John F. Haught*

Technology and the Quest for a Just Society .................................. 349
  *Young Bin Moon*

The Human Genome Project: Ethical and
  Theological Reflections ......................................................... 362
  *Karen Lebacqz*

Cloning, Theology, and Ethics after Dolly: An Overview .................... 372
  *Rebekah Miles*

Science, Evolution, and Methodism: 1840–1925 ................................ 388
  *W. Douglas Mills*

**Outside the Theme**

The Future of Black Theology .................................................... 400
  *Dwight N. Hopkins*

**The Church in Review**

Inclusiveness in The United Methodist Church
  *Josiah U. Young III* ............................................................... 409
  *Joerg Rieger* ................................................................. 409
A Word on The Word

Lectionary Study

*David L. Bartlett* .................................................. 416

Issues In: Biblical Exegesis and Interpretation

*Tina Pippin* ......................................................... 425

Book Reviews

*Preaching to Head and Heart*, by Thomas R. Swears (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000)

Reviewer: Youtha C. Hardman-Cromwell .................................. 432

*Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching*,

by Lucy L. Hogan and Robert Reid (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999)

Reviewer: Eunjoo Mary Kim ........................................ 433

Index to Volume 21, 2001 ........................................... 435
As I write these words, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington are barely three days old. Writing an editorial on science, technology, and faith seems trite, given the rending pain engulfing the country right now. But then I realize that technology has played a key role both in the perpetration of this horrific crime and in the search to bring those responsible to justice. And given the massively increased security measures at U.S. airports, technology is likely going to impinge upon our daily experience even more profoundly than it has to this point.

But this horror reminds us of something else too. The Greek word techne, from which our word technology is derived, refers to the art, craft, or skill involved in deliberately producing something. It follows that technology can be used to improve, heal, and prolong our lives—even create them. But it also follows that technology can be crafted to maim, kill, and devastate lives—as the scenes from New York and Washington have made so chillingly clear. In other words, technology—and the scientific work that makes it possible—is never neutral. It always serves the designs and purposes of human beings. And, as Scripture reminds us over and over, the human heart is capable of crafting deeds both of astonishing goodness and of horrendous evil.

So it is appropriate that we examine science, technology, and faith together. Indeed, it is indispensable to the health and safety—perhaps even the future—of the planet that we do so. Scientific research and technological advancements need constant moral evaluation and ever-watchful ethical and religious scrutiny if they are going to enhance rather than impede the flourishing of life in our world. This is especially crucial at the beginning of the new millennium, when scientific and technological breakthroughs confront us with unprecedented moral and theological challenges. How, for example, will new developments in genetic and cloning technologies impact the way
we define the nature and value of a human being? And in light of the mind-boggling possibilities and options opened up by genetic science, how should freedom and responsibility—personal, societal, and global—be construed?

These questions point to the complex and contentious nature of the conversation between science, technology, and faith—and the imperative to keep this exchange going. The essays in this issue are offered as a contribution to this conversation. The opening article by John Haught sets the stage for the dialogue by revisiting a fundamental question: What exactly is at stake in the conversation between religion and science? Haught's answer is provocative: What is at stake is the very "integrity and vitality of religious faith and theology." Douglas Mills, too, examines the relationship between religion and science, but from the perspective of American Methodism's response to Darwinism in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Based on a close reading of primary sources, Mills shows why the controversies over evolution—and particularly the celebrated John Scopes trial—that rocked denominations in the U.S. caused so little strife among Methodists.

Young Bin Moon addresses two interrelated questions: (1) What values ought to guide the purpose and application of new technologies? (2) In highly differentiated, technological societies, how do we decide what these values are? Drawing on systems theory, Moon argues for a truly public coordination of values in the context of a "holistic vision of justice." Moon's discussion prepares us well for Karen Lebacqz's examination of the Human Genome Project and Rebekah Miles's overview of the debate about cloning. As both essays show, these marvels in science and technology take ethical and theological reflection into truly uncharted waters. But an age-old question, important for ethicists and theologians alike, remains acute: How do we determine the relationship between (scientific and technological) knowledge and the power it bestows in a way that nourishes a just and equitable society?

The dialogue between science, technology, and faith dare not be relegated to the occasional church program or to a brief mention in the Sunday sermon once in a while. When this happens, the church risks becoming unfaithful to its calling. For it is by critically engaging the promise and peril of science and technology that the church witnesses to God's purpose for creation and to the role of human beings in bringing that purpose to fruition.

Hendrik R. Pieterse is the editor of Quarterly Review.
Religion, it may seem, does not need to take note of the natural sciences. The world’s great wisdom traditions were around long before the scientific revolution, and most generations of devout believers have framed their ideas of God or the gods without ever thinking about quantum physics, evolutionary theory, or Big Bang cosmology. Even today, after four centuries of modern science, many of us still see little relationship between scientific understanding and our most cherished spiritual intuitions. Religious thought has surrendered to science the domain of nature, while reserving for itself the spheres of human subjectivity, social existence, history, freedom, and God. Knowledge of the natural world is still not a major concern in our theology schools, seminaries, and college religion classes.

As one who has long been preoccupied with the question of science and religion, I have struggled to find a way to convince students and colleagues of the importance of the natural sciences, not just for the sake of our general knowledge but also for the integrity and vitality of religious faith and theology. In support I have often quoted Alfred North Whitehead: “When we consider what religion is for mankind, and what science is, it is no exaggeration to say that the future course of history depends upon the decision of this generation as to the relations between them.” I believe that these strong words, first expressed in 1925, are as pertinent today as ever.

Another twentieth-century religious thinker who agreed with
Whitehead is Paul Tillich. For Tillich, both science and religion are ways into "depth"—a depth that in its infinitely mysterious reaches is appropriately called "God." By turning away from science, then, we may be avoiding the divine. Although science and religion are distinct ways of approaching the dimension of depth—and should never be conflated or confused—it is worth reflecting on the simple fact that they both share a concern to dig beneath the surface of first impressions, to plunge from shallowness into depth. People of faith, therefore, may view science as a companion rather than as an adversary on the road to God.

Both science and religion assume that our universe has dimensions that cannot be exhausted by a first reading. The whole point of science is to dig beneath commonsense impressions, to go beyond what appears to be the case. A tacit assumption of scientists is that there is always more depth below the surface, beneath what seems to be. Religion also takes us deeper than what appears. In Tillich's terms, religion is a matter of our being grasped by the depth that lurks beneath the surface of our lives and of nature, too. In religious experience we do not so much grasp depth as allow the depth to grasp us. Depth takes hold of us in such a powerful way that we can neither deny nor master it—though, of course, we may try to flee from it.

Were there no sense of depth to reality, there would be no religion. Religion exists only because beneath the surface of all that we experience, including the natural world, we sense that we are taken into a dimension of inexhaustible depth. At times this depth powerfully carries us away, and in doing so it provides an unexpectedly solid grounding to our lives. To those who have experienced the depth, it strikes them—even in all of its vagueness—as more "real" than any of the focal objects they encounter on the surface of their world. They long to enter more deeply into it but hesitate to do so, lest they become lost in its greatness. For there is no end to the journey into depth. In Tillich's words:

The wisdom of all ages and of all continents speaks about the road to our depth. It has been described in innumerably different ways. But all those who have been concerned—mystics and priests, poets and philosophers, simple people and educated people—with that road through confession, lonely self-scrutiny, internal or external catastrophes, prayer, contemplation, have witnessed to the same experience. They have found that they were not what
they believed themselves to be, even after a deeper level had appeared to them below the vanishing surface. That deeper level itself became surface, when a still deeper level was discovered, this happening again and again, as long as their very lives, as long as they kept on the road to their depth.  

Science, I would like to emphasize, is also part of this long human voyage into depth. Though science and religion are quite distinct, they arise out of a common intuition that the truth that does not disappoint lies beneath the surface. It is worth reflecting on the quest for depth that science undertakes in league with religion.

The depth is truly a *mysterium tremendum et fascinationes*. We both shrink from it and long for it. At times, it breaks through with such compelling and self-authenticating power that it legitimately claims the character of "revelation." To those who have been grasped by depth, everything else pales in significance, including all scientific renditions of reality. Nevertheless, scientific exploration cannot be separated from the religious search for depth. Religion, therefore, cannot justifiably remain indifferent to science. That science can become "demonic" is no reason to ignore or run away from it. After all, religions, too, can become demonic. The risk of the demonic is part of every search for depth. But our encounter with depth is ultimately a meeting with the divine:

The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God. That depth is what the word *God* means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation. Perhaps, in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself. For if you know that God means depth, you know much about Him. You cannot then call yourself an atheist or unbeliever. For you cannot think or say: Life has no depth! Life itself is shallow. Being itself is surface only. If you could say this in complete seriousness, you would be an atheist; but otherwise you are not. He who knows about depth knows about God.  

Tillich modeled this striking metaphor for God in part on the new psychologies of "depth" associated especially with Sigmund Freud and Carl G. Jung. Following their disclosure of the inscrutable abyss within each
psyche, the quest for depth has often taken the form of an "inward journey." But the religious and theological importance of natural science is that it allows us to discover depth also in the endless outer horizons of cosmic reality that open up to our ongoing exploration. The biologist and avowed nontheist Ursula Goodenough implies as much in her recent and well-received book *The Sacred Depths of Nature.*

Goodenough finds in the vastness and "Mystery" of the universe a refuge from the anxiety of our own human finitude and perishability. In contemplating an endlessly expansive cosmos, she claims to have "found a way to defeat the nihilism that lurks in the infinite and the infinitesimal." She says, "I have come to understand that I can deflect the apparent pointlessness of it all by realizing that I don't have to seek a point. In any of it. Instead, I can see it as the locus of Mystery." The universe is "inherently pointless," but acknowledging the "sacred depths" of the universe can be emancipating:

I lie on my back under the stars and the unseen galaxies and I let their enormity wash over me. I assimilate the vastness of the distances, the impermanence, the fact of it all. I go all the way out and then I go all the way down, to the fact of photons without mass and gauge bosons that become massless at high temperatures. I take in the abstractions about forces and symmetries and they caress me, like Gregorian chants, the meaning of the words not mattering because the words are so haunting.

Forming "a covenant" with cosmic mystery is all she needs as a scientist to satisfy the spiritual side of her nature.

The favorable reception that Goodenough's elegantly written book has received confirms my suspicion that theology has for too long ignored the spiritual fertility of taking the cosmic route into the domain of depth. Contemporary spirituality has instead typically undertaken the search for depth in terms of the personal "inward journey." The result, I believe, has been to prolong the modern sense of our human isolation from the universe. If each fragmented psyche is borne afloat a limitless ocean of unconscious depth, it has seemed that the way to overcome our disconnection is to embark on the long and painful pilgrimage into our own untapped inwardsness. There, and there alone, spiritual directors have told us, will we find the link to meaning, or to God, that ordinary life in the
outer world cannot provide. But meanwhile we have lost touch with the
earth, the heavens, and the abyss of evolutionary time.

The inward passage to depth has been legitimized by the fact that
modern science often claims to have demystified the outer world, unveiling
the apparent "pointlessness" of an essentially lifeless and mindless universe.
To many, if not most, intellectuals today, science has simply exposed the
emptiness of the astral realms where countless people in the past, and even
a considerable remnant of scientifically uneducated people today, have
looked for a grounding significance. The sense of an utterly desacralized
 cosmos apparently leaves only our own inner depths as the place to look
 for religious meaning.

The inward journey, however, has taken us into a subjective world that
modern thought had already severed from any enlivening association with
the physical universe. The spiritless cosmos of modern mechanistic science
is one in which we feel our own souls—if these too have not been demythol-
ogized away—to be complete strangers. As we seek psychological or spiritual
fulfillment, therefore, we understandably turn our backs on a universe that
has already been drained of meaning. And since science has apparently
exorcized any meaning-bestowing mystery from the immense universe, the
"inward journey" leads only to a more palpable sense of our human alien-
ation from the cosmos.

Goodenough's proposal, as we shall see, is not without problems of its
own. It suggests, though, that we are now at a point in our scientific and spir-
ituai history where we may once again take the universe, rather than the
isolated self, as our primary point of entry into depth. Or, if we still wish to
enter through the door of our subjective lives, then at the bottom floor of
our own psyches, let us allow that there is an opening that sluices downward
into the temporal and spatial immensities of an unfathomably deep universe.
Instead of taking nature’s depth as simply parallel to that of the self, we may
now entertain the thought that the circumscribed world of the self—and of
human history, too—blossoms forth from the subsoil of an immeasurable
cosmic evolution. The spiritual dramas involving the self and human history
do not simply occur on the outer face of a natural world whose meaning is
exhausted in simply being the theater for such adventures. Rather, the self
and human history are now to be thought of as eruptions from the depth of
nature itself. And by allowing ourselves to be embraced by this depth, even
with all of its ambiguity, Goodenough and other religious naturalists believe
it is now possible to discover a kind of redemption and even cause for ecstasy. The proposal is at least worth examining.

Science and Religion in Search of Depth

First, though, let us look more deeply into the metaphor of depth; for here, too, it is all too easy to skim along the surface. Each of us already knows at least something of what it means to be grasped by depth. If we have ever felt that we are being called to generosity or compassion or to make a sacrifice for the sake of anything we value, we have already allowed ourselves to be grasped by depth. We may not even consider ourselves to be religious in any conventional sense, but we all have at least some appreciation of depth. And if scientists have felt the call to honesty and truthfulness—even if this leads them away from conventional religious ideas—it is because they have somehow been enveloped by the dimension of depth. Any scientist who wants to move beyond mere impressions to what is really true about the world is in the grasp of depth. And this is precisely why we cannot completely separate the realms of science and religion.

If at this moment you are wondering whether what I am saying is true, it is because you too want to go deeper than the surface of my words. Ultimately, since depth and truth are one, to be taken captive by your longing for truth means that you have already gone beneath the surface into depth. In order to value truth you must at some level already have surrendered to truth's claims upon you. Even to raise a critical question—or to suspect that my remarks are oversimplifying things here—you have already allowed the depth to grasp hold of you. And so, if religion is the posture of surrendering to depth, your allowing yourself to be taken into depth gives an essentially religious character to your own life as well.

Religions all over the world seek explicitly to awaken us to the depth beneath the shallow world of appearance. Indian religion, for example, instructs us that the Most Real lies beyond maya, the veil of illusion in which our lives are ordinarily enmeshed. Platonic spirituality searches for a realm of perfect Being beyond the becoming and perishing of “this world.” Jesus spoke about the presence of God’s reign hidden “in our midst”—a reality that only hearts trained to be like those of “little children” can discern.

In their own way scientists also strive to go beyond the world of mere appearances. They wish to explore what lies beneath the surface of our commonsense impressions of nature. In fact, it is only because they have
already dimly glimpsed a new level of depth that the great scientific
geniuses are able to break from the relative shallowness of conventional
ideas. Not unlike religious prophets, such scientific adventurers also suffer
at times from the loneliness and social isolation of the call that comes from
the depths of nature. It is only because the universe has depth that science,
like religion, can exist and thrive.

Reading the Universe
We may appreciate the notion of depth in a deeper way if we recall the
process whereby we once developed our own reading skills. When we
learned how to understand the written word, we first had to memorize an
alphabet, then corresponding sounds, vocabulary, grammatical structures,
and so on. Then we began to probe into texts and later into more chal­
lenging ones. And in the process of our education good instructors helped
us penetrate deeper: into the great classics. They invited us to journey
beneath the plain sense of a novel or essay into a “depth” of which our first
reading gave us only an inkling. And even though we may have struggled
and even suffered as we learned to read a play or a poem in a less literal
way, we eventually arrived at a more profound level. Then we began to
experience a surprising sense of satisfaction, a feeling of being on more
solid ground than before. We had been grasped by depth.

The experience of learning to “read in depth” is applicable to the natural
world also. Nature itself has a dimension of depth that invites both scientific
and religious readings. Science and religion may each “read” the universe in
search of what is going on beneath the surface. The quest for depth moti­
vates both enterprises. But if we ignore the question of exactly how to read,
then they are likely to become entangled with each other beneath the
surface. Viewing them as ways of reading can give unity to science and reli­
gion, but viewing them as distinct ways of reading can help us avoid
confusing them. Because both science and religion originate in the human
desire for deeper understanding, their mutual outcomes may at times seem
to compete. But wherever conflict occurs, it is because we have not yet gone
deep enough, either in our scientific or in our religious reading.

Whenever scientists and theologians have persisted on what Tillich
calls the long and lonely road to depth and have recognized, on the one
hand, the inexhaustibility of reality and, on the other hand, the poverty of
their own insights, what seemed to be a good reason for conflict at one
time turned out to be the occasion for breaking away from the surface even more decisively later on. The emergence of modern science and its own way of reading the universe has, in fact, helped theology to abandon both the cosmic and textual literalism that had shielded it from its own depth. Encounters with Galileo, Darwin, and Einstein have been good for religious thought.

Theology, then, has nothing to lose and everything to gain from its "dangerous" encounters with new scientific discoveries. Today this is especially true of its engagement with evolutionary biology. Darwin's surprising portrait of life, though initially terrifying to a certain kind of religious mentality, is really a fresh invitation into the depth of nature—a depth that can also help us understand ourselves and God more profoundly than before.

Continuing with the analogy to reading, we may employ the term literalism as equivalent to a shallow perusal, one that skims along the surface, whether of religious texts or of nature. I believe that we live at a time when many members of both the scientific and religious communities have settled down into a literalism that in both cases blunts the sense of reality's depth. Literalism, in fact, may be defined as a refusal to look into the depth, both of religious texts themselves and of the universe. And it seems that literalism becomes all the more desperate whenever an abyss begins to open up beneath the surface.

An example is the current obsession with "design" that causes some Christian thinkers to turn away altogether from the disturbing depths of natural history churned up during the last century and half by the harrow of evolutionary biology. The philosophical movement known as "Intelligent Design Theory" is, I believe, a sophisticated way of avoiding the depths of nature. In its fixation on instances of present design in physical phenomena and living organisms, it ignores the dark and tragic side of nature's evolutionary creativity. By associating divine wisdom almost exclusively with instances of natural order and overlooking the disturbing novelty and deep suffering that evolution entails, it leads only to an impoverished sense of God.

The avoidance of nature's depths, however, is not restricted to conservative Christians. The scientific community also sports its own brand of literalism. Scientism, the belief that science alone can put us in touch with the ultimate depths of the world, is a blatantly literalist evasion of depth as well. No less than biblical literalism, scientism (and its attendant "scientific mate-
rialism" or "physicalism") is rooted in the need for an absolute clarity devoid of the ambiguity that always accompanies a genuine openness to depth. Scientism arises from an intolerance of uncertainty no less repressive of nature's depth than biblical literalism is of the religious depth of sacred texts. In fact, I have observed in any number of instances that some of our most fervent scientific literalists (whom I will refrain from identifying here by name) were earlier in their lives biblical or religious literalists of one kind or another. Arrested religious and theological development may easily turn into a reactionary dogmatic materialism that reduces nature to the most mind-numbing versions of Flatland. What remains constant, even after conversion, is an obsession with clarity at the price of profundity.

In keeping with current scientific literalism there sometimes arises the sentiment that we are close to reaching rock bottom in our exploration of the universe. A few scientists are even quite certain that physics will soon have arrived at the most "fundamental" layers of the world. Having dug down to the irreducible physical units of physical reality, we will have reached "the end of science." Once we have attained the "Final Theory," there will be no digging any further, since everything significant in the natural world will already have been brought up to the surface. Nature will then show itself to have no remaining depth to be plumbed.

On the other hand, most scientists are not really literalists at all. Most would not tolerate the suffocating idea that the arena for further scientific exploration is growing progressively smaller. Like Goodenough, they would agree that no matter how illuminating our current scientific reading of the cosmos may be, there is yet more depth beneath the surface, and even more beneath that. Indeed, they usually suspect that we shall never gain complete intellectual control over the downward and outward reaches of nature. Science would lose its vitality if its practitioners truly felt close to exhausting the universe's oceanic abysses.

**Religious Naturalism and the Idea of a Personal God**

Both science and religion, it would follow, are stirred to life when the sense of an endless abyss opens up beneath them. However, even though science and religion both presuppose the reality of depth, they do not read it in the same way. Science does not formally attend to the dimension of depth at all. In fact, it employs methods that push aside—for the moment at least—our tacit awareness of the inexhaustibility of the world. Each science...
abstracts in its own way from the rich dimensionality of the real, biting off only what it decides to chew.

No given scientific field, therefore, can legitimately claim to “swallow reality whole.” For while it is savoring its own little bite, the full platter of being remains out of view. And sometimes scientists become so satisfied with the tastiness of the morsel they have chomped off that they forget how much remains on the table unconsumed. This is what happens, for example, when a physicist claims, by dint of mathematical expertise, to have found the “mind of God” or when a biologist asserts that the secret of life lies in chemistry, or that evolution is nothing more than the consequence of selfish genes seeking immortality.

Allegedly “scientific” readings of nature, having mastered the alphabet and grammar of a particular level, may claim that they have read nature all the way down to its fundamental levels. This literalist declaration brings scientists into conflict with religion, just as biblical literalism inevitably leads religious people to reject aspects of science.

Whenever it takes its founding metaphors and symbols too literally, religion loses its own depth. For example, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam represent the depth of nature in personal or anthropomorphic terms. They do so in order to render vivid their intuition that the universe is grounded in an all-encompassing love or promise. Since impersonal reality is incapable of loving or caring about anything, let alone making promises, a meaningful cosmos must apparently be rooted in a reality endowed with the capacity to care. Thus, the Abrahamic religions insist that in its ultimate depths the universe must be at least personal.

