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

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Quarterly Review: A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry

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There is an ethical principle which, if not exactly identical with Christian stewardship of time and talent, is at least within hollering distance of it: each person should make the greatest social contribution he or she is capable of. John Wesley is often quoted, "Do all the good you can," and, in a prudential counterpoint to it, "Make all you can, save all you can."

I pose for you the other rungs of a cruel sorites. Economists make the methodological assumption that markets measure and equilibrate the practical and only objective values of things, including human efforts, although none, I suppose, would risk their necks to hold that money value is the true, ultimate measure of worth. But our culture throws aside such reserve and rushes to application: You get what you pay for. And every minister can remember hearing the converse applied in a very personal way. Preachers don’t make much, it is said, because they’re not worth much.

The conclusions of the sorites (I warned it would be cruel) is: If you can make more doing something else besides being a pastor or teacher or bureaucrat (whatever you now do as a minister), you should, as an ethical obligation. You should make your best possible social contribution, as measured by what you get paid for it.

There is no reader, I’m sure, who cannot readily detect and refute the sophism of this argument, thus baldly put. One of my colleagues said to me: "I’ve been in another occupation. I know what I can contribute, and what social recognition I can get in the form of money. If I thought for one minute that I’m only worth..."
what I am paid by my congregation, I couldn't look one of them in the eye—that's how guilty I would feel about my stewardship."

So ministers learn to think of themselves as subsidizing their own jobs, as expressing a kind of noblesse oblige. I have a good friend, a physician in a high-power specialty and a former medical faculty member, who (so far from disdaining ministry) is considering an early retirement followed by a second career as a full-time volunteer in the church, centering in his very considerable talents as a biblical scholar and teacher. He once asked me, "Don't you think you are, in some sense, being wasted?" The question was scarcely less painful for all that I know of his very brotherly intention in asking it. My answer had to be, "All ministers are wasted, in some sense." But it is a false sense, however much it is the prevailing one in our culture.

It is not unusual for the same family to produce a minister and a physician. They grow up together with like aspirations and ideals, pursue protracted education of comparable qualities and lengths; then the new physician goes to the head of the table, socially and economically, while the minister goes to somewhere near the foot. In terms of measurement by income, the physician can expect to make (or have recognized) a social contribution of six, ten, maybe twenty times that of the minister.

Really? Can ministers live with the thought, so mightily reinforced and brought home to them by the most potent symbols of our culture, that they are making only a tithe of the contribution they might have made, had they taken a different turn of the road?

Most ministers have long since made their peace, in some way, with the steady sinking of (relative) ministerial income and recognition, which, according to Lyle Schaller, has been going on for a couple of generations. I put aside rationalizing it as fate or necessity (hardly an appropriate part of the Christian's mental armamentarium), or punishment (surely if we deserve no better, our congregations do). Most of us find our way to a kind of pride that we, however involuntarily, are making a truly outsize economic contribution to the life of the church in terms of foregone income. Hold that good thought; the alternative to it is the truly distasteful conclusion that ministers are paid what they are worth.
Pride, however, does not straighten our children’s teeth or pay the tuition at the good schools they grow up hoping to attend. In time the minister, proud of vocation and willing to sacrifice for it, must acknowledge that the rewards of vocation are largely his (hers), and the sacrifices largely exacted, not always very willingly, from spouse and children.

If the doctor’s fees are high because the seller sets the price, maybe ministers’ salaries are low because the buyer sets the price. I don’t mean this as indictment of congregations. To be sure, some members have a simpleminded marketing orientation and will purchase the pastor’s services (like everything else) as cheaply as possible. But most of our people are fair; at least, we don’t mind calling upon them to be fair with respect to the poor, the racial minorities, the young, the old, the sick, the immigrant, and so on. Maybe we should squeak a little louder when we feel pinched, and trust and expect our people to be fair.

Ministers do not want, or need, the kind of one-sided power/dependency relationships by which members of other professions have been able to raise income to very high levels. We do need some restoration of balance; it is equally one-sided when some pastors have become so dependent that they are too demoralized even to protest.

The standard should be neither “all the traffic will bear,” nor “buy cheap.” (Enlightened management now knows you can buy too cheap.) Neither side should maximize advantage; we share, after all, a knowledge of the value of things gotten not by peering through the filthy window of the market, but by seeing with the clear eyes of faith. We shudder at the religious figure who grows rich, leading the poor; does it follow that there is virtue displayed when the minister lives grubbily, serving a congregation of the affluent? Most of the economic shamefacedness of ministers would settle into sweet repose if they could be assured of simply sharing somewhere near its middle, the prevailing standard of living of the parish. We would live in the family, like the rest of the family. Our economics would be that of the oikos of God. Good enough. Fie on the economists!

FRANK E. WIER
HOMILETICAL RESOURCES: GALATIANS,
A MARVELOUS BOOK FOR PREACHERS

LAURENCE A. WAGLEY AND EUGENE L. LOWRY

THE PROMISE AND PROBLEM OF LECTIONARY PREACHING

The trouble with lectionaries is they tempt preachers to begin at the wrong place. They tempt preachers to begin with conclusions.

It's understandable. If you were going to compile a lectionary, you would probably select all the great passages—the happy endings, the responses of praise, the climactic moments, the grand conclusions. That's what most of the lessons in the three-year lectionary are.

Preachers, as well as compilers of lectionaries, are attracted to these passages. Even before most preachers used lectionaries, these were the passages most often used.

How were most of us taught to use these passages? We were taught to use The Text: To read it with authority, to exegete it with care, to develop a topical sentence out of it, and to deliver the sermon in that order. That is a prescription for disaster.

The preacher wrestles with a text or a subject all week, comes to a happy insight, and rushes into the pulpit on Sunday with his or her conclusions. ("Let me tell you the secret of the relationship between Galatians and Acts 15!")

The preacher is puzzled when the congregation does not share the excitement. It is not the fault of the careful exegesis (some preachers give up the "drudgery" of exegesis too fast). Preachers are to be encouraged to come to some insight. The nature of the text and the ordering of the sermon are at fault.

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Lections in these homiletical resources are taken from Seasons of the Gospel: Resources for