However, the sense of nature’s infinite depth can sometimes be forgotten by religious fixation on the idea of a personal God. And the danger here is that the deity may come to seem smaller than the universe itself. The “size” of God becomes too middling to command the response of genuine worship. And if our sacred traditions become too literalist in their understanding of a personal God, the universe of science may seem to open up a deeper and more enticing context for spiritual adventure than do the God-religions.

For this reason, many scientifically educated people today have little or no interest in formal religion. Ursula Goodenough, for example, still has cordial relations with the Protestant faith of her former days, but she no longer believes in the personal God of the Bible. I am convinced that her
experience, shared by many other scientifically educated people today, signals the failure of our theology and religious instruction to integrate the revelatory experience of a personal, promising God into an adequately expansive cosmological setting. A genuinely religious need for endless horizons and inexhaustible depth has led many scientifically excited seekers away from the shallowness of religious literalism and into the embrace of a seemingly infinite universe.

After Darwin, Hubble, Einstein, and Hawking, cosmic boundaries have inflated unimaginably; and the newly discovered immensity of time and space appears now to swallow up our narrowly human images of God. Likewise, the world of the infinitesimal seems to open up endlessly more fascinating frontiers. Religions concerned primarily with healing the foibles and hurts of human history have begun to seem rather paltry when placed against the newly discovered cosmic ranges. What astronomer Harlow Shapely somewhere dubbed “the anthropomorphic, one-planet deity” is less enticing than ever. Contemplation of the universe has become more intriguing and spiritually satisfying than participation in official religious practices.

The Theological Challenge

What response may theologians and religious instructors make to this situation? One approach is to keep on ignoring the universe of science as essentially irrelevant to religious faith. This has been the path taken by most modern Christian theology and spiritual practice. The assumption here is that the only thing that really matters religiously is the human sphere, whether public or private, and its relationship to God. Concern with our personal destiny, or with the affairs of people and the outcome of human history, still seems to be more than enough to hold the interest of most devout believers and theologians. They remain relatively uninformed about cosmology or biological evolution. They may have a vague apprehension that the universe began fifteen billion years ago, that life has evolved slowly, and that genes constrain our behavior. But this knowledge remains notional rather than real. Most of the time theologians, religious educators, and pastors avoid thinking in depth about the universe and our place in it.

It should not be surprising, then, that the new picture of an immensely deep, still-evolving universe arouses the kind of “religious naturalism” that Goodenough finds so appealing. Her focusing on “the sacred depths of
nature” has clearly struck a chord. Her brand of cosmic piety expresses the sentiments of many other scientifically educated and temperamentally religious searchers who find the ancient traditions too constrictive to frame their new sense of cosmic boundlessness.8

For more than a few science-minded spiritual pilgrims the “epic of evolution” is now supplanting the historically limited narratives about Israel, Jesus, and the church as the place to look for religious satisfaction.9 The new cosmic story appeals to their need for breathing space, for a wide open sea on which to ply their spiritual ships. The cult of a deity concerned primarily with human history is for them too provincial to evoke the sentiment of worship. The great mystery of the universe with its indefinitely expanding boundaries, on the other hand, provides an outlet for the human longing to celebrate and surrender to the infinite.

The “universe story,” then, becomes the new “creation myth”—one that apparently surpasses in scope the culturally confining narratives told by our religious traditions. In the new, science-based cosmic story the ancient religious narratives, including those about the promising God of Abraham, get pushed into the background, and at times abandoned altogether, as too diminutive to satisfy the religious craving for depth.

Still, I would argue, another—and even deeper—approach is available to us. This approach sacrifices neither the richly symbolic notion of a personal God nor the imposing magnitude and profundity of the cosmos. Religious educators need to take a close look at what Goodenough hails as the sacred depths of nature. But there is no good reason to separate our inherited idea of a personal God, of an infinitely generous Creator who makes and keeps promises, from the expansiveness and depth of the new universe story. After all, the logic even of the most classical forms of theism already disallows any overtaking of God, the ultimate source of “all things visible and invisible,” by the universe, regardless of how extravagantly large the latter is conceived. And if we understand God as the infinite source of boundless promise, by anyone’s mathematics such a reality can never be outreached by a finite universe, no matter how expansive the latter may be.

For this reason, theology must never be afraid to engage the enormous universe of contemporary cosmology. No immensities and abysses that we shall discover in the universe can ever—according to timeless theological principles—fully contain or express the bottomlessly resourceful promise that echoes from the Word that calls creation into being.
More than that, a robust theology may even legitimately claim that the fascinating universe of Goodenough's religious naturalism remains itself too small to accommodate our religious longings. Undoubtedly, as I have been emphasizing, there is considerable religious significance in the exhilarating new awareness of an ever-expanding and indeterminately self-organizing cosmos. But I find myself still asking questions like these: Can the fathomless night sky, the unfolding complexity of the cosmic story, the incomprehensible world of the atom, and the epic of evolution all by themselves speak adequately to the human need for infinite depths, especially after Einstein and the discovery that the universe itself is a finite set of interrelated things? And even if we attributed some sort of mathematical infinity to it, could an ultimately impersonal cosmos ever speak adequately to the human heart and its longing for love and perfect fidelity?

Can an unfathomable cosmos, at least so long as it is pictured as essentially pointless itself, arouse from slumber the human inclination to hope? Ecstasy or tragic resignation perhaps—but hope? Can a large but still fundamentally meaningless universe be the final context for the basic trust without which our moral aspirations may flag and fade? Can an impersonal universe, all by itself, really inspire us across many human generations to heroic lives committed to the virtues of justice, peace, and love? Can the scientific story of cosmic evolution, deep and fascinating though it certainly is, be the ultimate repository of our trust? In short, can it respond proportionately to the cor inquietum, the restless heart with its native capacity for the infinite?

I fear that devotion to the “new cosmic story” can also easily lend itself to a literalist reading, one that keeps us from pushing even further into the sacred depths of nature. I cannot fathom how the universe as now construed by natural science alone could ever adequately respond to our religious longing for infinite depths so long as it is portrayed as ultimately impersonal, as it inevitably is by religious naturalists. Without being grounded in the reality of an “interested God” (if I may use the famous physicist and self-styled atheist Steven Weinberg’s expression), any derivation of religious meaning from the universe alone will prove in the end to be spiritually illusory, morally impotent, and logically incoherent. In saying this so bluntly, I wish, at least on this matter, to express my agreement with Weinberg. He rightly insists that a universe uncoupled from the idea of a personal God would be inherently “pointless” and hence ultimately devoid
of religious depth as well. Here the hard-core atheist seems more logically consistent than the devotees of cosmic piety.\textsuperscript{10}

No matter how much its expanding breadth and timeless creativity rescues me from spiritual claustrophobia, I wonder if my religious aspirations—and perhaps even the foundations of a coherent moral existence—would not be shipwrecked ultimately on the rocks of an essentially senseless universe. Bathed in “mystery” though it may be, an immense but impersonal universe, as both Bertrand Russell and Albert Camus correctly noted, is somehow less than I am.

Even though its apparent depths may invite me to prostrate myself before it and lose myself in it, I have to ask whether I can surrender myself completely to any reality that in its deepest strata lacks the qualities of intelligence and concern or the capacity for self-sacrificing love and promise keeping that I associate with the very highest ideals of my own species. Even though it may be infinitely larger than I, a universe that is not grounded in an interested God would be less intense in its mode of being than I am. I fear that I cannot bow religiously to a finally unpromising, impersonal universe—no matter how far its boundaries in time and space extend—without becoming less than a person myself.

As Tillich insisted in his famous reply to Einstein (after the great physicist proposed that religion must now grow up and eliminate the idea of a personal God), a person can be healed only by that which is itself personal.\textsuperscript{11} What I choose to worship, therefore, must be at least personal in order to attract me at the center of my own specific kind of existence. Anything less than personal, no matter how large it is, cannot reach into the depths of my heart or heal my soul, even if it does appeal to my need for breathing room. Of course, our ideas of God must include nonpersonal (or superpersonal or transpersonal) aspects. They must indeed provide all the breathing room that religious naturalists rightly seek. But I see no good reason to deny that the vast universe symbolizes and amplifies, instead of contradicts, the fundamentally personal, promising concern that an adequate worship would locate in the sacred depths of the universe.

An immensity of time and space can by itself never turn an impersonal universe into a personal one. Of course, evolutionary science has now shown that over the course of billions of years a universe chronologically devoid of intelligent and ethical life for most of its many billions of years can indeed eventually give rise to persons. Evolution certainly has brought
about beings endowed with minds and the capacity for making and keeping promises. But, at least from the perspective of theology, the emergence of persons during the course of evolutionary time can occur only if the universe is somehow always grounded in an eminent degree of what we call "personhood."

The promise of emergent personhood, theology must insist, was already there at the time of cosmic origins. Just how this grounding is to be understood in a scientific age remains for theology to spell out more carefully than it has done up until now. But a universe taken to be essentially impersonal can never by itself become an adequate spiritual home for humans. Indeed, the very real danger in our construing the universe as essentially impersonal is that the search for the depths of our own spiritual personhood will once again only lead us away from the universe, into an escapist, world-fleeing mysticism or onto the path of a onesidedly narrow "inward journey" rather than into the true depths of the universe. Ironically, the new religious naturalists are still tied to the dualistic modern assumption that the cosmos outside of persons is at bottom impersonal. A serious resolve to return to the cosmos in our spiritual quests is not aided by the idea that in its sacred depths nature is utterly devoid of the personhood that can issue promises and be faithful to them.

In the Abrahamic traditions, what endows the "sacred depths" of the universe with "personality" is the sense that the ground of all being is a wellspring of promises. But only a person can make promises—indeed, the capacity to make and remain faithful to promises is a defining feature of personhood as we know it. Furthermore, if the universe is grounded in promise, then the immense temporal and spatial expanses of nature that may tempt us toward a pious or romantic naturalism can be seen as flowing forth from, rather than contradicting, the notion of a divine personality.

So, religiously we do not have to choose between a seemingly dwarfish personal God, on the one hand, and an expanding impersonal universe, on the other. There is no reason why we cannot take the recently revealed cosmic immensities as the extravagantly sacramental self-expression of the infinite depths of a divine power of renewal. We may then understand God's promise as opening up the universe to an ever-new future of evolution and ongoing creation.
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Endnotes

3. Ibid., 56.
4. Ibid., 57.
Technology and the Quest for a Just Society

YOUNG BIN MOON* 

"Techne without phronesis is blind, while phronesis without techne is empty."1 

Nowadays we observe remarkable breakthroughs in new technologies, most notably in the realm of genetic engineering: witness the advances in cloning technologies and in the Human Genome Project. Such breakthroughs pose new theological and ethical questions. With these issues in view, this article reflects on the complex relationship between science, technology, and the Christian faith, addressing the following questions: What are the values that ought to guide the purpose and application of new technologies? Who decides what these values are? Is such a discussion even possible in a pluralistic society like the U.S.? Is the ubiquity of a scientific and technological mindset harmful to society? What roles should Christian churches play in public discussion of values? 

In what follows, I approach the above questions from a systems-theoretical perspective. American sociologist Talcott Parsons was the first to formulate a general systems theory; it was reformulated later by German sociologist Niklas Luhmann. In this article, I use Luhmann’s systems theory as a basic conceptual framework.2 According to Luhmann, a “technological society” consists of highly differentiated social systems, such as politics, economics, law, education, religions, science, and technology. As I will show, this perspective lends itself particularly well to analyzing the contemporary milieu with its tension between postmodern fragmentation and global networking, or “soft” globalization.3 

In the first section of the article, I argue that, despite its radical differentiation, coordinating values in our technological society is minimally possible because society does share a common lifeworld, common resources of rationality, common environments, and a common destiny. I put forth the claim that a holistic vision of justice, with its multiple parameters teased out, ought to guide new technologies. Next, I show that in our technological society the realistic aim of value coordination consists of an
ongoing optimization of parameters of justice, which can occur only in an “open society” that fosters maximum feedback interactions among systems.

The next section chronicles the dangers of a technological society, to wit, the loss of a holistic vision of justice resulting in various kinds of “colonization.” Finally, I highlight three distinctive contributions that Christian churches can—and ought to—make in public discussion of values: (1) disclosure of a holistic vision of justice; (2) participation in mutual learning with other systems; and (3) a critique of ideologies.

**Technology, Society, and Justice**

As we mentioned, for Luhmann, society is the sum total of highly differentiated social systems: politics, economics, art, education, science, technology, religions, and more. Such radical differentiation in technological societies is brought about by modernization (Max Weber). Each system is distinguished from its “environment” or other systems by its distinctive operation, logic, and value structure. Indeed, a social system is a value system. Therefore, the operation, logic, and value structure of two social systems (for example, science and politics) are very different from each other. Besides radical differences in values between social systems, there are also conflicts of values within a particular social system. For example, theologians differ markedly among themselves about the value and implications of new technologies. And in society, too, there are power struggles over values, whether between social systems or within a social system. The key question becomes this: Is it possible to coordinate values in such a fissured society? Given the depth of societal fragmentation, it is not surprising that many thinkers, including Luhmann, are pessimistic about this possibility.

Although I fully recognize the depth of fragmentation in our society, I argue that coordination of values is indeed possible. No matter how radically fragmented social systems are, they do share a common lifeworld, common resources of rationality, common environments, and a common destiny. Let us look first at the notion of a shared lifeworld (Lebenswelt). A lifeworld denotes a common linguistic background, which renders possible our daily experience of intersubjective communication. Second (and related to the shared lifeworld), society contains common resources of rationality, which denotes rational structures and assumptions that cut across systems. Philosopher Calvin O. Schrag coined the term transversality to signify the intersystemic nature of rationality in an effort to counter the
postmodernists’ radical rejection of reason’s capacity to transcend the bounds of a particular social system.\textsuperscript{8} Inspired by Schrag, theologian J. Wentzel van Huyssteen argues that there are shared reasoning strategies between science and theology. Both theology and science employ value judgments of our common life, which are biologically grounded in the cognitive fluidity that had to be developed for human survival in the evolutionary processes.\textsuperscript{9} Third, differentiated social systems share common environments, such as the ecosystem, biological systems, physical systems, and so forth. Fourth, such common environments entail a common destiny for differentiated social systems—for example, with respect to the worldwide deterioration of the ecosystem. The fact that fragmented social systems actually share a common lifeworld, resources of rationality, environments, and destiny opens up a minimal possibility for coordinating values in a technological society, regardless of how radically fragmented it is. It is important to note that technological societies exhibit a subtle tension between fragmentation and integration (sharing) of value systems.

While sharing a common lifeworld, resources of rationality, environments, and destiny makes a meaningful public discussion of values possible, we still face the daunting task of identifying and coordinating the specific values that should guide the development and use of new technologies. Moreover, the task of value coordination should always be conducted in such a way that the subtle tension between fragmentation and integration of value systems is respected. I believe the tension between fragmentation and integration can be interpreted creatively and fruitfully with the help of two concepts: a holistic vision of justice and parameters of justice. The holistic vision of justice serves to foster dialogue between the various value systems in society. Later in the article, I show how such a holistic vision, when appropriately “optimized,” can fruitfully guide the coordination of values in our society. On the other hand, this dialogue happens in the context of four parameters of justice, which shape the various social systems in society. Let me note briefly the four broad parameters of justice that the ethical issues posed by the new technologies help us to identify.

The first parameter is justice with respect to science and technology. This parameter highlights values such as knowledge, understanding, creativity, innovation, adaptation, manipulation, and the like. The second parameter—justice with respect to the created order—puts an emphasis on the integrity of the ecosystem and the species, on nature and human nature, and so forth.
The third parameter is justice with respect to the social order, which stresses values such as peace, harmony, love, relationships, communities, and more. The fourth parameter—justice with respect to the meaning of human existence—underscores values such as meaningfulness, freedom, individuality, and so on. We should point out that these four parameters are not entirely independent. They are interrelated, although tensions do exist between them. But, as we shall see, it is the task of a holistic vision of justice to identify and manage the interrelation between these four parameters of justice.

It is interesting that the biblical accounts of creation (Genesis 1–2) contain images that correspond in a profound way with these four parameters of justice. The first image can be found in God's command to the human beings God had created: "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). The image of subduing evokes concerns of justice with respect to science and technology, since it implies understanding nature (science) and manipulating nature (technology) as essential activities for human survival in the evolutionary process. The second image is "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17), which signifies justice with respect to the created order: it symbolizes the delimitation of human freedom in relation to the created order. God forbade Adam from eating the fruit of this tree. Once Adam ate of the fruit, he was destined to die. He was expelled from the Garden of Eden and forbidden to eat the fruit of "the tree of life" (3:22). As a result, the created order was severely disrupted. The third image is that of the first human couple becoming one. This image symbolizes justice with respect to the social order. The fourth image—the tree of life—implies justice with respect to the meaning of human existence, since the meaning of human existence can be found only in relation to eternity. The image of the "Garden of Eden" can symbolize an ideal, or holistic, state in which the four parameters of justice are perfectly balanced and optimized.

Optimizing Justice in an Open Society

Thus far, I have argued that the task of coordinating values in a complex technological society is possible, because differentiated social systems hold certain value spheres, such as the lifeworld, in common. However, realistically speaking, the goal of value coordination is not to reach a consensus. Rather, it involves a process of ongoing optimization; that is, a dynamic process of continually seeking for global optimality between order (consensus) and disorder (dissension).
The notion of *optimization* is widely used in the natural, social, and applied sciences to find "the state of a system that maximizes or minimizes a variable under certain constraints." The notion can be extended into the domain of social ethics through a process of what Luhmann calls "functional generalization." Thus, discovering "functional equivalents" between different kinds of systems allows one to "functionally generalize" these equivalents. For example, if the "structural change" of the cell (a biological system) is functionally equivalent to that of the church (a social system), then the idea of structural change can be functionally generalized.

With regard to a holistic vision of justice, what variable should be optimized? And who determines the variable to be optimized? The variable to be maximized, I suggest, is the *global good*; and deciding what the global good is is up to the society as a whole. (Note that in this article, I use the term *global* to refer to an overarching vision of a particular society rather than to the world, the "globe." To use the language of evolution, the variable to be maximized is the "global fitness" of a society with respect to its environment. Admittedly, *global good* and *global fitness* are vague concepts; but they ought to be kept vague if we are to avoid a kind of teleological determinism. The "good" for a particular society is not a fixed, static entity; rather, it involves a continuous process of definition and redefinition. This is similar to Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of a "living tradition," which he defines as "an historically extended, socially embodied argument, ... an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition." As such, a living tradition is an ongoing argument about what is "fitting" and what is "good." What is the good is what is the fitting; what is the fitting is what is the right. A technological society, then, experiences a constant process of deliberating and negotiating competing local parameters of justice, seeking as its ultimate goal "global optimality," the "global good"—that is, the good of the society as a whole. This notion of the global good connects with a holistic vision of justice in this way: The global good (the desired good for society as a whole) is "global justice"—justice for society as a whole. Accordingly, it is *global justice* that ought to be maximized through a process of continually adjusting local parameters of justice.

On the other hand, there is a variable that ought to be minimized, namely, worldwide risks that can threaten the very existence of a technological society. We are experiencing threats, such as nuclear and ecological disasters, as a consequence of our failure to foresee and minimize the
worldwide risks implied in scientific and technological developments. Indeed, to be considered "rational," a society must be able to deliberately minimize its global risks. By adjusting local parameters of justice, a rational society continually maximizes global justice and minimizes global risks.

It is worth pondering a bit further the human power to manipulate the environment in the name of technological advancement. We do not passively adapt to our environment; we actively manipulate it for our purposes. Nowadays we are even capable of manipulating not only our biological nature by means of genetic engineering but also our reproductive processes by means of cloning. However, technological manipulation of this sort may entail global risks detrimental both to the created order (the ecosystem, human dignity, species, etc.) and to the social order, possibly even to the point of threatening our survival. Minimizing such global risks requires a holistic vision of justice, which can be obtained only through maximum interpenetration and global networking between differentiated social systems. That is why society as a whole (and all the systems within it) ought to be involved in public deliberation of values.

The kind of society that fosters constant and multiple interaction among the social systems within it is akin to the "open society," as proposed by Karl Popper. A famous advocate of critical rationality, Popper envisioned an open society that fosters ongoing criticism between social systems for the sake of society's progress. He vehemently attacked so-called "closed societies," such as Plato's ideal state in *The Republic* or Marx's vision of the ideal communist state. Appropriating Popper's notion, I contend that it is only in an open society that all the parameters of justice can be freely brought to the surface for public hearing, debate, and negotiation in the interest of the global good. Since an open society respects both differences and mutual learning, it sustains a creative tension between fragmentation and integration.

The public dissemination of knowledge about new technologies and their ramifications is crucial if society as a whole is to make "fitting" value judgments. Such knowledge is a prerequisite for public deliberation about values, which involves weighing the benefits and risks involved in implementing new technologies. Calculating risks requires a holistic understanding of the far-reaching consequences of new technologies. And such a holistic understanding is not possible without maximum feedback interactions between differentiated social systems.
Complexity theory provides additional conceptual resources for understanding how value optimization can proceed in the public realm. According to this theory, a complex system or an ecosystem (in our case, a society) can be described by a so-called “fitness landscape,” which is a multidimensional space consisting of parameters to be optimized. A fitness landscape consists of numerous competing “wells” (so-called “attractors”) that represent local optimal points. The existence of multiple attractors signifies the “multistability” of a complex system. Multistability means that a complex system does not stay at a local optimal point but is continuously hopping around local optimal points in search of “global fitness.”

By way of functional generalization, we can extend this conceptual framework to describe an open society. In this framework, a technological society can be described as “a fitness landscape of value communications,” in which there are numerous competing “value attractors” representing local optimal points. These value attractors force the society to be “multistable” and to continuously seek “global fitness.” This framework is particularly helpful in visualizing the relationship between local parameters of justice and the global good, as well as the tension between locality (local value attractors) and globality (global network). Global optimization is a possibility only for an open society in which a creative tension exists between fragmentation and integration of values. A society without fragmentation of values is a uniform society, whereas a society without integration of values is a fractured society. Neither can be optimized; neither can flourish. An open society locates itself between order and disorder, allowing this subtle tension to help it mature and flourish.

Dangers of a Technological Society

While we enjoy the great benefits of science and technology, we need to be alert to the detrimental effects that their awesome presence have had upon our society. A number of powerful “secular prophets” have warned of the ill effects of scientific and technological hegemony from various angles. I discuss briefly a few of these thinkers with a view to illustrating the multifaceted dangers inherent in a technological society.

Perhaps the most chilling image to describe the end of the progressive "rationalization" of a technological society is Max Weber's "iron cage." For Weber, the iron cage of a technologized society marks the loss of meaning and freedom in social life. For Jürgen Habermas, what is at stake is the
loss of dialogical rationality; that is, the pervasiveness of technological (means–ends) rationality (Zweckrationalität) leads to the “inner colonization of the lifeworld” (the world of culture). Indeed, Habermas’s concept of colonization lends itself well to a depiction of the multidimensionality of the dangers inherent in a technological society, as articulated by a number of important nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers. Thus, key for Karl Marx is the “colonization” of the poor through the unequal distribution of the benefits of technology (particularly money). This led Marx to envision a communist utopia. Martin Heidegger’s existentialist approach focuses on a “colonization” of existence: the danger of a technological society resides in the loss of the meaning of existence. This prompted the German philosopher to elaborate a vision of “authentic existence.” For Friedrich Nietzsche, what is at stake is the “colonization” of vitality—the loss of vitality. From this judgment came his notion of a higher humanity—the Übermensch. For many postmodernists, the crucial issue turns on the “colonization” of differences, otherness, and concrete narratives by the imperialism of technological rationality and its grand metanarratives; this provoked their program of deconstruction.

That these analyses are onesided, even exaggerated, is widely acknowledged; however, each does throw light on a crucial danger in technological societies. The question is this: Is there a way to combat the types of colonization that these thinkers point to? As I have argued in this article, there is such a way, and it has to do with the rehabilitation of a holistic vision of justice. And to this vision the Christian faith can make a vital contribution.

**Christian Faith and Its Public Functions**

Just what resources can Christian churches offer in the public discussion of values concerning new technologies? Drawing on the rich resources of their faith, Christian churches can fulfill three interrelated public functions: (1) disclose a holistic vision of justice; (2) participate in mutual learning; and (3) engage in a critique of ideologies.

First, Christian churches can and ought to contribute to public discussion of values by disclosing a holistic vision of justice in terms of biblical symbols, myths, and narratives. Earlier, we considered the rich nuances of justice embedded in the creation narratives. Let me illustrate this further by referring to two noted theologians. In his quest for a “public theology,” David Tracy has been tireless in stressing the “disclosure” possibilities of
Christian symbols in the public realm. He once criticized Habermas for overlooking this aspect of religions: “To ignore these discussions impoverishes Habermas’ analysis of the actual character and disclosure possibilities of the classic religious symbols . . . .” 16 Tracy likens the disclosure possibilities of religious symbols to those of aesthetic symbols or of literary “classics,” a point he argues extensively in The Analogue Imagination. 17 Earlier, in The Nature and Destiny of Man, Reinhold Niebuhr forcefully demonstrated the disclosure possibilities of religious symbols in the realm of social ethics. 18 For him, symbols such as imago Dei and the kingdom of God disclose the ideal (the “ought”) for society, while a symbol like sin reveals the root of the real (the “is”). According to Niebuhr’s “Christian Realism,” Christian social ethics aims to understand the tension between the ideal and the real for the sake of approximating the ideal in the real. Not only do Christian symbols (or images) disclose the ideal, they also reveal the “whole,” not unlike the holistic vision of justice I have been arguing for thus far.

Second, Christian churches can and ought to participate in mutual learning with other systems (science, technology, politics, economics, other religions, and so forth) for the sake of the public optimization of values. The Christian faith can make a unique contribution by bringing a holistic vision of justice to public discussion of values. The conversation about how to optimize competing parameters of justice ought to proceed with the holistic vision in mind. It is only by means of a holistic vision of justice that the public can discern which parameters of justice are overvalued or undervalued. Due to the process of rationalization, our technological society shows multiple symptoms of colonization, leading to the undervaluing of a number of parameters of justice: communication (colonization of the lifeworld); equity (colonization of the poor); the meaning of individual existence (colonization of existence); individual freedom and will power (colonization of vitality); and diversity (colonization of difference, otherness, and small narratives). A holistic vision of justice can disclose such undervalued parameters of justice, providing a direction in the process of optimizing global justice in the public realm.

Although the Christian faith can provide a holistic vision of justice, it ought to engage in genuine dialogue with other systems for the sake of mutual learning. The Christian faith can learn much from the disclosure for a better understanding (or interpretation) of the holistic vision of justice.
provided by other systems. Hans-Georg Gadamer refers to the result of this kind of dialogue as a "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*). He defines the concept of horizon as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point."\(^{19}\) According to Gadamer, understanding is an event that occurs only when the horizon of a text (or a tradition) collides and fuses with the horizon of the interpreter. The interpreter's horizon is formed by his or her situation. In our case, we can say that this horizon is formed by other systems' disclosures. The fusion of horizons is an ongoing event. Therefore, understanding between the Christian religion and other systems requires continual dialogue for the sake of optimizing the holistic vision of justice. It is indeed encouraging to see the substantial agreement about this vision that already exists between diverse religions.\(^{20}\) Indeed, the reality of these shared values lends significant weight to religious voices in public discussion of values. Further, since the general public is more sensitive now to the technological risks posed by nuclear and ecological threats, it is more open to religious voices.

Third, Christian churches can and ought to offer a critique of ideologies of all sorts, including the ideology of "scientism." The critique of ideologies coheres with the prophetic tradition found in Judaism and Christianity, superbly exemplified by the Hebrew prophets and by Jesus. This prophetic tradition discloses the Christian ideal through a variety of symbols, such as *justitia originalis, imago Dei,* the Garden of Eden, covenant, the people of God, the kingdom of God, Christ, the Second Adam, eschaton, and the new creation. These powerful symbols foster a holistic vision of justice on the basis of which to critique ideologies that contravene its meaning and standards of justice. For the Hebrew prophets, the court of appeal for judging the ideologies ("idolatries") of the day in the public realm was "the Mosaic Covenant." That covenant richly displays a holistic vision, meaning, and standard of justice. For his part, Jesus appealed to the metaphor of the kingdom of God—whose holistic vision, meaning, and standard of justice are beautifully disclosed in the Sermon on the Mount—to offer a trenchant critique of the ideology of his day (ossified Judaism).

According to Jürgen Habermas, an ideology is a form of "pathological" communication—a kind of "pseudocommunication" or "systematically distorted communication" that leads to false consensus.\(^{21}\) For Habermas, only an "ideal speech situation," free of domination, is capable of exposing such systematically distorted communication or false consensus. With
reference to fostering a holistic vision of justice, an ideology functions as
the domination of a systematically distorted vision of justice, which leads
to false consensus. In systems-theoretical terms, an ideology is false global
optimality that is unstable. Such an ideology is hardly possible in an open
society, since an open society actively fosters maximum interaction and
criticism between systems. In terms of disclosing and communicating a
holistic vision of justice in the public arena, the Christian religion can make
a unique contribution in exposing an ideology as a delusion.

It is quite possible that the Christian faith has been an unacknowledged
resource behind some of the "secular" prophetic voices in the West. The
Christian prophetic tradition has been a formative influence in the construc-
tion of the lifeworld of the West; thus, it is unlikely that these secular voices
were entirely exempt from this powerful influence. Marx's idea of commu-
nist utopia, for example, might be a secular version of the Christian eschato-
logical kingdom; Nietzsche's Übermensch might be a secular version of the
Christ, while Heidegger's notion of "authentic existence" might be a secular
expression of the Christian concept of "spiritual life." Such a concept of
ideality provided each of these visions with the "transcendent" power
needed to critique ideologies. Thus, when Christians enter the public discus-
sion on a holistic vision of justice, they should avail themselves of the perva-
sive—if secularized—influence of Christianity in the culture, as evidenced in
the thought of people like Marx and Heidegger. However, Christians should
also be aware that the faith itself can be turned into an ideology. To prevent
this possibility, Christians should always be ready to accept criticism from
other systems and continually reinterpret the Christian vision of justice in
dialogue with these other systems. Seeking for a holistic vision of justice is
an ongoing journey that all of us traverse together.

I conclude by revisiting the words of Richard J. Bernstein cited at the
beginning of the article: "Techne without phronesis is blind, while phronesis
without techne is empty." This Aristotelian insight is still powerfully relevant
in our technological society. While techne denotes "knowledge for control,"
phronesis has to do with "moral reasoning." Put in terms of Bernstein's
observation, my thesis can be stated in this way: Our highly complex tech-
nological society needs a holistic vision of justice, with its multiple parame-
ters teased out in order to optimize pluralistic phronesis for the sake of
guiding techne. Such optimization is possible, because differentiated social
systems do share values in common. Ongoing value optimization can occur
only in an open society, which fosters maximum feedback interactions among systems. The Christian faith plays an integral role in this process of optimization by disclosing a holistic vision of justice, participating in mutual learning, and offering a critique of ideologies.

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Endnotes

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5. For Luhmann, a particular kind of social system is characterized by its distinctive symbolic code of communication: for example, truth for science, money for economics, faith for religion, etc. One can view such a distinctive code as a distinctive value structure.


20. See, for example, Yersu Kim, "Philosophy and the Prospects for a Universal Ethics," in *God and Globalization*, 80-81.

In June 2000, two teams of scientists announced simultaneously that they had developed a preliminary map of the human genome. In February 2001, the map was published. Both the announcement and the publication were historic—and controversial—moments. This essay is about why churches should care about these historic moments and how we can prepare to deal with theological and ethical issues surrounding the controversial efforts to map and sequence the human genome.

The purpose of the Human Genome Project (HGP) is to try to discover the location of each human gene on our 23 pairs of chromosomes; the content or sequence of the "base pairs" of nucleotides that make up the gene; and the function of the gene. The initial announcement relates to knowing the sequence of base pairs that make up the DNA. The exact location and function of most genes remain to be discovered. Nonetheless, the hope is enormous: knowing the location, sequence, and function of all the genes in the human body, we would eventually learn to diagnose defective genes and might be able to repair them with gene therapy. In the process, we will also learn a great deal about human biology and cell development, which may be important for generating new modes of therapy such as "regenerative" medicine in which the body can be trained to repair itself. New and more specific drugs can be developed to cope with common diseases that have a genetic component. As a byproduct of the focus on genes and health, already we have seen the development of sophisticated computer and data-analysis systems far beyond what would have been projected some fifteen years ago when HGP was first announced.

Before the realization of hopes and promises, however, the road is paved with ethical and theological issues. From the beginning, HGP has been wrapped in theological overtones. Some called it the "Holy Grail." Many believe that unraveling the secrets of DNA brings us close to knowing our human "essence." Therein lies both the promise and the peril.
Knowledge of the human genome brings great power, and power is always fraught with ethical ambiguity. In this short essay, I can only point to some of the many perplexing questions that deserve and require theological and ethical reflection. The churches have a truly important role to play in public discourse around these issues.

When Is a Difference a Defect?

The idea behind HGP is simple: once we know where our genes are normally located and what their base pairs are, we can also identify variations from the norm and begin to consider the possibility of changing such variations. For example, the only treatment currently available for phenylketonuria is to put a newborn infant on a very restrictive and difficult diet in order to prevent mental retardation. Some day it may be possible to change the structure of the child’s genes so that a restrictive diet is not necessary. Already hundreds of experiments in gene therapy are underway, though such experiments received a major setback last year when a young volunteer died in the course of one experiment.1 Most commentators are cautious about gene therapy because of the many technical problems that have to be solved to make genetic interventions safe.

But even if such experiments ultimately prove safe and successful, the prospect of changing genes raises some difficult ethical and theological questions. When is a genetic difference a “defect” and when is it not?

Height varies considerably among humans—from the pygmies of Africa to the tallest of basketball players in the United States. Such variations are normally considered just differences, not defects. Yet some people are of such short stature that they may have difficulty functioning in the social and physical world that we have created. They may not be able to reach a pay telephone or see over a bank counter. Is such shortness a defect? Should it be corrected? If we knew where the genes for height were located, should we try to change people’s genes so that they grow up to have “normal” stature in their culture?

At first glance, the answer might sound obvious. But consider this: the Little People of America, who represent many people called “midgets” and “dwarfs,” do not consider short stature to be an abnormality that must be corrected. Height alone is not something to be fixed. Although most people may want their children to be taller, some prefer to have children of short stature who will be able to use the tables, chairs, and other furnish-
ings of a home that has been adapted for a Little Person.

The same is true of a number of other differences. The politically active Deaf community considers deafness not a defect to be corrected but merely a difference to be acknowledged. Just as I need an interpreter to travel in Beijing but not in Boston, so a deaf person may need an interpreter to get around in San Francisco but not in Fresno (where signing is widely practiced). The Deaf community may not speak for all deaf people, but it speaks for many who see deafness as a difference rather than a defect and who argue that "sign" is a language just as any other language. They challenge those in dominant culture to beware of cultural imperialism.

When is a difference a defect that should be "corrected" and when is it merely a difference to be acknowledged, tolerated, and possibly even celebrated? Those who affirm that human beings are "made in the image of God" and have a worth that is given by God and that need not be earned by human accomplishment should have something to say about the acceptance and celebration of differences in the human community. The voice of the churches will be important for reminding us that dominant cultures tend always to suppress other voices and that justice in the Christian tradition requires precisely that voices from the margins be heard.

Who "Owns" DNA and Human Tissues?

The race to map the human genome pitted a private company—Celera—against the federally funded efforts of the National Institutes of Health. The issue was not just who would first arrive at a complete map or complete sequence of the DNA. The issue was also whether human DNA can be "patented." Private corporations often pour millions of dollars into basic scientific research. They have an obligation to their shareholders to see some return on that investment. It is in their interest to gain exclusive control over what they learn. Patents provide the right to exclude others for a period of time from having access to information or products or processes. Thus, the race to map the genome has been coupled with a race to patent bits and fragments of human DNA. Thousands and thousands of patent applications are pending around the world on genes, DNA fragments, and slices of human DNA.

As understandable as the push to patent may be from the perspective of business, it raises some very difficult theological and ethical issues. While patenting is not the same thing as ownership, both involve the right to
exclude others from access; hence, some people do see patents as a form of ownership. For precisely that reason, in 1995, representatives of more than 80 religious denominations signed a Joint Appeal against Human and Animal Patenting. Can human DNA be "owned" by people? If a corporation gains ownership of DNA fragments, may it exclude others from working with that DNA or developing medicines that may depend on knowledge of that fragment, even when such exclusion may harm many people?

Already several problematic patent cases have arisen. The drug Celebrex, which is widely used for pain control, works by blocking a particular enzyme. The enzyme is encoded by the Cox-2 gene. Pharmaceutical giant Searle was already marketing Celebrex when the University of Rochester received a patent on the Cox-2 gene. The University promptly sued Searle, claiming that marketing of the drug was a violation of the University's new patent. If this drug were taken off the market, millions of patients would be affected. If the drug is not taken off the market, and Searle must now pay licensing fees to the University, the price of the drug will likely reflect those fees, and patients will still be affected.

In a second case, Human Genome Sciences, Inc. won a U.S. patent on a gene that plays a key role in HIV infection. The patent was granted because Human Genome Sciences found the sequence of base pairs that make up the gene. Ironically, however, the corporation apparently did not know of the key role this gene plays in HIV. Nonetheless, once the patent was granted, the corporation had the right to exclude researchers from using the gene or to require that they license access to it. Doing so would affect dozens of HIV researchers, as well as potentially millions of patients with HIV. While it is common practice for corporations to license patented information to others for additional research and development, current laws do not require that they do so. One fear is that companies will sit on potentially useful information and prevent it from being developed. Some have suggested that laws need to be changed so that a corporation cannot prevent others from developing or marketing potentially and actually valuable medical interventions.

Both the question of access to existing medicines and the question of development of new medical interventions have huge ramifications from the perspective of justice. Church people have a role to play here. Our culture understands justice in the language of "give to each what is due." When someone has worked hard to learn or create something new, we
generally think that person should be able to reap the benefits of her or his insight, ingenuity, and hard work. But from a biblical perspective this is only part of justice. Justice is also about the common good and about helping the poorest of the poor around the world. Sometimes these needs may have to take precedence over individual gains. If the God we serve is a God of justice, then these questions of access become crucial theological issues, as well as places where ethical concerns must be raised.  

**Control and Humility—Are We “Playing God”?**

Although the scenarios of future treatments are breathtaking, for the immediate future HGP promises to give us new information without new medical interventions. Our primary intervention for the immediate future will likely remain prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion. All of the ethical issues that accompany prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion will only intensify as the range of genetic disorders that we can test prenatally expands.

For example, the question of abortion will become very difficult and controversial if a “gay gene” is ever firmly established. If sexual preference is genetic, should we then accept and even celebrate sexual differences? Or should fetuses who carry the gay gene be aborted? Should these decisions be left to individuals, or should there be some limits placed on people's ability to abort fetuses because of traits such as height, sexual preference, eye color (which we know to be genetic), and other features that individual parents may not choose?

At least one commentator has already argued for “designer genes”—for the right of parents to choose the characteristics of their children. Others charge that to do so would be “playing God.” The arguments are complex, and they go to the heart of what it means to live in a liberal society. To what extent should we exercise choice over the lives of others, including the lives of our children? To what extent does trust in a loving God mean that we accept the children we are “given,” genes and all? These again are theological issues that the churches would be well advised to address.

Christian churches have a long and rich theological tradition of understanding freedom rather differently than the “freedom of choice” that permeates so much contemporary thinking. Luther’s famous paradox, “a Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none; a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all,” places the question of freedom in a far more complex framework than is suggested by a phrase.
such as free choice. To what extent does freedom imply service rather than independence and community rather than individuality? Enriching the public conversation about the meaning and purpose of human freedom would be an important contribution from the churches to the public debate over genetic sciences.

The Specter of Eugenics

A very troubling aspect of the question of control is what sociologist Troy Duster has called the "backdoor to eugenics" that may be opened up by developments of the new genetic technologies. The history of eugenics in the United States is a sobering reminder of our human frailty and sinfulness. We would like to think that we have moved beyond the kind of obvious discrimination and injustice represented by that movement. But Duster argues that we are in danger of opening a backdoor to eugenics. We will think that there is no eugenics movement, because all decisions will be made in the private arena. But, in fact, all these "private" decisions are deeply influenced by social norms and structures. It is not necessary to have a specific social program of eugenics in order for eugenic ideologies to be operating. In India, for example, one study of 8000 abortions found that all but three of them were of female fetuses. Social pressure to have male children, coupled with presumed freedom of choice by women and their partners, led to a clear pattern of discrimination against female children. There need not be an explicit social program of eugenics in order to see the "eugenic" effects of people's choices. If support services are diminished for families who have children with genetic abnormalities, then those families may have little choice but to abort a child who would have a genetic abnormality. Their choices are deeply socially constrained, and eugenic ideals may operate through the private sector. If the development of gene therapy or other interventions makes our society less likely to support families or children with special needs, then we may unwittingly engender a eugenic impulse.

From a theological perspective, it is crucial to help people make the connections between such presumably personal choices and the social conditions that constrain those choices. The United States has such an ideology of personal choice that many people in this country do not readily see how their actions are shaped by the larger social world. Developing a more critical perspective on the problematics of personal
choice would be a significant contribution from the churches.

A related question has to do with ideologies. Susan Wolf cautions that we are "geneticizing" life—thinking in terms of individual genes rather than social conditions. The real harm, she suggests, is not the occasional act of discrimination on the basis of one's genes but the very fact that a genetic "norm" is established. Doing so tends to place the responsibility for disease on individuals and their genes rather than on attending to ways in which our culture creates pockets of disease. The rate of lung cancer in the African-American community, for example, has risen astronomically as cigarette companies have moved their advertising into inner cities. While there may be genes that make some people more susceptible than others to lung cancer, not all the rise in lung cancer can possibly be due to genes—genes do not mutate that quickly! Similarly, less than 5 percent of breast cancer is inherited, but great excitement has accompanied the announcement of the location of two genes for inheritable breast cancer. In both cases, environmental causes remain important, but they may be ignored as public energy and excitement are directed toward locating the "genes" for various cancers.

Learning to unmask ideologies is a theological task, as many liberation theologians have pressed. If the God we worship is a god of truth as well as justice, it is crucial for Christian people to learn how society masks realities and offers oversimplified solutions to complex social problems. This is a task for the churches as well as for educational institutions.

Regulating—and Supporting—Scientific Research

Finally, there are some very important questions about how these new arenas of research should be developed and regulated. Currently, some of the effort is funded in the private sector, a great deal in the public sector. The advantage to having research regulated in the public sector is that the research goes through many layers of public review and even of scrutiny for ethical issues. When research is conducted in the private sector, such review is not mandated.

For example, a congressional ban on using federal funds in any research that involves the death of an embryo has meant that all embryonic stem cell research in the United States has been conducted in the private sector. Stem cells are cells that have not yet differentiated into a specific type of cell; they have the potential to become several types. Embryonic stem cells have the potential to become any type of tissue. They offer the
possibility that tissues can be cultured in the laboratory and used to repair heart muscle, liver cells, pancreatic islet tissue, neurons, or other cells and tissues that are implicated in some of the most common and devastating human diseases. Scientific excitement over these cells is extraordinary, and Science magazine called them the "breakthrough of the year" in 1998.

Yet research on these cells is stymied because of the ban on use of federal funding for any research involving the death of an embryo. In the case of stem cell research, a very early embryo (pre-implantation, blastocyst or "hollow ball" stage) must be destroyed in order to derive the inner cell mass from which the stem cells are cultured. Hence, the research has not been supported by federal funds. Both the National Institutes of Health and the National Bioethics Advisory Commission have proposed that the ban should be lifted, but President Bush has remained opposed. His recent compromise proposal permits use of federal funds on research utilizing existing stem cell lines derived in the private sector, but it refuses use of federal funds for derivation of stem cells.

From the perspective of the churches, there are two crucial issues here. First is making sure that important research is supported. Much good can be done if this research is successful. Not to support it is to fail in Christian obligations to help our neighbors. Second is making sure that important research receives adequate ethical oversight. Because of the ban on use of public funding, stem cell research does not always receive the kind of ethical oversight that would be desirable. When research is conducted in the public sector, it receives more ethical review. This is one reason why some commentators have urged the federal government to withdraw its ban on research using embryos (or to make an exception to the ban) that would permit embryonic stem cell research.

Conclusions
The world of high-tech science such as HGP may seem at first glance light-years away from the day-to-day concerns of the churches. This impression is mistaken. While the science is complex, it is no more important than the ethical and theological issues that emerge from it. While we may have "unprecedented choices," as Audrey Chapman puts it, we also have much precedent for resolving some of these choices. Questions of justice in access to human goods are not new to theological deliberation. Questions of the meaning and role of human freedom similarly have a long history of
insight and reflection. Many of the ethical issues that emerge from new technologies raise time-honored questions of theology: who is the God we worship and what difference does that worship make for our everyday living? The time is ripe (kairos!) for church people to be involved in the public debate that already surrounds the announcement of a map of the human genome and that will surely accompany every step of the effort to identify specific genes and their functions.

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Endnotes


7. An excellent collection of essays on patenting of genes can be found in Audrey R. Chapman, Perspectives on Genetic Patenting.


11. The view that ethics deals with accepting what we are "given" has been helpfully developed by ethicist Stanley Hauerwas in a number of essays. See, for example, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), ch. 10.


14. For learning to make the connections, see Beverly Harrison, *Making the Connections*, ed. by Carol S. Robb (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).


17. For the past three years, I have served on the Ethics Advisory Board of Geron Corporation, which pioneered in stem cell research. Geron is distinctive in the private sector in having set up such an ethics board.

Cloning, Theology, and Ethics after Dolly:
An Overview

REBEKAH MILES

When the news broke in February 1997 that a cloned lamb, Dolly, had been born in Scotland the summer before, the world shook. "Researchers Astounded ... Fiction Becomes True and Dreaded Possibilities Are Raised," read The New York Times headlines. News stories were afloat in exclamation points and words like horrifying, shocking, and unthinkable! Human cloning, many predicted, would not be far behind. The public and media responses were so strong that one bioethicist, complaining that we were "hyperventilating over cloning," recommended that we stick our heads in a paper bag, "breathe deeply, and try to catch our collective moral breath."

Many religious and political organizations called for bans, moratoriums, and funding restrictions—especially for research into human cloning. Many governments heeded their call. The critics of cloning (I among them) lined up by the hundreds, eager to write articles or to talk with reporters who were just as eager for a gripping quote or a new angle. On the other side, commentators flocked to criticize the critics of cloning for leading from their gut—from their repulsion—and then rushing to judgment. With the passage of time cloning would become as familiar and as widely accepted, these commentators predicted, as heart transplants, blood transfusions, and in vitro fertilization. People would get used to the idea.

Were those commentators right? More than five years have passed since Dolly's birth in the summer of 1996. Are we used to the idea? The polls suggest that we are not. Depending on which poll you believe, between 87 and 94 percent of people in the U.S. opposed human cloning in the weeks post-Dolly. Four years later, opposition held steady at 90 percent. In 1997, 82 percent of Canadians objected to human cloning; four years later, 82 percent of them still objected to human cloning.

With the news of Dolly, though, the prospect of human cloning came much closer to reality. Not surprisingly, the extraordinary developments of the past four years have propelled ethicists and theologians, scientists and
politicians, into a rollicking and fiery debate about cloning. Listening to the scenarios where cloning might be used and is now being used, I have come to doubt the ancient words of The Preacher when he opined that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles. 1:9). Cloning and other new genetic technologies present us with genuinely new options in human life—options that call for serious public reflection and debate.

**Cloning after Dolly: A Review of Recent Developments**

Scientific advances of the past few years have given us plenty of opportunity to reflect on cloning and other genetic technologies. What has happened after Dolly? For one thing, the world has heard the birth announcements of hosts of cloned animals, including Dolly's neighbor, the transgenic, cloned lamb Polly (whose DNA had been altered with the addition of a human gene before the cloning); cloned headless tadpoles created at a university in Bath; fifty cloned mice produced in a lab in Hawaii; five cloned piglets; a dozen cloned Holstein cows exhibited at the World Dairy Exposition in Madison, Wisconsin; and the cloned calf of an old Texas bull named Chance, who was aptly named Second Chance. Newspapers also reported the first cloned clone—a cloned calf whose DNA came from the ear of a previously cloned calf. And, using the old-fashioned method of sexual reproduction, Dolly had a little lamb.

Endangered animals are also in the cloning news. In Iowa, Bessie the cow gave birth to Noah, an endangered cloned guar (described as "an ox-like creature"). Researchers have announced a plan, derided by many as science fiction, to clone a woolly mammoth from DNA found in an ancient frozen carcass in Siberia and to implant the clone in the womb of an Asian elephant. Others hope to implant a cloned panda embryo in a surrogate mother black bear.

Human animals have not been left out of this litany of bizarre cloning stories. At first, all we heard were predictions. Ian Wilmut, the head scientist responsible for Dolly, estimated in 1997 that with a thousand human eggs and two years, a researcher could make good progress in human cloning research. And bioethicist Art Caplan noted soon after Dolly's arrival, "It is almost a lead-pipe cinch that cloning is something that can be done in humans." We read in 1998 about United Methodist physicist Richard Seed, who not only planned to produce a human clone but insisted that cloning was a step to "becoming one with God." And in early 2001, a team of infer-
tility specialists from Italy, the U.S., and Israel announced their intention to have a cloned human baby born by 2003. If they succeed, it would not be the first human cloning. Researchers at a Korean lab claimed, without offering any proof, to have produced and then destroyed a human embryo using a cow’s egg and a cell from a thirty-year-old woman. And in a Massachusetts biotech lab, scientists used a cow’s egg and the DNA taken from a cell in a man’s leg (the leg of one of the research scientists) to create a “human” embryo that was destroyed before it was two weeks old.

What a litany! Dolly, Polly, Second Chance, headless toads, crowds of cloned mice, a dozen cloned Holstein cows, the prospect of woolly mammoths gestating in elephants and pandas in black bears, plans for cloned babies, and the reality of human-cow embryos. Flannery O’Connor or J.R.R. Tolkien, both masters of the bizarre, would have been hard pressed to come up with fiction as strange as the regular fare in our daily newspapers!

What Has Been the Response?

The public response following Dolly’s birth announcement was characterized by astonishment and horror. Poll after poll showed strong opposition. Even so, many were fascinated by the prospect of cloning, especially human cloning. Cloning fantasies and visions pervaded the media. The public was called on to imagine a basketball court with five Michael Jordans facing five Dennis Rodmans. The imagined cloning scenarios haven’t been limited to the cloning of the good, the fast, and the beautiful. Stories from magazines, newspapers, and the Internet have called up visions of cloned Hitlers and Husseins. Even religion is not beyond the scope of the imagination. At a satirical site, web surfers are asked to join the group Christians for the Cloning of Jesus. What a boon to have Jesus not only in every heart but also in every house. Have you ever wondered, when facing a tough moral question, What would Jesus do? . . . You could just call home and ask him.10

And, of course, many imagined what it might be like to have a clone of their own. One chat room recommended an exercise that reflects the psychological interest in cloning. Participants are asked, “If you could clone yourself and raise a brand-new ‘baby you,’ what mistakes would you avoid?” And what would they do differently? “Take piano lessons? Enroll in summer language schools?”11

Many of these fantasies about cloning are clearly that—fantasies. Clones of Michael Jordan would not necessarily “be like Mike.” Your personal clone
would not be a "brand-new 'baby you,'" but a different person with countless distinctive influences from the environment, as well as the freedom to transform environment and self. Human cloning, if it is possible someday, would not bring to life a full-grown look-alike, with all the talents and quirks of the original—a kind of photocopy in the flesh, a duplicate of blood and bone. Cloned humans would be born infants just like the rest of us—dripping, howling, and growing to maturity (or not), always shaped not only by genes but also by the environment and by their own wills.

According to some scientists and bioethicists, the more negative cloning scenarios (such as possible Hitler clones) are based not in reality but in unrealistic human fear. They blame "the Frankenstein factor"—the tendency to fear new scientific discovery as the harbinger of horrifying monsters and mass destruction. But even if some of the most frightening scenarios are unlikely, at least on a wide scale, the fears come for good reason. Many of us imagine the potential abuses of cloning because we have seen so many other technologies abused. Responding to the charge that the scenarios are far-fetched, one ethicist replied, "Far-fetched? No longer. Besides, the far-fetched often gets us nearer to the truth than the cautious, persnickety pieces that fail to come anywhere close to the pity and terror this topic evokes."

And leading scientists, ethicists, and social scientists have continued to write about the frightful potential of cloning and its possible misuse. Some have suggested that human clones might be abused as "spares" for body parts or as subjects for dangerous medical research. As Jean Bethke Elshtain puts it, "We humans should be haunted by Dolly and all the Dollies to come and by the prospect that others are to appear on this earth as the progeny of our omnipotent striving, our yearning to create without pausing to reflect on what we are simultaneously destroying."

Following Dolly's birth announcement and later news stories, many Western countries passed or strengthened laws banning human cloning. Others limited funding sources and imposed regulations. The World Health Organization called for a ban on human cloning. The President's National Bioethics Advisory Committee recommended a temporary five-year moratorium. Many in the scientific community also opposed human cloning. For example, Ian Wilmut, the head scientist responsible for Dolly, raised serious moral objections to human cloning, finding it "offensive" and "ethically unacceptable."

Many religious groups have also expressed caution about cloning.
particularly human cloning. For example, the United Methodist Genetic Science Task Force, on which I served, called for a ban on human cloning. Similarly, the United Church of Christ Committee on Genetics wrote, “We oppose cloning...[and] support legislation to ban cloning for reproductive purposes, at least in the foreseeable future.” The Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution calling for legislation to “make human cloning unlawful.” And the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland expressed “the strongest possible opposition to the cloning of human beings” and called for an international treaty “to ban it world wide.”

In contrast to the strong opposition to human cloning expressed by many religious organizations and leaders, some of the key theologians who specialize in science (particularly genetic science) are relatively more optimistic about cloning and other genetic technologies. For example, both Ted Peters and The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) conclude that while there are temporary practical hurdles and social questions facing human cloning, there are “no abstract arguments” or theological reasons to permanently ban it. On the contrary, Peters and others foresee potential benefits in cloning, especially for treating infertility; and they take their conditional optimism about cloning one grand step further by seeing it as a possible avenue for humans to participate in God’s creative activity. CTNS states, “If this new process is used wisely, then God could be seen as continuing to create through human agency, just as God continues to create through the natural process of evolution.”

Likewise, Ingrid Shafer, a philosopher of religion, places cloning within a larger cosmic vision, imagining that God could be pleased that we are fixing creation. She writes,

What’s wrong with envisioning God perching on the side of a Petri dish, eager to have us correct some copyists’ errors which have crept into the three billion “words” in the past six hundred million years? Why not have faith in a God...who challenges us to perfect ourselves not only spiritually but biologically?

Peters has sharply criticized the critics of cloning—especially the religious ones who, he insists, are overcome by the “yuk factor” and pronounce their “religious judgment: no, no, no.” Describing these reactions as “cloning shock” and “reactive hysteria” where “ethical outrage raged,” Peters asks, “Where did all this reactionary stuff come from?” He suggests that
much of the common religious opposition to cloning is based not in good argument but in hysteria, reactionary impulses, and unnecessary fear.

These responses by Peters, Shafer, and CTNS are striking not only for their relative optimism about the new technologies but also for their claim that these advances could be a proper expression of our God-given freedom as we continue God's creative work in the world. This stance is in stark contrast to the more conservative positions on human cloning taken by most religious organizations, religious leaders, and many others.

Given the contrasting positions on cloning—even among Christians who share many traditions, texts, beliefs, and practices—how are we to reach a judgment? Throughout the discussion of cloning key questions appear again and again. Let me summarize here some of the recurring arguments.

The Pros and Cons of Animal Cloning

The Pros of Animal Cloning

**Agricultural Stewardship**
What are the benefits of animal cloning? At one level, animal cloning is simply an extension of what humans have been doing for centuries in animal husbandry—breeding for desired characteristics. It would allow humans to take what is known to be a good animal and make that genetic structure again. Also, animals nearing extinction might be cloned to increase the species' chances for survival.

**Research and Medicine**
The most important use for animal cloning, however, is in research and medicine. For example, by using cloned animals with the same genetic makeup in experiments, there are fewer variables to consider in assessing the outcome of a study. In medicine, the cloning of transgenic animals is especially promising. The genes of transgenic animals have been altered (often with the addition of a human gene) for a specific medical purpose. An animal could be modified to have organs compatible for human transplant or to produce milk or blood containing something needed to treat human diseases. In these cases, the advantage of cloning is that, once scientists have developed an animal with the desired gene, they can simply duplicate that animal for medical purposes.

Given these clear benefits that animal cloning could bring to medicine and research, many people have given their support, arguing that the
suffering to animals is no greater in cloning than in other, long-established research projects and that the clear benefits to medicine, research, and agriculture outweigh the harms and risks.

**The Arguments against Animal Cloning**

*Maintaining the Integrity and Diversity of Creation*

If there are clear medical benefits, then why not support animal cloning? One concern is the integrity of creation, including the integrity of particular animals. These animals are creatures of God, runs this argument, and have certain rights to be free from undue suffering and from being treated simply as commodities. Donald Bruce, director of the Society, Religion, and Technology Project of the Church of Scotland, observes that making cloned animals "like a production line of widgets seems to lose something of the individual dignity of the animal." Other key themes include valuing the integrity of the species as created by God and maintaining the diversity of God's creation. Reproduction by cloning is questioned, then, because it promotes uniformity—the production of the same genetic pattern—instead of diversity—the reproduction of a different genetic pattern. This genetic diversity is valuable because it is a part of God's creation and, practically, because it is good for the larger group of animals and helps protect them from disease.

*Animal Cloning and Human Well-Being*

There are also questions about the practical, social implications of animal cloning. Is this where limited research dollars should be spent? If private industry controls the development of cloning technologies (as it does in most cases), will research be directed by the profit motive at the expense of broader social and ethical considerations? If cloning gives an advantage to one segment of the agriculture industry, what will happen to those who cannot afford access to this technology?

*The Danger of the Slippery Slope*

Finally, a common argument against research into animal cloning is that it starts us down a slippery slope that will likely result in procedures that could be applied to humans.

In spite of these drawbacks, animal cloning has been supported by many governments and public groups and is not nearly so controversial as human cloning. The United Church of Christ Committee on Genetics, for example, states that "the use of nuclear transfer cloning in research on non-human mammalian species is morally and theologically permissible."
provided, of course, that the animals be treated humanely and that needless suffering is avoided.\textsuperscript{22}

The Pros and Cons of Human Cloning

In contrast to the relatively positive assessment of animal cloning, the response to human cloning has been quite negative. Even so, strong arguments exist on both sides of the debate.\textsuperscript{23}

The Benefits of Human Cloning

The primary benefit of human cloning would be for reproduction. For some couples struggling with infertility, cloning might be the only way to have a biologically related child. Rabbi Moshe Tendler suggests, for example, that if the child or grandchild of a Holocaust survivor who is the last surviving member of his family discovers that he is infertile, cloning could be warranted in the interest of continuing that family’s genetic line.\textsuperscript{24}

In another scenario, if a husband were a carrier for a serious genetic disease, a couple might choose to give birth to a clone of the wife and thus be able to have a biologically related child while not passing on the genetic disorder. Lesbian couples or single women could have biologically related children without needing to procure sperm through either intercourse or insemination. And cloning could help families with an older child who is seriously ill and in need of a life-saving bone marrow transplant. By giving birth to a clone of the older child, the parents could provide a match for bone marrow donation.

Some ethicists argue that once the scientific hurdles have been overcome and human cloning is as safe as many other accepted medical and reproductive procedures, there is no good reason to object. Couples have the right to make their own medical and reproductive decisions. And the clear, known benefits that would come through offering a new reproductive technology would outweigh the potential but unknown social and psychological harms. Ethicist Ron Green, for example, grounds his support of human cloning for reproductive purposes in our shared values of “individual liberty.”\textsuperscript{25} The arguments against cloning, he maintains, are not sufficiently persuasive to overcome the powerful claims of individual liberty. Severino Antinori, the Italian physician planning to clone human babies for infertile couples, offered a stronger version of this argument when he told reporters, “I think it is a human right to have babies.”\textsuperscript{26}
Arguments against Human Cloning

Given the potential benefits for reproduction, why is opposition to human cloning so strong? Here are some key ethical and theological questions asked by opponents of human cloning.

Accidents will happen.
Animal cloning has high failure rates, including many eggs that fail to implant, many miscarriages and stillbirths, and animals born with high levels of genetic abnormalities and other health problems. Dolly, for example, was the only surviving lamb after 277 attempted cell fusions, 29 successful fusions, and 13 successful implantations into surrogate sheep wombs, and five live births. What risks are we willing to tolerate with human animals? This may not, of course, be an insurmountable obstacle. Failure rates may drop to levels similar to those for in vitro fertilization.

Human cloning threatens our uniqueness and worth.
Does human cloning threaten our God-given distinctiveness, uniqueness, or sacred worth? No reputable arguments have been made that a person conceived by cloning would not have a soul or would not be made in the image of God and thus have sacred worth. Indeed, several statements by religious groups insist that persons produced by cloning would bear the image of God and have the same rights as others.\textsuperscript{27} Ethicists and theologians have asked, however, if cloned people would be mistreated and objectified because of their previously existing genetic makeup and if they would suffer psychologically because of this objectification. Would the knowledge that they were born not with a new genetic makeup but with a previously existing makeup deliberately chosen by someone else damage their own sense of distinctiveness and individuality? Would the process of cloning treat the cloned child as a means and not an end?

Human cloning can damage family relationships.
If parents were able to choose the specific genetic makeup of their children through cloning and thus reproduce a child with a replica of the genes of the father, mother, or some other person, how might family relationships be changed?\textsuperscript{28} Would children resent the extraordinary control exercised by the parents in so precisely determining their genetic makeup? Would these children be burdened by expectations to match the accomplishments of the person whose genetic makeup they inherited? How would the relationship between parent and child change if conception came to look, as it
would in cloning, more like intentional, controlled manufacture than the open-ended, serendipitous creation of ordinary reproduction? (Even reproduction by in vitro fertilization entails the creation of an unpredictable new life that combines two pools of genes in a serendipitous way.)

"A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle."

This popular bumper sticker from a few decades ago is a little closer to reality with the prospect of cloning. Sperm is not needed in cloning. Does the absence of a male role in reproduction by cloning weaken the already fragile position of fathers in our society?

"A good surrogate womb, who can find?"

This crassly revised verse of Scripture from more than a few years ago hints at an important question. Might cloning technology be used in male-dominated, sexist cultures in ways that objectify and use women as egg donors and surrogate mothers?

_Human cloning downplays the power of human sin._

Are critics of cloning guilty, as some have charged, of being overcome by the "Frankenstein factor"—an irrational fear of new scientific developments—or are they simply being realistic about human sin? Given what many Christians believe about the proclivity of the human self to seek its own selfish ends and to use others in the pursuit of those ends, what is the potential for abuse and objectification in human cloning? Should potential abuses, such as possible production of clones for organ harvesting or for eugenic purposes, be considered in our judgments about human cloning?

**What we don't know CAN hurt us.**

How should the limits of human knowledge and the subsequent inability to predict the precise physiological and social outcome of cloning over several generations be weighed over and against the potential benefits of cloning as a treatment for infertility? Of course, this argument also runs the other way: Given the limits of our knowledge, how can we say with certainty that cloning will not bring benefits that are worth the harms and risks? Normally, however, ethicists place the imperative, "do no harm," before the imperative, "do good."

_Human cloning can lead to financial exploitation._

How would market forces drive human cloning and research? What role would companies' profit margins play in guiding research? What technologies would be neglected if we put our resources into cloning? How would
those without access to these technologies be affected? Would the process commodify and objectify the children born from cloning and the women who serve as egg donors and surrogate mothers?

If it feels wrong, don't do it!

How should we take into account the repulsion or horror that many feel at the prospect of human cloning? Ethicist Leonard Kass suggests that this gut repulsion "is the emotional expression of deep wisdom .... We are repelled by the prospect of human cloning because we intuit or feel, immediately and without argument, the violation of things we rightfully hold dear. Repugnance, here as elsewhere, revolts against the excesses of human willfulness, warning us not to transgress what is unspeakably profound."^29

On the other hand, cloning supporters can fairly ask how one could determine whether the widespread repulsion expressed about this new technology is more wise than previous repulsion about heart transplants or donor insemination.

**Human cloning mirrors a narcissistic culture.**

Does the temptation to clone reflect something gone awry in contemporary Western culture? Are there common sins and distortions of our culture that make cloning particularly troubling? Is it any accident that the culture that produces cloning is a culture that revolves around control, chafes against imposed limits and finitude (even natural limits, like aging and mortality), is obsessed with the self and its pleasures, and is often willing to pursue its own ends at the expense of others, even making others into means and commodities? Might cloning be the perfect expression of a narcissistic, control-obsessed, consumer-driven culture?

**Human cloning is a form of "playing God."**

The notion that human cloning amounts to playing God^30 has been dismissed by some as a knee-jerk, reactionary religious response to many new scientific developments. However, does this concern about playing God express a legitimate point? The question gets at an ancient Christian claim about human nature. In Scripture and Christian theology, a common preoccupation is the tendency of the human self to overreach its own limits and to try to make itself and its own projects the center, displacing the proper role of God. The question, then, might be rephrased. It isn't so much a question of "Are we playing God?" but rather of "Are we playing the human?" That is to say, in the attempt to clone, are we falling into the
common sin of denying and overstepping our human limits and making ourselves and our projects the center of the world?

In fairness, it should be noted that there is another sense to the phrase "playing the human." To be sure, we humans have a long rap sheet of offenses. But humanity's record as a whole includes not just our offenses but also our feats of justice and mercy: universal suffrage, civil rights, penicillin, painkillers, radiation therapies. So, in the case of cloning, which role are we playing? Are we playing God, overstepping our limits and doing what we do worst—playing the sinner? Or are we doing what we do best—playing the just and loving human, offering new medical techniques to make lives better? While these questions are unlikely to produce definitive answers that would provide sure grounds for opposing or supporting a particular procedure, they are worth asking as a reminder of our tendencies both to evil and to greatness.

What, Then, Shall We Do?

Several years ago, while speaking about cloning to a church group in Cleveland, Ohio, I asked people to raise their hands if they supported human cloning. After I summarized the arguments on both sides, someone asked about the reproductive role of males in human cloning. I explained that while an egg would be needed for human cloning, sperm would not, thus eliminating the need for a male reproductive contribution. Suddenly an elderly gentleman on the front row, who had enthusiastically voted his support for cloning only minutes before, raised his hand. Pulling himself erect with his walker he asked, "Ma'am, can we take another vote?"

I sympathize with that man. Over the past few years, as I have weighed the arguments for and against cloning and have felt myself drawn first in one direction and then in another, I have often asked that man's question, "Can we take another vote? Can we reconsider?" Although I oppose human cloning, I sometimes wonder if things might look different in 2010.

Whatever our position on cloning, it is incumbent upon us to enter the debate, to raise our voices, and through our participation in public discussion, to vote and vote again. Ethicist Leonard Kass challenges all of us to engage in this debate. "This is not business as usual to be fretted about for a while but finally to be given our seal of approval. We must rise to the occasion and make our judgments as if the future of our humanity hangs in the balance. For so it does."
CLONING, THEOLOGY, AND ETHICS AFTER DOLLY: AN OVERVIEW

Or does it? Does the future of humanity truly "hang in the balance," as Kass claims? Or is cloning simply one more page in a larger story of scientific progress, a piece of the narrative that will and should become familiar over time? We don't have a prayer of knowing which side is right unless we follow the debate through. And, frankly, given our stunning capacities for self-deception and the inevitable limits of our knowledge, we may not know the truth if it is laid out before us on a platter—or, more likely, in a good argument. But what else can we do but talk to each other—talk and argue, praying that we will get it right and knowing that we may well get it wrong, always trusting that either way—right or wrong, cloning or not cloning—God is still God. No matter what blessings or curses we bring upon the earth, God forgives the sinner and loves and redeems all of creation. We trust in God "as if the future of humanity hangs in the balance. For so it does."

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Endnotes

1. In this article, cloning refers, in almost every case, to cloning by somatic cell nuclear transfer, a process by which genetic material from a specialized adult cell is fused with an egg whose genetic material has been removed. For a description of this process, see the initial report by the scientists who created Dolly. A. E. Wilmut, et. al., "Viable Offspring Derived from Fetal and Adult Mammalian Cells," in Clones and Clones: Facts and Fantasies about Human Cloning, ed. by Martha Nussbaum and Cass Sunstein (NY: W. W. Norton, 1998), 21-28. An older cloning technique involves "splitting" embryos at their earliest stages of development. Dolly, by contrast, was made from the DNA of a specialized adult cell.


4. For my other writings on cloning that address some of the same themes raised here, see "Christian Responses to Human Cloning: Miracle or Mess?" Christian Social Action (October 1999): 28-29; "Knitting Life in the Womb: When It Comes to the Newest Reproductive Technologies, Who Sees? Who Knits Together, Who..."


18. Ingrid Shafer, "Biotechnology: The Moral Challenge of Human Cloning"; found online at www.usao.edu/~facshaferi/SHAFTER1.HTML. Taken from Religion and Science website (7 January 1998).
19. For Peters's criticism of the religious critics of cloning, see his articles listed in note 17 above.
25. Ron Green, "Should We Be Working toward Human Cloning for Infertility
Treatments?" See also Gregory Pence, "Will Cloning Harm People?" in Flesh of My Flesh, 115-27; and John Robertson, "Cloning as a Reproductive Right," in The Human Cloning Debate, 67-82.


30. For a summary of the "playing God" debate in cloning, see Chapman, Unprecedented Choices, 104-6.
Lecturing to pastors while the evolution controversy was brewing in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Gilbert T. Rowe discerned that “the Methodist Church has wisely refrained from committing itself as a Church to any particular scientific theory.” Here is a thesis in need of testing. Rowe stood in a good position to have a knowledgeable perspective. Church pastor, book editor for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and editor of the journal *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Rowe eventually taught summer school for preachers and also at the Divinity School of Duke University. He was named the school’s dean in 1946. Rowe defended the scientific treatment of religion and, specifically, of the Christian Scriptures. He equated scientific methods with scholarship and considered it a mistake for the church to oppose scholarship. “It is a simple matter of historic fact that every time the theologians have opposed a great scientific discovery upon doctrinal grounds it has turned out that the scientists were right and the Church wrong,” he claimed. Rowe reminded his readers of the history of Galileo, but he had in mind, more pertinently, the debate over evolution and the eventual trial in 1925 of John T. Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee.

Scopes was no Galileo, but both the media and church communities portrayed his trial as one part of the larger fight between science and religion. Several communions expended considerable energy on the debate. The General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church declared that the Mosaic account of creation was to be taken literally, further partitioning the Presbyterian tradition. Debates over evolution and creation ripped the Northern Baptist Convention into several parts. The Restoration Movement, too, which had already separated out the Churches of Christ in 1906, was further polarized; at the heart of the division was the scientific method of biblical and historical criticism. But the “Modernist controversy,” as we have come to call it, for which the Scopes trial was the poster child, elicited much less disturbance in American Methodism, both North
and South. Methodist historian William J. McCutcheon identified three primary reasons why the effects of the Modernist controversy were only slightly felt within the Methodist folds. (1) No strong Methodist personality championed the fundamentalist cause; (2) the General Conference did not meet in 1925, when the debate was at its crescendo; and (3) the tradition's emphasis on personal experience as the only test of faith left it "least susceptible to the polarization." McCutcheon was right, of course, that neither of the general conferences, North nor South, met in 1925. However, the issues had received sufficient press by 1924 that, had there been interest, the Northern church conference of that year could have taken up the matter and passed a resolution. Indeed, from 1920 until the 1928 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, conservatives attacked what they perceived as entrenched liberalism within the church. Harold Paul Sloan, from the New Jersey Conference, led the charge, which focused on the Course of Study curriculum. The Methodist League for Faith and Life, born early in 1925, selected Sloan its president to continue the critique of the Course of Study. The conservatives won some measure of victory in the process. The 1920 General Conference established theological and doctrinal standards for the Course of Study—standards that included the Articles of Religion, the Discipline, and John Wesley's sermons. The 1924 General Conference extended to any member of the church the right to examine the list of books proposed for the Course of Study.

Nevertheless, the issues of science and evolution were not the main focus of Sloan's and the League's criticisms. As McCutcheon noted, "Sloan's attack centered upon the inadequate Christology of the leaders of Methodism, which seemed, in his opinion, to lead to an insipid Unitarianism. Harris Franklin Rall of Garrett and Edwin Lewis of Drew bore the main brunt of his charges." In a moment of drama, members of the 1928 General Conference, having already heard a warning in the Episcopal Address against heresy hunting, refused to consider further appeals made by Sloan and eventually shouted him down. Still, Sloan earned some degree of influence as the champion for the cause, as did Southern church bishops Warren Candler and Collins Denny, who were also critical of liberalism. But they voiced no sustained attack on either
science or evolution specifically. However, the criticism of the Course of Study curriculum is noteworthy, because it is there that the majority of Methodist pastors read about the debates over science and religion, as well as about historical and literary criticism of Scripture.

Preachers enrolled in the Course of Study turned to the Book of Discipline to find the assigned reading list. First appearing in the 1848 Discipline, the curriculum listed required and optional readings for traveling preachers, divided into four years of study, and, before 1940, separate curriculums for local preachers and for deacons. Each list included well-known works on biblical studies, the history of Christianity and the history of Methodism, pastoral care, and theology. By use of the list, planners indicated what they considered essential reading for Methodist pastors. Reflecting the high value placed on the denomination's journal, the Commission on Courses of Study added one periodical, The Methodist Review, to the list of readings in 1900. When the journal changed its name in 1932, the successor periodical, Religion in Life, continued to be included on the list. A sampling of the articles about science and religion in The Methodist Review indicates the issues of significance and gives a clear picture of the theology and prevalent ideas available to reading Methodist church leaders. What this sampling will bear out is that the issues important in the John Scopes trial were mostly settled before 1925 in the minds of Methodist thinkers. Furthermore, these articles indicate that the writers for the Methodist journal had implicitly committed themselves to a particular scientific theory, in spite of Gilbert Rowe's assertion that the church as an institution had no such commitments.

The Literature: 1840–1925

Methodist Review enjoyed a venerable history, begun in 1818 by Joshua Soule and Thomas Mason. It endured one of the longest runs of American journals founded before 1850. As historian Frederick Norwood pointed out, if Religion and Life is considered its successor, then The Methodist Review sets the record for longevity. If the current periodical, Quarterly Review, is also factored in, then the record is unbeatable. Whether Methodist Review set the record for longest run or not, it clearly set the standards for influence, content, and what Norwood called "the expression of the Methodist spirit in American life." It reflected the intellectual and cultural currents within American society at large and within Methodism in particular. Together with its successor journals and its two sibling journals, one from the Methodist
Episcopal Church, South, and one from the Church of the United Brethren, it made a family of five journals that gave a detailed and accurate picture of American Methodist church life.9 The picture included current Methodist attitudes toward and theological reflection about science and the theories of evolution.

Nineteen years before Darwin published his *Origin of Species* and fifty years before Andrew Dickson White exaggerated what he labeled "the warfare between science and theology," David Holmes, writing in the *Methodist Review*, considered "religion and science the two grand subjects suited to the mental and moral constitution of man." Holmes argued that the connection between science and religion was strong. Using a metaphor familiar to the Reformed tradition, he claimed no discrepancy between the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature, because "God is the author of both." Holmes noted that the numerous allusions to the various branches of science make the Bible a scientific book. He took notice, for example, that the book of Job "contains a synopsis of the learning of the eastern world."10 Primarily, though, Holmes argued that Christianity is the nurturing mother of science. To study science, Holmes advanced, in what was a very fashionable argument, was to study the very works of God—a task for which the Christian was best morally suited.

William Carlyle Williams reviewed Darwin's *Origin of Species* for the *Methodist Review* soon after its publication and predicted that Darwinianism could not withstand criticism from the scientific community, such as that of Harvard's Louis Agassiz. Ironically, though, it was Williams's antagonism toward the theory of evolution that would not withstand the opposition of editorial direction. In his own writings, journal editor Daniel D. Whedon unveiled his bias. In 1877, for example, Whedon reviewed the *Systematic Theology* of Miner Raymond. Raymond, from Garrett Bible Institute, explored the current advancements in some areas of science, but for him the accepted understanding of the biblical record remained the final court of appeal. Specifically, Raymond opposed the theory of evolution and, according to Whedon, seemed to make the Bible stand or fall on that issue. Whedon sharply criticized Raymond for this approach. In keeping with Whedon's direction, other articles criticized preachers who attempted to present or critique theories of science—particularly evolutionary theories—from the pulpit. According to James Potts, most preachers did not have the intellectual or educational tools to deal adequately with
scientific matters. Therefore, he warned, preachers should stick to preaching the gospel. The warnings did not stop; twenty years later John Poucher declared that a preacher criticizing science might "expose his ignorance and alienate scholarship from the Church."ii

By the turn into the twentieth century most of the journal writers had accepted the tenets of evolutionary science and attempted to harmonize evolutionary theory and Christian doctrine. Arthur B. Sanford discerned that "the doctrines of God, immortality, and other cardinal doctrines of Christianity, such as sin, redemption through Jesus Christ, and eternal life, are defensible on precisely the same ground as the great theories of science." Christian doctrines and scientific theories each required an equal amount of faith for acceptance and each rested on a "logical basis." A. L. Faust, reporting on the 1912 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, explicitly identified Jesus Christ as the "directive force" of matter. In fact, Faust claimed, the idea of evolution was not at all new to the Christian, who understands that "there is an evolution in the Christian's character that is as sure as any the scientist has yet discovered." God, through Christ, intended to form a race of perfect beings; God, therefore, provided both the material impetus and the spiritual directive force.12

In mid-1924, the American Civil Liberties Union issued its first public statement about academic freedom and cited anti-evolution laws as one of its chief concerns.13 In November of the same year, Methodist Review ran Charles W. Hargitt's article, "Problems of Science and Faith," reiterating the consensus that had formed in the pages of the journal and confirming the predominant position of Methodist thinkers. Hargitt likened Darwin's theory of evolution to Newton's theory of gravitation. "If Newton's hypothesis was the key which resolved primeval chaos into a harmonious cosmos, Darwin's theory did a service no less distinguished for biology." Hargitt called the theory of evolution stupendous, sublime, and far-reaching. And, as far as Hargitt could detect, there was no conflict between religion and science, particularly the science of evolutionary theory. What had appeared as conflict in other times was "due in part to hasty generalization and deductions on the part of certain scientific enthusiasts and to the no less hasty alarm of religious zealots who arose to repel the supposed attack." Hargitt concluded his article with a caution and plea for tolerance, begging that churches and bishops, conferences and synods, would be tolerant of any "modern Newton" found pondering the grandeur of this life.14
Two pertinent articles appeared in the July 1925 issue of *Methodist Review*, the month of the Scopes trial. The second, by Robert Bagnell, continued some of the themes proffered by Charles Hargitt. In a sense, Bagnell surrendered the royal standing of theology as the queen of the sciences, placing it on equal footing with other sciences. Like the other sciences, theology, too, evolved, grew, and developed. And like other sciences, particularly biology, theology was not a finished science, Bagnell insisted. No hypothesis or belief should be held as final. Notice Bagnell’s attitude: Where other writers had compared the *changing* positions of science to the *fixed* doctrines of religion, Bagnell endorsed an attitude that acknowledged the dynamic, changing nature of religious doctrine.

The other article addressed more directly the situation in Tennessee. Samuel Plantz reviewed the history of the controversy between evolution and Christian theology, confirming what the editors of *Methodist Review* had implicitly favored. When Darwin first published *Origin of Species*, it created controversy. The Christian public was startled, theologians were threatened, and preachers were defensive. But in short order, attitudes shifted and preachers and teachers wrote learnedly “about how evolution was in harmony with the correct interpretation of religious truth.” Scholars of the two disciplines established peace and consensus. Why, then, Plantz questioned, had the old debate awakened? A small part of the answer, Plantz discerned, involved a general, renewed interest in things supernatural following the Civil War. A second explanation posited the development of the Fundamentalist movement, which, to Plantz, mistakenly opposed the modern critical methods of study. A third reason for the interest in evolutionary theory in general and the Scopes matter in particular relied on the fact that some evolutionists of Plantz’s time had “made evolution a causal agency, and [had] given a philosophy of all existence on a materialistic basis.” Natural causation, Plantz argued, could not explain the regularity and order of the universe. Natural causation, or mechanistic evolution, could not explain why and how forms develop from states of lower to higher complexity. Plantz could not doubt the process of evolution, but postulated that the only form of evolution that could explain all the facts was theistic. This conclusion, he maintained, robbed evolution of any potential antagonism with the Christian faith.

In his recitation of the evolution-theology debate, Plantz recognized the commitment that most of the other authors had made to the idea of
theistic evolution. Like A. L. Faust, who argued that God in Christ was the
directing force of evolution, or A. B. Sanford, who declared that an Infinite
Mind with absolute knowledge directed evolution to nobler forms, or John
Poucher, who insisted that the Creator God provided the requisite uniform-
ity for the laws that governed the process of evolution, so Plantz recog-
nized the accepted consensus that adopted the idea of evolutionary
theism. The pages of Methodist Review—a key part of the curriculum of the
Methodist Course of Study—explicated the providential hand of God in the
process of evolution, leading creation on to higher, more developed, forms.
Therefore, one significant reason that the evolution controversy elicited
little polarization within American Methodism was because Methodist
teachers and pastors had already committed to the theory of divine design.

Indeed, in a most fascinating article, William Warren prophetically
anticipated this very conclusion. In 1863, Warren recognized the advent of
an impending revolution in theology, driven by advances in science. All of
English theology held that the universe was a vast but inert mechanism
upon which God applied either constant upholding and actuating power or
upon which God "superinduced" forces, requiring no constant exertion of
power, but upon which God "can and does miraculously interpose, and
overrules many natural causes so as to make them contribute to the attain-
ment of supernatural ends." The assumption of inert matter undergirded
either assumption. But science challenged that assumption.

Two diametrically opposed theories of matter vied for dominance: one
held that the ultimate atoms of matter are necessarily inert, the other that
they are necessarily active. The first insisted that change was the result of
outside forces; the second held that the forces of change were resident in
and essential in matter. The whole of English theology was predicated on
the assumptions of the first theory—that matter was absolutely inert.
However, Warren concluded, science, driven by new discoveries, was aban-
donning that theory in favor of the second. Science had already verified the
existence of repellant and attractive forces active within the matter of a
dynamic universe. The result would spark a theological revolution, and
Warren detailed the implications. The scientific reappropriation forced a
philosophical reevaluation of the proofs for the existence of God, princi-
pally of the etiological argument. "We can no longer prove," Warren
announced, "that that which we call matter is not that unoriginated and
necessary being; that intelligence may not reside in it." Likewise, this
conclusion forced theology to reassess the relation of God to the natural world. Until the scientific realignment, traditional theology argued in favor of the constant and controlling action of God in the natural world. Deny the assumption of the inertness of matter and the theory is invalidated. Furthermore, if matter is imbued with vital processes, as scientists claimed, this might be taken as "valid proofs of the existence of a spirit in every individual atom of matter manifesting the possession of such forces." 

Warren gave a most insightful analysis and one as relevant at the beginning of the twenty-first century as it was in his own day. Having deconstructed the basis of contemporary theology, he recognized the need for constructive theology. His limited writing may not have had a wide appeal, but Warren had considerable influence, nonetheless. In 1869, he became the first president of Methodist-related Boston University, where, as an able administrator, he prepared the way for the acceptance of the work of Borden Parker Bowne and the development of Boston Personalism, the dominant stream of Methodist theology for the first half of the twentieth century.

As Warren contributed administrative leadership to Boston University, Bowne contributed sharp, systematic, and philosophical elucidation to the growth of Methodist theology. Bowne opposed anti-intellectualism, affirmed scholarly (historical and literary) criticism of Scripture, and critiqued Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution. He opened his book *The Immanence of God* with an argument reminiscent of Warren's article but with his own emphasis. Bowne rejected a mechanical world, even as Warren had announced that science, too, had rejected it. With specific regard to evolution, Bowne argued that "[t]here is no longer any reason for being afraid of naturalism, for naturalism is now merely a tracing of the order in which the divine causality proceeds." Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Bowne's student and the first occupant of the Bowne chair in philosophy at Boston, continued the Personalist tradition. Like Bowne, Brightman accepted the theory of evolution and insisted on theistic design, because "[t]he evolution of life from its primitive germs to higher types demands some cause." Scientific theories posed no threat to religious philosophy as far as Brightman was concerned. Indeed, he argued that religion, challenged by the collapse of the mechanistic view, was "in a sense losing its hold on God while science has been finding God anew." Albert C. Knudson, the theological successor to Bowne, concurred. Science permits a theistic interpretation of the process of evolution. However, among the
Personalists, Knudson advanced a slightly different description of the relation between science and religion. While other thinkers (including those here considered from the pages of Methodist Review) conceived of a close relationship between science and religion, in which each aimed to understand God’s action in nature, Knudson separated the two. Theology and science could live peaceably, but apart, he declared. “Each has in the main its own independent field, and each may well learn from the other.”

The Relationship between Science and Religion

Contemporary observers have discerned at least four ways in which to describe the historic and current relationship between science and religion. Ian Barbour describes the relationship in terms of conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. Appropriating similar models, John Haught uses the terms conflict, contrast, contact, and confirmation. Most modern commentators have pointed out that the conflict was more internal, that is, between competing religious views or between scientists. Still, for some, science and religion could never be reconciled. Barbour includes both scientific materialists and biblical literalists in this camp. One way to avoid conflict is to view the two disciplines as independent, one used to explain observable data and the other used to interpret metaphysics or to ascertain ultimate values. Moving beyond independence, science and religion may come into contact or dialogue particularly around what Barbour calls “boundary questions.” Boundary questions generally include methodological issues, such as theories of knowledge, principles of verification, and assessment of prevailing paradigms. The preferred relationship between science and religion Barbour calls “integration” and Haught “confirmation.” According to this description, religion’s claim that the universe is finite, rational, ordered, and dynamic is the paradigm that fuels the scientific quest for knowledge. Robert John Russell takes this relationship of confirmation or integration one step further. For him, science and religion each is a resource for the other—informing, guiding, interacting. Russell recognizes that both scientific and theological arguments are highly contextualized by limitations and assumptions of the other. Most philosophers and theologians recognize the limitations and assumptions given by science, but too few understand that science, as well, “is affected by the prevailing intellectual culture, including the forces of theological and philosophical thought.”

Conventional wisdom suggests that Christian denominations for
which the relationship between science and religion was perceived as one of conflict were more likely to be torn or deeply disturbed by the presentation of evolutionary theory. Writers of articles in *Methodist Review* between 1840 and 1925 acknowledged the perceived relationship of conflict but were more likely to describe the relationship in terms of *contrast* or *dialogue*. Many of the writers, including Sanford, Faust, and Hargitt, reasoned that in the dialogue with religion science had or could perfect the theory of evolution. The early Personalists, among others, recommended a closer relationship between science and religion, a relationship that Barbour, Haught, and Russell would describe as “partnership.” This attitude toward the relationship, in addition to the commitment largely made to the idea of theistic evolution, prevented American Methodism from being torn apart by the Fundamentalist controversy and the John Scopes trial.

Gilbert Rowe correctly noted that, as an institution, the Methodist Church made no official statements regarding science. But the 1992 General Conference of The United Methodist Church added a paragraph on science to the Social Principles in which it considered the current state of the relationship and called for further dialogue. Using a pastoral tone, the Conference wrote, “Facts alone can be empty and confusing without an integrating interpretation best accomplished through dialogue with the scientific community.” The Conference did not indicate what facts it had in mind. The 2000 General Conference shortened the paragraph. The new wording acknowledged the “validity of the claims of science in describing the natural world”; but the Conference was unwilling to grant that science can make authoritative claims about theological issues. Continuing the tradition begun at the beginning of the twentieth century, the 2000 General Conference declared its preference for a close relationship, “Science and theology are complementary rather than mutually incompatible”; consequently, the Conference encouraged “dialogue between the scientific and theological communities.”

Certainly, the issues, even regarding theories of evolution, are not resolved. The concept of theistic evolution garners many supporters besides those already noted, including the Methodist theologian John B. Cobb, Jr. Recent articles and advertisements in *Circuit Rider* magazine identified other important works. But the concept of theistic evolution is exceptionally complex and has faced serious criticism. One of the most serious attacks came from Jacques Monod’s 1972 work, *Chance and
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Endnotes

2. Ibid., 207.
5. See, for example, Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church, ed. by Thomas A. Langford (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991).
7. McCutcheon, ibid., 270-73, adequately chronicles the conservative attacks and the actions of the General Conferences.
8. A special thanks to L. Dale Patterson, archivist at the United Methodist Church Archives in Madison, NJ, for confirming these dates.
11. William Carlisle Williams, "Darwin on the Origin of Species," Methodist Review 43 (October 1861): 605-27; Daniel D. Whedon, Methodist Review 59 (1877): 734-40; James H. Potts, "Relation of the Pulpit to Skeptical Scientific Theories," Methodist Quarterly Review 64 (January 1882): 37-44; John Poucher, "The Religious Use of Necessity. Some of the issues cannot be resolved; some of them will take considerably more dialogue, contact, and integration. If it builds on its foundation and precedent, United Methodism is more likely to be a strong theological voice in the discussion than to be torn asunder by it.
18. Ibid., 465, 467, 470.
Black theology of liberation is the name given to a movement created by a group of African-American clergy in the late-1960s who felt that the gospel of Jesus Christ had a positive message for Black people despite the negative racial conditions they faced. The National Committee of Negro Churchmen and, later, James H. Cone believed that the good news from Christ called for a ministry where God and human beings would work together to transform this oppressive social condition into a new community of justice on earth. Black theology was needed, argued its founders, because all theologies are human speech about God's relation to humanity. Since the gospel of Jesus Christ is essentially one of liberation and since the human social relations in the United States were characterized both by racial discrimination against African Americans and by their struggles toward freedom, Black theology of liberation was needed not only for African Americans but also for the country in general. By removing racial obstacles from the God-given rights of Black folk, peace and justice could reign throughout the United States.

Theologically, Black theology of liberation states that God created this world for all humanity. But hubris or selfishness led most of the American White community to hoard God's created order for themselves. Thus, evil in Black theology emphasizes both personal and systemic sin. To fight such a demonic force, group accountability, individual responsibility, and personal individuality were all needed. In addition, evil existed in the monopolization of power over resources and over divinely given rights or privileges for all humanity. In the U.S. context, this denial of power showed itself in the disproportionate number of African Americans suffering from disenfranchisement on two levels. First, racial discrimination denied the positive self-identity of what it meant to be a Black person, especially in the
context of the U.S. apartheid structures of the 1960s, where the definition of what it meant to be human was encoded by law and custom in the identity of White Americans. To be human was to be a White person. Consequently, most White people did not see Blacks as human beings—thus erasing both their African heritage and their unique gifts of being Black people on North American soil.

Second, in addition to restrictions against positive self-identity were restrictions against African-American people's right to self-determination. All peoples, particularly poor communities, were given the right to determine for themselves how they wanted to conduct themselves on earth—how they attempted to control the wealth, resources, and space around them. Because the image of God in us signifies total liberation and grants complete freedom, the first component of Black theology spoke to cultural concerns and the second to a political agenda. If the church is to be the church, then it should be about the business of working with Jesus in the midst of the movement to realize self-identity (as in Black cultural rights) and self-determination (as in Black political rights) in the African-American community. In sum, Black theology of liberation arose as a Christian movement of freedom for the transformation of personal and systemic power relations in U.S. society at the point of racial difference.¹

Beginning in the early 1980s, the trends in American Black theology have been characterized by the growth of a second generation of Black theologians, including younger African-American thinkers who emphasize an exploration of theology from any and all aspects of reality. Moreover, these present trends show Black theology deepening its ties both in the Black church and in M.A. and Ph.D. programs. A slowly increasing number of African Americans are attending graduate schools of divinity, theology, and religion. And they are institutionalizing themselves in the American Academy of Religion—a national organization of scholars with some form of Ph.D. related to religion. The Society for the Study of Black Religion likewise remains a vibrant intellectual location for African-American religious scholars. Similarly, the ties between Black churches and Black professors have deepened, with more scholars either pastoring or copastoring churches or working in and with churches in some capacity.

Furthermore, the present stage of U.S. Black theology is finding more research and publications centering on primary sources in African-American culture and politics; for instance, in the areas of slave narratives, music, biog-
raphy, and public policy. Afrocentrism is adding its mark to the nature of African-American theological concerns today, cutting across particular disciplines in religious studies. Also, the founding, or first, generation of Black scholars (from the 1960s) persists in publishing and in setting the pace in various parts of Black theology. And a small cadre of Black educators and ministers are establishing openly their lesbian and gay identities as gifts from God and, therefore, directly challenging Black theological beliefs.

Challenges for the Second Generation

The decades of the 1980s and 1990s gave us the work of younger African-American scholars who have branched out into a variety of Black theological concerns. While they seek to pursue further the first generation's pioneering agenda, they also claim their own distinct approaches. In a word, the second generation is both an heir to and a groundbreaker with the contemporary Black theological founders.

The first twenty years of contemporary Black theology developed under the bold leadership of the first generation of pastors and scholars. These older scholars literally had to fight for the right of the African-American church and community to think theologically. Before the National Committee of Negro Churchmen (1966) and James H. Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969), the connection of Black religious experience with serious intellectual implications for all of society was considered comic relief, if not ignored, by the White mainstream. Likewise, the mushrooming Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s had not made a decisive break with the dominating, mainstream White theology.

In some cases, Black theologians had to disrupt White religious and academic institutions as well as remind Black churches of the liberative role of the gospel and the historic prophetic tradition in Black people's history of faith and practice, from West Africa until today. For the creators of Black theology, the main issue was the Christian gospel of freedom for the poor. Thus the first generation used a passionate intellect that laid the foundation for all African-American religious thought since the late 1960s. The overarching historic significance of the first generation is that it fought successfully for the right of Black theology to exist. Also, the long-term importance of the first generation is that it created Black theology and built it as a permanent, Christian, and prophetic movement in the United States, with influence throughout the world.
Moreover, Black theologians had to declare business no longer as usual in predominantly White church and educational institutions, as well as teach Black churches about their own Christian tradition of struggle and freedom for the oppressed. The first generation of Black theologians fought to connect the thinking and practice of all African-American people to the message of liberation for the poor in the Bible.

Now the second generation has greater access to support and resources inside and outside of religious institutions. The successful work of the first generation has allowed younger scholars to move closer to the mainstream.\(^3\) And, consequently, new challenges present themselves. In a word, unlike the older Black scholars who primarily fought from outside the mainstream and who were compelled by and related to the life-and-death concerns of a larger societal movement, the second generation finds itself accepted more.

The second generation of Black theologians can follow and fulfill their vocational responsibilities in several ways. A crucial thread that should continue to tie together all areas of study and perspectives is a clear focus on working people and the poor. The overwhelming majority in the African-American church and community falls within these categories. Furthermore, the Christian gospel’s emphasis on the bottom of society likewise determines the vocational direction of Black theology. Such a pro-poor position will also sharpen the distinctions between a “Black theology of liberation” and a vague “Black theology.” The former encourages a gospel of good news for all of broken humanity, while the latter tends toward the maintenance of bourgeois privileges. The former fosters social change; the latter preserves the status quo in order for Black middle-class representatives to enter. In all of its professional efforts, the second generation must ask whether it has tried to work for the voices and interests of the African-American poor. Liberation defines Black theology, because the sacred spirit of God and black ancestors are for the practice of freedom for the bottom of all societies.

A second challenge is to keep the vocation of intellectual work as a service to the church and the community. Intellectual work is a calling from God and is another form of ministry. In the Black church, family, and overall community, the complexities of the contemporary period of structural unemployment, AIDS, violence, self-hatred and despair, domestic violence, the existence of one monopoly capitalist superpower, the
increasing "feminization of Black poverty," examples of positive resistance on the local and national levels, the reality of positive and stable Black families and Black churches, and a host of other issues mean not less but more rigorous scholarly work.

The church is one community that holds us accountable to the liberation-faith mandate in the gospel and in the African-American tradition. The church also helps to nurture our growth. But most of the educational systems in the U.S., particularly for full-time pastors, pull us away from meaningful, organized faith communities. Educational institutions try to perpetuate themselves. And, like all groups, they have established methods to suck professors into their own world. In this world, advancement and staying power depend on how well we give all of our time to publishing, teaching, and serving the academic lifestyle. Clearly, part of the gap between Black professors and the pew results from a well-organized educational system that demands our time. Still, we must maintain creative and critical relationships to the Black church—in the forms of teaching and preaching in the church, serving as associate pastors, leading workshops and seminars, acting as consultants, or regularly sharing our ongoing work with lay people. Faith organizations, especially the Black church, can help us both to serve the poor and to challenge them when they fall short of a gospel message calling on freedom and right relationships for all peoples.

Third, the vocation of the second generation calls us to place liberation theology in conversation at different levels. One audience is at the professional level—undergraduate and graduate levels. A second level is the pastoral—the Black clergy situated at the heart of the African-American community. And the third and largest audience comes from the masses of Black folk—poor and working-class people. It is at this level that Black theology has to continually remind itself of its audience (e.g., these people's feelings, pains, goals, fights, language, and hopes). In this sense, the challenge is to speak on three levels, with an emphasis on the third audience within the African-American church and community.

Consequently, we need to write so that our families, communities, ancestors, and unborn can understand their roles as the power of the poor in history. In contrast, most graduate-school educational institutions would have us follow the standard practice that labels the most indirect, obscure writing as the most profound. Unfortunately, this style of communicating usually means that only the most formally educated can talk to and among
themselves. Our communities, on the other hand, are left wondering what happened to those nice, young Black folk who went off into White people's schools. And when these same promising African Americans from the community bring back books they've written, hardly anyone in their families and churches can read them.

For the poor, language means more than a convenient form to carry content. Language itself is also content and substance. People's language reveals their faith, backgrounds, hopes, desires, and connection to community. Language tells poor people whether or not the writer comes out of their world or at least takes their world seriously. Language, therefore, serves as a window into the lifestyles and beliefs of the writer, as well as the writer's relation to her or his audience. If the majority of Blacks in the African-American communities and churches are to see themselves in our work, then we must see them when we write. Thus, religious language is part of life and should help make unjust relationships just.

Fourth, the complexities facing the Black community and church in the twenty-first century demand a more sophisticated theoretical framework. What structure of concepts can aid the liberation conclusions and practices of Black theology? What insights might be taken from a host of academic disciplines and related experiences from liberation theologies in the Third World? What theories can help Black theology move from its primary sources of Black experiences to its theological conclusions of God's intention for oppressed humanity? For example, how do we take interviews with ex-slaves or the rap music of Black youth and jump to conclusions about what Jesus Christ is telling poor Black folk to say and do? Theory can become a weapon of struggle in the story of God's working with the Black poor to move them from being passive victims of oppression to being active people searching for a more compassionate and just lifestyle for all creation.

Fifth, women, too, continue to challenge the vocational tasks of African-American theologians; but we need to emphasize more the life-and-death issues of the majority of Black women. This group consists, at the very least, of Black women who are poor, working class, unemployed, and/or single heads-of-household. How do we make their survival and full human dignity prominent in our scholarship? Their day-to-day triple experiences of class exploitation, gender oppression, and racial discrimination can enrich the entire theological focus of Black religious studies. The point
where various types of intense human pain come together usually provides the most fertile ground for creative and sustaining work as it relates to the God–human interaction.

Sixth, the second generation needs to identify clearly the location of passions of resistance. What are poor people angry about today? For instance, does rap music provide any hints about the state of urban Black youth and the (destructive and constructive) potential they offer the Black church and community, and, in fact, all of America? Where exactly is the Black Christ today fighting beside the brokenhearted and leading a struggle for emancipation? Responses to these questions require of Blacks today and tomorrow the disciplines of anthropology (with its tools of long-term field work) and ethnographic studies.

Seventh, in order to harness all of its strengths, the second generation will have to conduct a prolonged, organized conversation and joint practice between Womanists and (male) Black theologians. An encouraging model appears in My Sister, My Brother: Womanist and Xodus God-Talk, written by the wife-and-husband team of Karen and Garth Baker-Fletcher. Their book begins the dialogue on God, Christ, humanity, the ancestors, the church, and the last things in Christian hope. A similar model is the ongoing course on "Womanist Theology and Black Theology," cotought by the wife-and-husband team of Linda E. Thomas and Dwight N. Hopkins. The course takes place at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and the University of Chicago Divinity School. Using the disciplines of anthropology, systematic theology, political economy, and African-American studies, their specific approach is to put Womanist and Black theologies in conversation around issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and the ecology.

Eighth, the historical foundation of African-American religious life in North America calls us to rethink our doing of Black theology today. Particularly, the period of slavery (where Black people were actually forged into “African Americans” and the Black church began to define itself) and the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1950s and 1960s offer a storehouse of traditions, lessons, cultural values, and political strategies for today’s Black community. What was in the faith of enslaved Black folk that provided the groundwork for survival and liberation of Black Americans even until today? What happened in the 1950s and 1960s so that the African-American community felt a sense of collective self-worth, transformative values, and a liberation-faith inspired movement? The purpose of
religious history is to change the world today. Yet, the effort to address unjust relationships in the contemporary period grows out of a historical legacy of Black and White interactions. Since European Christians carried Africans into the land of the Native Americans, millions of poor and illiterate Black people have developed an enduring faith. And such a rocklike faith has looked into the eyes of the demonic and survived. Moreover, that historical faith has ensured Black positive cultural self-identity and political self-determination.

Finally, the second generation will have to build and exhibit models of basic Christian communities in local areas on the everyday level. Such locations, whether centered around a particular church or household meetings of African-American Christians, would teach, preach, and practice a Black theology of liberation for all to see and hear. If there is going to be a third and fourth generation of Black theology, then the second generation will have to meet these challenges, and more.

The Twenty-first Century
The second generation of Black theologians continues to produce fresh scholarship to meet new challenges at the beginning of the twenty-first century. At the crossroad of two millennia, we hear the painful but powerful voices of the state of Black America and the cries of our unborn demanding to know what preparations we have made for our children and our children-to-be. Basically, the second generation has to integrate a message of hope for a more just social order, a critical acceptance of African-American religious history, and an understanding of theological, cultural, and political power in the United States today.

But there exists blatant and subtle forces that attempt to detract formally trained intellectuals, the church, and the community from drawing on the potential of a radical African-American spirituality and thinking. On the one hand, this occurs when persons in mainstream decision-making positions say no to us or try to co-opt our strengths. On the other hand, we trip and fall when we fail to balance the basic prophetic and servant roles of Black theology's vocation. In fact, Black theology has a calling to organize itself at the service of silenced voices. We must listen to and help empower them—and thereby empower ourselves. Without a faith context and the interest of the majority, we can seem like latter-day intellectual minstrels performing before White people in educational institutions.
THE FUTURE OF BLACK THEOLOGY

At the same time, in our servant role we shoulder prophetic and critical responsibilities. Not all Black churches are preaching and practicing the Christian gospel of returning all of society's wealth to the poor; sometimes, having a Black preacher and Black congregation can mean the propagation of a demonic theology. Service to, love for, and affirmation of the poor and the entire church and community mean keeping them accountable to what they have been called to say and do. Ultimately, in the twenty-first century, the vocation of the second generation of Black theologians will help to bring about God's kingdom of justice on earth when our faith and works risk a new way of thinking and living now.

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Endnotes

1. See the following for the origin and tradition of the dynamic called "Black theology": James H. Cone, For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), ch. 1; Dwight N. Hopkins, Introducing Black Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999).
3. Many of the second generation have received numerous research grants, accepted positions at Ph.D.-granting institutions, and institutionalized their discipline in the American Academy of Religion. For instance, the Womanist program unit in the American Academy of Religion and the Black biblical scholars program unit in the Society for Biblical Literature have been leading intellectual gatherings. And I chaired the first seven years of the Black theology program unit in the American Academy of Religion. Will Coleman followed as the next chair. Similarly, second-generation theologians are editors of the Black religious series at various publishing houses—for instance, Cheryl Kirk Duggan, Anthony Finn, and Karen and Garth Baker-Fletcher. And I am the editor of the Henry McNeal Turner-Sojourner Truth Series on Black Religion for Orbis Books.
Inclusiveness has become one of the hot topics of our time. Hardly anybody appears to disagree with the mandate to become more inclusive, even though the reasons vary considerably and there are disagreements about the limits of inclusion. At the same time, churches remain among the most segregated places in the United States, and there seems to be fairly little incentive to change this right away. Churches report the most significant growth in numbers where, like in newly developed suburbs, the membership is homogeneous. What is going on? Why should we bother to become a truly inclusive church?

What does it really mean to be inclusive? At times, to be inclusive is identified with expanding one's market. When a neighborhood changes, for instance, churches sometimes try to become more open and inclusive in order to broaden their membership base. On the national level, the white Anglo majority will have become
Kingdom promises that there will be no death, for the Kingdom will actualize the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:20-24). Still tied to death, time, then, can be neither an incremental development of the Kingdom nor a period in which the “victors” can actualize the Kingdom. By definition, the Kingdom brings new, indestructible life and the cosmic righteousness intrinsic to such life. As that life is not at all evident at this time, the Kingdom has to be before us. Before the Kingdom comes, however, we do have time to advance a rather passionate critique of the events that have preceded us and in which we live, a critique that is integral to a certain premillennialism.

The critique to which I refer takes offense at the popular view that we have arrived at the dawn of the twenty-first century progressively or providentially. To be sure, in many ways we are better off in this time of technological innovation than our ancestors were in their own times. To the extent that our innovations have helped to alleviate suffering (through improved medical care, for example), we are, indeed, better off than our progenitors. To the extent, however, that these times of speed and light are rife with injustice, we are heirs to values that are hostile to diversity. Those hostile values are at work in the notion of universal history, Hegel’s Philosophy of History being its chief artifact. The notion of universal history is hardly a relic of the nineteenth century, though. Until today, the guardians of “civilization” influence us to think that time refers to the incremental actualization of the Highest Good as manifested solely in Western civilization.

We are to understand that Western civilization is no accidental achievement but rather is the product of the craftiness of history’s inner logic (“the cunning of reason,” as Hegel puts it). Allegedly, that logic reigns today in the form of, say, the Internet and the corporate super structures, which have come to dictate the pace of the world. The concept of universal history holds that this reigning logic has involved the nullification of people with no contribution to make to freedom and culture. The African AIDS pandemic exemplifies such nullification. The spread of the virus could have been curtailed if the First World had deemed African people as worthy of care. Under its caption, “The World Shunned Signs of Disaster,” a recent Washington Post article documents that the proliferation of the disease “is marked by wealthy nations’ loss of interest once they understood they had escaped the worst, by racial undercurrents, and by poiso-
nous turf battles among the multinational bodies charged with marshaling a response." Peter Pilot, the executive director for the UN program on HIV/AIDS is a tad more blunt: "If [the AIDS pandemic in Africa] would have happened in the Balkans, or in Eastern Europe, or in Mexico, the reaction would have been different."3 Now Africans are dying in droves from the unchecked virus. Former member of the World Health Organization, Jonathan Mann, identifies the nullifying animus this way: "The bottom line is that the epidemic could rage in Africa and we could control it here . . . We’re the rich United States. Do we need Africa?"4

Persons who rail against universal history because of the diversity it undermines are thought to be irrational. They allegedly fail to see that the Highest Good, manifest in its Western form, "pays the penalty of determinate existence and of corruptibility, not from itself, but from the passions of individuals."5 As philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas suggests in his critique of Hegel, however, the passions of individuals enable us to consider that Western civilization is not what it thinks it is since it is hostile to diversity—since "it does not dispose of the means to realize itself." For "to think that everything is consummated while the people that tear one another to pieces belie this universality . . . is to shock reason."6 Indeed, the civil wars in Africa, the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the high incidence of terrorist activities around the world suggest the correctness of Lévinas’s claim. One hopes that the future will halt that offense to reason by virtue of the fact that the death on which civilization has thrived will be "destroyed" (1 Cor. 15:26). To put this hope another way: "Come, Lord Jesus."

The assertion in the Book of Discipline that inclusiveness "enables all persons to participate in the life of the church, the community, and the world," and that inclusiveness "denies every semblance of discrimination," demands that one not only deny all appearance of bigotry but also own its stubborn depths. We own the problem’s depths when we look forward to the Kingdom that is coming, acknowledge its power to reverse the irreversible, and mine our Wesleyan heritage to make good on our claim to be growing in (spiritual) perfection. We can only attain that perfection when we can celebrate diversity with those "erased" persons—the first generation of Africans enslaved in the Americas, for instance—who have yet to speak for themselves and be themselves. Surely 1 Cor. 15:21—"For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being"—does not mean that those people have to be
Westernized to be so raised. Can we hope for them if we assume that they will uphold what their enslaved labor has helped produce? If we can say yes, then we are universal historians hostile to diversity. If we can say no, then we hope for a future that is unlike the present and the past, which is something to look forward to. Our task as The United Methodist Church is to use the time that we have in this new millennium to approximate that hope in our dealings with each other and the world.

My hope is that our local churches will cultivate teachers and preachers whose theological perspectives challenge us to remember and hope for the nullified people of yesterday and today. I call for the sincere embrace of perspectives focused on Third World issues, their first World counterparts, and the long histories that have produced such massive contexts of poverty and bigoted contempt. I hope our churches will welcome the discomfort such perspectives instill in us, a discomfort we endure—perhaps—on a “diversity Sunday” or a “missionary Sunday.” Our Christian education programs and liturgical life should incorporate those perspectives as the life blood of our hope for the great diversity the Resurrection promises.

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Endnotes

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., A13.
continued from page 409

the minority by the middle of the twenty-first century, and savvy church planners already try to prepare for the transition. Similar efforts at inclusiveness can now also be observed in the world of the economy where, backed up by a more diverse workforce, the exploration of more diverse markets stands for success. This type of inclusion, however, means business as usual—with a few new flavors added.

To be inclusive is also at times identified with expanding one's community: the more, the merrier. As one pastor put it to his church, "Everybody who walks through this door is welcome." There is a sense of accomplishment if a community manages to make itself more colorful by attracting a certain number of people who are (and look) different. "Inclusiveness is fun," might be the motto here. But, as the act of walking through the church door signifies, others are expected to make the first step to join our community and to adapt to its rules. No matter how welcoming the community, this approach often ends in inclusiveness on the terms of the established group.

What if these well-meaning efforts at being inclusive miss the mark? What if being inclusive had a different meaning altogether? Theological arguments for inclusion usually refer either to a divine mandate or to Christian love. In both cases, people assume that inclusion has something to do with what we have to do to others, with our generosity, or simply with "being nice" to others who are different. The Book of Discipline's definition of inclusiveness as "openness, acceptance, and support" can easily feed into this attitude. It is our action which, in the words of the Discipline "enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world" (¶117). To a large extent, this mentality fuels the debate over inclusion of gay and lesbian Christians; but it also drives efforts to include racial minorities.

Unfortunately, such inclusion remains a one-way street, and gays and lesbians are only the most recent group to discover that even those who talk most about inclusion often fail to develop real relationships. Inclusion of racial minorities along those lines is even more problematic, because it often goes hand in hand with a paternalistic attitude that leaves those who do the including in control over those to be included. In this case, the well-intended effort to include those who are excluded—being open, accepting, and supportive—often ends up reaffirming the egos of those who perform the act of inclusion and implies that those to be included somehow have a deficit. In the language of the Discipline, they need to be enabled (by us) to
participate. Inclusion of people of the lower classes, or of people below the poverty line, is usually not even an issue; here the themes are not inclusion but "charity," "assistance," or "economic development."

If inclusion is to be real, it cannot remain a one-way street. An expanded notion of love may help to understand what is at stake. Jesus' well-known challenge to "love your neighbor as yourself" is not simply another item on the Christian to-do list but rather a first step to realizing who we are. What happens if we read Jesus' words to mean "love your neighbor as being part of yourself"? In this case, my neighbor—the other person—is not merely the object of a divine demand, the recipient of my charity, or the subject of my sympathy. Rather, the other person is part of who I am. In other words, I cannot be fully human without my neighbor, without that person who is different from me in gender, race, or class. In this case, being inclusive is no longer optional. It has nothing to do with political correctness or with being generous. Including the other person has to do with the fact that the other is part of who I am and, thus, has a claim on me. This goes beyond the Book of Discipline's definition of "openness, acceptance, and support." Here, the notion of love changes. In opening up to the other in love, the focus is no longer simply on what can be done for others. In love, something comes back in return and transforms the one who loves.

The biblical notion of justice adds another aspect. In the Old Testament, justice means "to be faithful to the covenant." Including those on the margins—the widows, the strangers, the orphans—is simply a way of being faithful to Israel's covenant with God. "Social" and "spiritual" spheres cannot be separated here. Failure to be inclusive is a violation of the covenant not only with fellow human beings but also with God. By the same token, struggling to become a more inclusive community is not just a "social" mandate but also a matter of spirituality—a way of keeping the covenant with God. Inclusiveness is at the heart of the Christian life with God. Shutting out people on the margins means shutting out God as well.

This insight finds a resonance in the conclusion of the United Methodist Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty, which has received very little attention, even where this initiative was picked up in the churches and annual conferences. After analyzing the dismal situation of children everywhere, the bishops conclude that what matters at this point are not first of all new programs (paradoxically, this has been the response to the Initiative ever since) but the "reshaping of The United Methodist Church in response to
the God who is among 'the least of these.' What is at stake in the effort to become more inclusive, therefore, is nothing less than the vitality of the church. As I have argued, including people on the margins is not simply a mere consequence of our relation to God—an afterthought; it is at the very heart of it. Inclusion has nothing to do with an easygoing multiculturalism that loves to sample the colorful aspects of other traditions and customs. Neither does inclusion have anything to do with strategies for church growth in a demographically changed society. Inclusion becomes the central issue in the reform and revitalization of the church in the new millennium, initiating a process that moves from the bottom up rather than from the top down. In a recent statement, the bishops confess the difficulty of keeping focused and they reaffirm the challenge: "We are convinced that the reshaping of the church... cannot take place apart from a... relationship of the church, including the bishops, with the economically impoverished and the most vulnerable of God's children. God has chosen the poor, the vulnerable, and the powerless as a means of grace and transformation."

The issue of inclusion is paramount at this time, because it serves as an indispensable means of grace, together with the other means, such as Holy Communion, prayer, and the Holy Scriptures. Wesley himself was concerned that Methodists were falling from grace because they were not aware of this aspect of the means of grace. In this light, inclusion has nothing to do with the special interests of a few. It is in the best interest of all. Neither can we afford to limit ourselves to the inclusion of one group or another. As long as people are shut out, God is also being shut out. The most important challenges, therefore, are tied not necessarily to those who receive the most press but to those who are hardly noticed at all at present—particularly to those who disappear in the cracks of an economy that creates not only incredible wealth and growth but also unimaginable lack and despair all around us.

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Endnotes

1. This concern has been reaffirmed in a more recent statement by the bishops, found online at http://www.umc.org/initiative/statement.html.
2. Ibid.
Our son has just graduated from college, and he has begun the complicated task of looking for a job. Part of his responsibility is to write a letter that will commend him to possible employers. He needs to list his qualifications; give some indication of what he knows and knows how to do; and, he hopes, persuade them to take him and his qualifications seriously.

Paul's letter to the Romans is unique among his surviving letters. It is the only letter written to a congregation or group of congregations that he does not already know. He intends to visit Rome, and he wants them to take his visit seriously; so he begins by listing his credentials.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God . . ." (Rom. 1:1). Look at what these credentials include. First of all, his authority does not come from his own brilliance, faithfulness, or experience. It comes from his relationship to Jesus Christ. Second, he has an assignment as one of Christ's people: he is an apostle. *Apostle* simply means "one who is sent." In the early church there were Christian leaders who were not primarily responsible for local church communities but were "sent" to establish new communities and to watch over such communities, sometimes from afar. Peter was one of these apostles; and Paul was another. Third, Paul's job as an apostle is to present the "gospel of God." At the time of Paul's ministry the church did not yet have written gospels, stories of Jesus' life. The *gospel* meant the good news—the good news about what God has done for humankind in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that his main job is to be a news broadcaster—but unlike so many of the broadcasters today, his job is to tell us not how bad things are but how good God is.

It helps to remember that the good news that Paul preached to others
was good news for him as well. He had spent the first years of his life seeking eagerly to win God's good pleasure by his close obedience to the Old Testament law. He had been, he tells us, a religious overachiever, an Eagle Scout of faithfulness. (Look, for instance, at Phil. 3:4-6.) Then God confronted him with the following good news: When it comes to God, what counts is not what we achieve but what we receive. What we have received is God's absolute love in the cross of Jesus Christ. No one can earn that love. (Who could earn the death of God's own son?) No one needs to earn that love because God has already given it to us and to the whole creation.

So Paul writes his letter to the Romans both to introduce himself as a messenger of the good news and to remind them of what makes the good news both good and new. He is not the founder of the Roman churches; other apostles have been there before him. But he can remind the Roman Christians of what they already believe—and maybe deepen what they believe—so that they will welcome him when he arrives.

Welcome, in fact, is a major theme in this letter. Not only does Paul want the Roman Christians to welcome him, he also wants them to welcome one another (see Rom. 15:7). For whatever reasons, there apparently have been some differences among the Roman Christians about what the faithful life looks like, and perhaps they have not been as open to one another as they might have been. Now Paul asks them to welcome him and to welcome one another. Again, they do this not just in order to be good and obedient people. They do it in response to a most amazing piece of good news: "Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7).

(My own guess is that the disputes among the Roman Christians have to do with differences between house churches that are primarily Gentile in background and those that are primarily Jewish. The complicated argument of Romans 9-11 about how God's choosing of the church does not negate the election of Israel may have been written in part to help Gentile Christians appreciate more fully the role of Israel, and of Jewish Christians, in God's plan.)

**February 17, 2002—First Sunday in Lent**

Rom. 5:12-19; Gen. 2:15-17; Psalm 32; Matt. 4:1-11

Here is a key fact about the good news as Paul preaches it and writes it: The good news is about the one God who is God of all people; therefore, God's love must be available not just to some people but to everyone. So here is the punchline for our passage: “Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to
condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all" (Rom. 5:18). Let us now go back and look at how Paul got to this punchline by what he says in the first four chapters of the epistle.

In the first two chapters of Romans, Paul, like any good preacher, presents a kind of series of Lenten homilies to get us ready for the good news of Good Friday and Easter. Chapters 1 and 2 provide the opportunities for Romans of the first century and for North Americans of the twenty-first century to think about the ways we Christians have disobeyed God's will.

Some of us have disobeyed God's will though we grew up steeped in Scripture and quite aware of what the faithful life demanded of us (we are rather like the readers or hearers addressed in Rom. 2:17-29). Others of us may not think of ourselves as very religious, but we are at least perceptive enough to believe that the world and all that is in it is a gift from God; and when we think about it we know we should give God thanks and praise. But the truth is we get busy chasing after little gods—not the statues of birds and beasts of the early pagans, but money or success or sexual encounters divorced from lasting commitment or just one thrill after another.

It looks at first as though we've set off on quite different journeys, but the truth is that the different paths have led us to the same place: the Far Country. We all ended up at a distance from the God who made us for God's self. That is the claim of Romans 1 and 2. The claim of chapter 3 is that though we had gone far from God, God came out to seek us through Jesus Christ our Lord (just as the father of the prodigal went down the road to greet him and hurried to meet his older brother not long after).

Chapter 4 tells the Romans that long before they came along God had also sought out Abraham and that Abraham had turned to the loving God through faith (as the Romans may also do; and as we may also do). Then chapter 5 makes the story even bigger: Adam was the father of everybody, but Abraham was the father of all in faith.

In the 1930s, Carl Sandburg wrote his famous biography of Abraham Lincoln, not just because Lincoln was an important and interesting figure but also because his story seemed to encompass the American story when our nation was discouraged. Lincoln had overcome adversity and brought us to unity; that was a comforting reminder at a time when we were hit by depression and torn by division.

In some such way (only more so), Paul wants to say that Adam's story is the story of us all. Adam struggled toward faith, fell into disobedience, and
was exiled from the garden to his own far country. "That sounds a lot like you and me," says Paul to the Romans. But even more (notice how often Paul uses language of "even more"), Jesus' story is the story of us all. As in Adam we all wandered away from God, so in Christ we can all come home. Christ is our great welcome and our great welcomer.

When I was an adolescent attending church camp, one exercise just before we went to sleep was for each camper in our cabin to recite his favorite Bible verse. I was always astounded, even then, at how often my fellow relatively happy pubescent peers recited Rom. 3:23: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." A fair amount of Lenten preaching, perhaps appropriately, concentrates on that theme. But here's the deal: We would not know we had fallen short of the glory of God if we did not know what the glory of God looks like. And the glory of God looks like God's reconciling of all creation through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, even in Lent we do not bewail our sins or repent our shortcomings without knowing that those sins have been, are, and are about to be forgiven and that in Jesus Christ the whole creation is being welcomed home to the glory of God.

February 24, 2002—Second Sunday in Lent
Rom. 4:1-5, 13-17; Gen. 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; John 3:1-17

What is annoying about the lectionary is its tendency to leave out the clues. Romans 4:6-12 contains essential clues to the mystery of faith laid out in the rest of the chapter. Of course, Rom. 4:6-8 presents a complicated quotation from the Psalms that Paul interprets in an odd way. And Rom. 4:9-12 has all that obscure archaic stuff about circumcision. But circumcision is what the whole argument of the chapter is about, and the psalm is where Paul found the claim he wanted to make.

Remember, we said that for Paul the one God has to be the God of all people and of the whole creation. And in Paul's time, what stood in the way of that claim was not political disagreements or arguments about the liturgy or gender conflicts. It was circumcision. Christians asked, "Do men have to get their foreskins cut off in order to be part of God's family?" Put more broadly, the question was this: Do Gentiles have to become Jews before they can become Christ's people? "No," says Paul. How do we know? Because, says the Apostle, Abraham was reckoned as one of God's own people (was welcomed entirely into the family) before he got circumcised.

Equally important to Paul is the quotation from the psalm (32). What ties
the psalm to Abraham is the use of the word reckon. “Reckoning” is the way God decides who is welcome in God’s family and who is not. For those who have faith, sins are forgiven and are not reckoned against them.

We misunderstand Paul if we think that he blithely comes up with theological affirmations and then runs through a concordance to find texts to support his claims. His claims about God’s reckoning the faithful as righteous came from his wrestling with the story of Abraham and the psalm of David (in the same way that his claims about Adam and Christ came from his reading of Genesis 2 and 3). Paul is a model for preachers, not only by his devotion to the gospel but also by his attention to the texts that provide the language and the stories by which to apply the gospel to human life.

If we leave the circumcision text out of our reading for this Sunday, we can easily forget that Paul’s claim is not just that faith brings us to God. It is also that in faith we come close to one another. Circumcision separates the circumcised from the uncircumcised, while faith brings us together. Each generation of Christian people needs to decide what external marks of piety or doctrine we are using to separate us from one another; and each generation needs to hear the call to faith as the disposition of the self toward God that can bring us together. In my six-decade pilgrimage as a Christian person I have seen race, political conviction, eucharistic practice, gender, and sexual orientation all used as markers to distinguish Christian from Christian. I have also seen the astonishing power of Christians to rediscover their heritage as children of Abraham, whose faith (not his distinctive practices) accepted the astonishing welcome of God.

Note how the passage ends, with the great affirmation of who this God is who welcomes Abraham in faith. This is the God who gives life to the dead and brings into existence the things that do not exist. Abraham will soon know this when he and Sarah, as good as dead for any reproductive purposes, give birth to Isaac, whose name means “laughter”—God’s great and gracious joke. Abraham will know this when out of sheer nothing a promise brings forth something—a beloved child. And, therefore, Abraham and Sarah’s astonishing story recalls and foreshadows the whole astonishing story of Paul’s gospel. Out of nothing God brought forth creation; now God redeems the whole creation through the one who out of death rose to new life.

In the midst of all the perfectly appropriate ways in which we mark ourselves for Lent, we must remember above all that God has marked us for God’s self through creating us and redeeming us in Christ our Lord.
March 3, 2002—Third Sunday in Lent
Rom. 5:1-11; Exod. 17:1-7; Psalm 95; John 4:5-42

Note that we're moving back and forth in Romans while we move straight ahead through Lent. The Bible teacher in me resents a bit the idea of moving in and out of Paul at chosen points, as if he were kind of a pool of piety into which one could dip one’s cup and come up with just the right refreshment for our daily thirst. He is a letter writer and a preacher, and there is a reason why he begins in one place (with his apostleship in 1:1) and ends at quite a different place, which is not so different at all (the obedience of believers and the glory of God in 15:26-27). And there is a reason why Rom. 5:1-11 came before Rom. 5:12-19, the lectionary’s epistle lesson for two weeks ago, before we scooted back to Romans 4 in order to scoot ahead to Romans 5 again. At any rate, it is worth remembering that our passage is a kind of swing between the story of Abraham and the story of Adam, and that both stories are also the story of Christ and the story of all those who are incorporated into Christ by faith.

The claim that in Jesus Christ we have access to grace is the reminder that Jesus is God’s great welcome. Unlike the picture in Revelation—for Paul, Jesus doesn’t stand at our door and knock—Jesus throws God’s door open wide and says, “Welcomel Come in.”

There is no simple sentimentality here, however, about what happens when we accept Christ’s invitation and enter God’s home to become part of the family. As with many of the associations that mean the most, membership in this family has its cost. From his own story, we know that Paul turned from being persecutor to being persecuted, suffering pain and imprisonment (see especially 2 Cor. 11:22-29). Indeed, we know that when Paul finally follows his own letter to Rome, it is not only the Romans who will welcome him but also imprisonment and, finally, martyrdom.

Christians do not hope because we are naïve about suffering. Christians hope because we know that sometimes suffering can produce endurance, and especially because we know that no suffering can separate us from God. Preachers should look not just to Paul but also to their congregations to see how suffering, endurance, character, and hope can come together. I think of two sisters, just past middle age. The younger and stronger willed of the two is dying of cancer; the older, quieter sister finds in herself the strength to sustain her sister through the long final days. I think of a father
whose son had gone a long way down the path toward the far country, who just got in his car and traveled after his son, grieving and hoping, never letting go. Think on those apostles of our own time and see the links that have been forged between churches across the centuries—ties created not only, and maybe not even so much, through our dogma as through our suffering, enduring, and hoping.

"While we still were sinners Christ died for us" (5:8)—God’s own son for the ungodly. "Sinners" and “ungodly” are the same people. They may or may not be the blatantly immoral and they may or may not be the loudly atheistic. They are the people who think that they can make it on their own—functional atheists—those for whom most days go by without deep commitment or astonishing hope. In Romans 8 Paul tells us that no power in heaven or on earth can separate us from the love of God; now he tells us that not even we in our ungodliness can separate ourselves from the love of God. “The ungodly” describes Paul before he saw the light so brightly and before we see the same light—though in a mirror, dimly. Thank God that Christ died for the ungodly, or we would be left out. As it is (as we keep saying), we are brought in; we are welcomed.

March 17, 2002—Fifth Sunday in Lent
Rom. 8:6-11; Ezek. 37:1-14; Psalm 130; John 11:1-45

Here is what has happened so far in Paul’s letter to the Romans. He has introduced himself as Christ’s slave and as an apostle, one sent to declare the good news. Then he has declared his good news. The good news starts with not-so-good news: everyone has sinned and fallen. Jews have sinned by disobeying the law of Moses. Gentiles have sinned by disobeying the law that should have been evident to them: There is one God only, and, therefore, only one proper object of worship. But the good news is that when we ran away from the one God, God reached out to us in Jesus Christ. We receive that reaching out through faith. Abraham shows us how we can live by faith; Jesus Christ shows us how we can live by obedience. This brings us to the end of Romans 5. Then Paul looks at some possible objections to his view that we come to God by faith in what God has done in Christ. At the end of chapter 7 he comes to the end of his objections, and in chapter 8 he pulls out the stops and returns to the mode of affirmation: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1).

Paul has more than one way of talking about what it means to be “in
Christ Jesus.” For one thing, it means to be “in faith.” For another thing (and this is the theme of much of Romans 8), it means to be “in the Spirit.”

For Paul, as for many other thinkers, there is an important distinction between flesh and spirit. But, for Paul, flesh and spirit aren’t so much different parts of the human being as they are different powers in the world. Flesh and spirit aren’t part of people; people are part of them. "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit," says Paul, "since the Spirit of Christ dwells in you" (8:9).

Rudolf Bultmann was by far the most influential student of the New Testament in the first half of the twentieth century. He stirred up considerable controversy by his claim that we needed to demythologize the New Testament for modern people. But one thing of which he persuaded most careful readers is that Paul’s worry about the flesh is not a worry about what we think of as bodily concerns—eating and drinking and sexuality. Paul’s worry about the flesh is worry about living selfishly. To live in the flesh is to be so self-absorbed that we have no time either for God or for others. To “live in the Spirit” is to be filled with Christ’s Spirit, so that we are empowered to turn to others.

Paul is telling the Roman Christians to live according to the Spirit, because they really are spiritual people, even though they may be tempted to fall back into fleshly selfishness from time to time. Last year, I watched two political commentators on television. One of them said something to the effect that in the United States poor people get what they deserve because they are losers. The other commentator was clearly annoyed, but he did not simply say, “You are dead wrong about that.” Instead, he replied, “You are a better person than that.” In Romans, as in all his letters, Paul is reminding his readers—and, through them, reminding us—that we are better persons than we sometimes look like: less selfish, less self-centered, less fooled by our own attempts at self-sufficiency. Christ’s Spirit lives in us; we are therefore spiritual people. Moreover, because the Spirit that dwells in us is the Spirit of Christ, this Spirit is in the resurrection business (see also 1 Cor. 15:45).

The conclusion to the whole passage contains a promise both for this life and for the life to come: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (8:11).

The promise of life to our mortal bodies means that even when life seems most deadly, dull, and hopeless (which is to say, most selfish, self-
centered and supposedly self-sufficient), God in Christ brings new life—life that begins and ends in God and that reaches out in love to others.

Years ago I knew a young boy who had largely had to fend for himself on the streets of our town. He lived for himself and looked out for himself, because there was no one else to do it for him. Because all his energy went into keeping himself together, he had no time or spirit left to turn to others.

When he got into considerable trouble with the law, he was finally placed in a foster home. And there he found a family that attended to him. Because he was genuinely cared for, he no longer needed to scramble constantly to care for himself.

I remember especially his second Christmas in that new family, when he began to be confident that security and love would be provided. For the first time in his life, Christmas took on the excitement of giving: secure in the love he had received, he could give love to others.

In Romans, life in the Spirit is life surrounded and sustained by the love of God. Because we no longer need to achieve our place in God's family, we are freed to return love to God and to share love with others. That is part of what Paul means when he promises us new life in the Spirit.

That promise also means that when life is done, the God who gave life to Jesus will give life to us through the Spirit. These verses look back to Romans 5. Adam brings death; Christ brings life. The verses look ahead to the end of chapter 8, which seems to me to be the climax and heart of the claims Paul makes in this letter of introduction. There he introduces not only himself but also his understanding of God's good news:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39).

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Endnotes
1. For a fuller discussion of why Paul wrote Romans, see David L. Bartlett, Romans (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995).
The history of the Bible continues to shift and change in its third millennium. Using the term the Bible implies the sacred texts of Christianity, in which the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) is renamed "Old Testament" and the Christian Scriptures are named "New Testament." Contemporary biblical exegesis in the academy recognizes that the "Old Testament" has a context all its own, as well as an important place in the Christian testamental merger. "The Bible" is thus full of books (Greek: biblos) that form the respective canons—the rule or measure of authoritative Scripture. Over these millennia there have been a multitude of readers and readings. The field of biblical studies has become more multidisciplinary and international, and finding one's place in these sometimes complicated conversations is a challenge. How does one locate a secure-enough space within these ever-shifting terrains of biblical readings and readers?

The past century began with the German and British focus on the historical critical method of biblical exegesis. Arising out of an Enlightenment concern for scientific investigation and the archeological finds of the 1800s, major movements in biblical studies included the Religiongeschichtliche Schule (History of Religions School) and the rise of form and source criticisms, all extending the search for origins and comparisons with and in the ancient world. My first academic study of the Bible began with this search for origins: I investigated authorship, date, historical context, archeological information, and ancient literary parallels and did word studies. In classes in college and seminary, I used color pencils to delineate the Four Source Hypothesis of the Synoptic Gospels and the J and P sources in the Flood narrative in Genesis. These historical critical methods remain the basics of biblical exegesis. I continue to teach these theories in my introductory classes at my college and in lay academies in churches. But over the past dozen years I have added newer methods to my courses in Hebrew Bible and New Testament. I find many of these
newer criticisms useful in involving my students more deeply in the act of reading biblical texts. In this article, I focus on the most accessible of the newer critical theories used in reading the Bible and show the possibilities these new conversations open to readers of the Bible.

What Are the More Recent Developments in Biblical Criticism?

There are several good general introductions to the more recent critical methods in biblical studies. The audiences of these books vary; but church educators will find that even the more complex readings are worth the effort, for they provide some exciting new insights into the biblical text. Most of the standard Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias (Harper's, Mercer, Anchor) have good synopses of some of the major critical theories. But a few books go into more detail on recent developments. They are:


Also, journals such as *Semeia* (from the Society of Biblical Literature) and *Biblical Interpretation* have thematic issues on specific critical methods. The different forms of analysis are numerous and include social-scientific criticisms (using sociology and cultural anthropology), rhetorical criticism (using categories of ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric), reader-response theory, semiotics, structural linguistics, structuralism, poststructuralism, autobiographical criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, ideological criticism, feminist and Womanist criticisms, gender criticism, masculinity studies, postcolonial theories, fantasy criticism, queer theory, race theory, historiog-
raphy (New Historicism), and cultural criticism. At first glance, the over­whelming number of new players in the discourse of biblical studies is a bit alarming. The range in these criticisms is wide, but here I will focus on the major and most approachable methodologies.

Social-Scientific Readings of the Bible
Insights from sociology and cultural anthropology have been important in examining, for example, questions about purity and danger (Mary Douglas); ritual (Claude Lèvi-Strauss); and sacrifice and scapegoating mechanisms (René Girard). These discourses between biblical studies and the social sciences have given insight into social roles and workings in the biblical world. A main debate is over the accusation of the "referential fallacy": that is, the claim that there exists a direct line from the biblical text to some "real" ancient practices or daily life. Can these interdisciplinary insights lead to clarity about the author and audience of a particular biblical book? While often a slippery slope toward claiming definite historical settings, these methods, one can claim, offer perceptions into the world of the text. Two books in particular offer useful introductions:

- Richard L. Rohrbaugh and Bruce Malina, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

Literary Criticism: From Narratology to Deconstruction
In the last third of the twentieth century, biblical scholars have been conversing with their colleagues in English and Comparative Literature departments. In narratology, the reader focuses not on the historical questions but on the basic elements of a story: plot, characters, point of view, irony, narrator, implied author, metaphor, and so on. Questions like the following are the main points of entry: Who is telling the story? Who are the reliable characters? What are the intertextual and intratextual references and how are they used? What, if anything, can we know about the audience from the cultural and literary references in the text? There is both the "said" and the "not-said" of the text, and narratology examines how readers fill in the "narrative gaps." The most accessible introductions to a narratological reading of biblical texts are these:


Conversation partners from literature departments who have focused their methodologies on biblical texts have played an important role in opening the interpretive process to new areas. Some of the main theorists include the following authors (look also at other works by each of them):


One of the main debates within literary criticism is to what extent the text can lead the reader to knowledge about the ancient contexts and communities. Most narratologists are not interested in excavating the true identity of the “author” or “audience” of a particular biblical text. They claim that the text deserves respect, both as a literary narrative and in the way it functions as narrative. Within these parameters are a variance of approaches to how much one as a reader may “play” with a text (and allow the text to play with the reader). Structuralist approaches examine the general system of linguistic usage (studies in the “signs” of culture-semiotics) or the underlying currents or deep structures in a text (from Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss). Poststructuralism (the later works of Roland Barthes) and deconstruction (from Jacques Derrida), on the other hand, are more open to the play of texts in culture. The “meaning” or “truth” of a biblical text is not something a reader can objectively discover. Rather, there are multiple truths and meanings that arise out of cultural experiences and performances of the Bible. Drawing from literary, cultural, and philosophical studies, deconstructive criticism can be complex. The best place to begin is with The Postmodern Bible and with these books:

Scholarship (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).


One issue that arises for church-based readers is the question of biblical authority. Do postmodern interpretations lead to total relativism, where any interpretation is allowable? Should there be parameters on biblical exegesis? What role does the Bible have in ethics? The immediate answers are no to relativism and yes to ethics. Postmodern criticisms are grounded in a concern for context—both contemporary and past. The uses and abuses of the Bible have to be remembered and confessed before any ethical dialogue in the future is possible. In Holocaust and genocide, imperialism and colonization, slavery and racism, (hetero)sexism and misogyny, and all other forms of abuse and oppression, the Bible and those who hold it as their sacred text have been present in many forms. Postmodern readings open up the hard conversations but hold out options for an ethical future.

**Liberation Hermeneutics and the Global Context of Biblical Studies**

No longer is biblical studies centered only in Europe (Germany and Great Britain, in particular) and in North America. Voices from scholars in the Third World are increasingly important. Even in North America there is a rising movement of "readings from below"—from the poor and/or disenfranchised. While the majority of introductory Bible textbooks ignore or marginalize liberation hermeneutics and the global conversation, the resources and empowerment of local justice movements grow. These movements link the Bible and politics—with issues of justice and human rights—and the role of the church as an actor for or against the oppressed. The concerns are highly volatile in denominational politics—from the ordination of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons to the role of missionaries in countries with totalitarian regimes. The Bible requires its readers to wrestle with these world problems, such as poverty and war. Neutrality is not an option for postmodern readers, many of whom are reading in the midst of oppressive contexts. Readers come to the text with their bodies (gendered, racial, ethnic, national, political, etc.) and specific experiences. The postmodern biblical discussions are nowadays more about difference than sameness. The following resources are ways into the different discussions.
Introductions to liberation hermeneutics in North America include:


On postcolonial theory, global perspectives, and the Bible, see:


On African-American biblical hermeneutics, see:


On Latino/a biblical hermeneutics, see:


On Native American biblical hermeneutics, see:


On general issues for postmodern biblical hermeneutics, see:

On feminist and Womanist approaches, see:


On queer criticism, see:


**Creating Conversations of Hope**

In many church contexts, the discussion of exegetical methods from nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century historical criticism causes enough difficult debate, so why add to tensions with these newer methods? The reason is this: Omitting these global and cultural discourses in biblical studies is a political move. The ethics of reading leads to an opening of the conversation to both a variety of readers and readings (exegetical and hermeneutical). The Bible exists in many forms in the world—print and other media—and there are an infinite number of rewritings and rereadings. These more current forms of criticism call us to make sense of the Bible in the world. The role of the biblical critic is to enter into these new worlds and participate in the often difficult (because of their sometimes esoteric nature or politics or both) dialogues. These postmodern readers can help create spaces where margins and center meet, where ministry is found.

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Preaching to Head and Heart, by Thomas R. Swears (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000)

For the preacher who, in the midst of the sermon, sees parishioners with glazed-over eyes or asleep and for the preacher who puzzles over enthusiasm in worship that does not manifest in changed lives, Swears offers help. His stated purpose in Preaching to Head and Heart is to insure that listeners experience preaching that has soul and passion, weight and substance, by challenging preachers to preach to the whole person. There is a tendency, he says, for preachers to focus either on the listener's head-giving information—or on the listener's heart—evoking an emotional response. To reach both, the preacher must become the leader of a journey through which congregants "see the extraordinary presence of God in the ordinary events of their lives" (11).

But how does preaching do this? Swears answers that one must give attention to oneself, to the listener, and to the text. Such preaching both gives the listener information and emerges from the preacher's soul to touch viscerally the soul of the listener, evoking what resides in the listener. For Swears, preaching is a craft rather than an art or science, and this craft is developed well when preaching is marked by awareness, intentionality, and integrity. The preacher must (1) possess integrity of "tongue and heart and hand," which comes through an authentic personal witness to the gospel in word and deed and results in the preacher's being taken seriously because authority is based on responsibility for rather than power over the listener; (2) engage the listener because the listener is taken seriously; and (3) prepare by listening to and engaging the text.

Swears asserts that the fundamental ingredient, if the heart and head are to be reached, is the action of the sermon; therefore, the preacher must be aware not only of what is being said but also of what he or she is doing. The action behind and beyond the words sets the sermon free in the listeners' lives. But Swears needs to explain more fully what he means and how preachers can appropriate this understanding in their preaching.
Swears speaks directly to preachers who are in pastoral relationship to their hearers. He does not address the question of how those who preach only occasionally can do so with integrity, intentionality, and authority.

He identifies the preacher as craftsman and the listener as apprentice but does not adequately explain these concepts; as a result, the concepts seem an oversimplification of the relationship.

Chapter 2, titled “The Person in the Pulpit,” articulates some concepts and cautions of which every preacher/pastor ought to be aware. The section on authority is a “must read.” It articulates clearly the nature and source of the preacher’s authority.

Swears includes helpful sermon examples from his own preaching. I was struck with the way in which he challenged me, even as I read the previous chapters, to mentally examine my own sermons, sermon preparation, and understandings of myself and of the listener. Evoking this self-examination is a great strength in this easily read offering to those who take seriously the effect of their preaching on the lives of the hearers.

Reviewed by Youtha C. Hardman-Cromwell. Hardman-Cromwell is Acting Director of the Office of Practice of Ministry and Mission at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC.

Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching, by Lucy L. Hogan and Robert Reid (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999)

In this book, Hogan and Reid remind us that preaching a sermon is “a rhetorical act” (20). They make the assumption that preaching is an art of connecting with the congregation rhetorically as well as theologically through an “intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end” (11). Proceeding from this assumption, the authors introduce students of preaching to a set of rhetorical skills based on the classical categories of rhetoric.

The first two chapters of the book provide background understanding of the major discourse of the book by explaining its goals and purposes and reviewing historically the relationship between Western rhetoric and homiletics. Chapter 3 concentrates on the preacher’s ethos—his or her “personal character and identity” (50). Chapter 4 explores how the preacher
can make use of pathos, meaning "the effect emotions and feelings have on an audience as well as the role those emotions play in persuasion" (71). Chapter 5 focuses on logos—"what we say in our sermon" (91)—in relation to invention; that is, the "process of deciding on a theme, thesis, topic, or central idea, and developing supporting material for the claim in relation to a particular audience and specific situation" (101). Chapter 6 introduces a variety of sermonic forms or arrangement theories based on four distinctive paradigms of preaching: the traditional, the kerygmatic, the transformative, and the postliberal. Chapter 7 explains the significant role of the style of speech in persuading the listener and introduces different styles of speech concerning the use of words, rhythms, patterns, cadences, etc. The last chapter concludes with a brief reminder of preaching as an art of rhetoric.

This book helps the reader map contemporary homiletical theories within the site of Western classical rhetoric and reconsiders the intimate relationship between preaching and rhetorical skills. Preachers who strive to improve their preaching rhetorically will benefit from the book, because they will be able to review their preaching, using the criteria of each category of rhetorical theories.

However, the book's value is questionable in the field of homiletics, because although the authors promise in the first chapter to write a book that will contribute to a constructive theology of preaching rather than simply "produce a 'how-to' homiletic rooted in rhetoric" (21), the book does not accomplish this goal sufficiently. It endeavors merely to connect some contemporary homiletical theories to classical rhetoric, which can be placed in certain "how-to" categories of rhetoric. Moreover, the content of the book, which begins with the ethos of the preacher and ends with style of speech, is based on the traditional speaker-oriented approach to preaching rather than on the listener-oriented approach, the latter being considered important theologically as well as methodologically in the field of contemporary homiletics. The authors simply revisit traditional Western rhetoric with some contemporary theories rather than provide an avenue to study preaching creatively from a new theological and rhetorical perspective.

Reviewed by Eunjoo Mary Kim. Kim is Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado.
Index to Volume 21, 2001

Editorial
Keeping Faith in a Postmodern World, Hendrik R. Pieterse, 5-6
Postmodernity, Spirituality, and the Spirit, Hendrik R. Pieterse, 115-16
Bringing Good News to the Poor, Hendrik R. Pieterse, 225-26
Science, Technology, and Faith, Hendrik R. Pieterse, 331-32

Issue Theme
Theological Reflection and Vital Piety in North American Methodism, Ann Taves, 7-19
Formation and Reflection: The Dynamics of Theology in Christian Life, Randy L. Maddox, 20-32
The Word of God and the People of God: Revitalizing Theological Discourse from the Bottom Up, Joerg Rieger, 33-44
The Imperative to Teach: Towards Vital Renewal of the Teaching Office, Patricia Farris, 45-57
Hispanic Lay Theology: Reflections on an Emerging Model, Saul Trinidad, 58-66
(Re)Turning to the Spirit: Theology in a World Post-Christendom, D. Lyle Dabney, 117-29
The Closet and the Class: Some Historical Perspectives on Methodist Spiritual Discernment, Margaret Jones, 130-42
The Spirit and the Mission of God, Henry H. Knight III, 143-55
The Spirit and the Holy Life, Bryan Stone, 156-68
God's Spirit and the Renewal of Creation: Living in Committed, Ambiguous Hope, Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, 169-81
Living Faithfully in the Global Economy, Rob van Drimmelen, 227-38
The New Moral Context of Economic Life, Max L. Stackhouse, 239-53
Being Human in the Market Society, M. Douglas Meeks, 254-65
When Generosity Is Not Enough, Ellen T. Charry, 266-78
The Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty: Its History and Future, Pamela D. Couture, 279-91
Technology and the Quest for a Just Society, Young Bin Moon, 349-61
The Human Genome Project: Ethical and Theological Reflections, Karen Lebacqz, 362-71
Cloning, Theology, and Ethics after Dolly: An Overview, Rebekah Miles, 372-87
Outside the Theme
The Reforming Bishop: John Wesley and the Sunday Service of 1784, Robert Webster, 67-80
The United Methodist Church in Eastern Europe: Challenges for Ministry, Heinrich Bolleter, 182-93
On Taking the Method Out of Methodism, Philip R. Meadows, 292-305
The Future of Black Theology, Dwight N. Hopkins, 400-08

The Church in Review
Doctrine and Identity, J. Michael Ripski and Jerry L. Walls, 81-87
The Authority of the Bible, Kenneth J. Collins and Sarah H. Lancaster, 194-200
Holy Communion, Mark W. Stamm and E. Byron Anderson, 306-12
Inclusiveness in The United Methodist Church, Josiah U. Young III and Joerg Rieger, 409-15

A Word on the Word
Lectionary Study
Following the Liberating God, Osvaldo D. Vena, 88-101
Jeremiah for Turbulent Times, Pamela J. Scalise, 201-10
Celebrating Emmanuel, Donald Senior, C. P., 313-21
Living God's Welcome, David L. Bartlett, 416-24

Issues In
Homiletics, Paul Scott Wilson, 102-07
Jesus Research and Scholarship, Mark Allan Powell, 211-17
Pastoral Care and Counseling, Carrie Doehring, 322-27
Biblical Exegesis and Interpretation, Tina Pippin, 425-31

Book Reviews
Reviewers
Hendrik R. Pieterse, Trinity, Community, and Power (Kingswood Books, 2000), 108-10
Jane Ellen Nickell, Doctrines and Discipline (Abingdon, 1999), 218-20
Robin Knowles Wallace, Worship Matters, 2 vols. (Discipleship Resources, 1999), 328-30
Youtha C. Hardman-Cromwell, Preaching to Head and Heart (Abingdon, 2000), 432-33
Eunjoo Mary Kim, Connecting with the Congregation (Abingdon, 1999), 433-34
In This Issue:

Issue Theme:
Science, Technology, and Faith
Science, Religion, and the Sacred Depths of Nature
John F. Haught
Technology and the Quest for a Just Society
Young Bin Moon
The Human Genome Project: Ethical and Theological Reflections
Karen Lebacqz
Cloning, Theology, and Ethics after Dolly: An Overview
Rebekah Miles
Science, Evolution, and Methodism: 1840–1925
W. Douglas Mills

Outside the Theme
The Future of Black Theology
Dwight N. Hopkins

The Church in Review
Inclusiveness in The United Methodist Church
Josiah U. Young III
Joerg Rieger

A Word on The Word
Lectionary Study
David L. Bartlett
Issues In: Biblical Exegesis and Interpretation
Tina Pippin

Book Reviews
Preaching to Head and Heart, Thomas R. Swears (Abingdon, 2000)
Reviewer: Youtha C. Hardman-Cromwell
Connecting with the Congregation, Lucy L. Hogan and Robert Reid (Abingdon, 1999)
Reviewer: Eunjoo Mary Kim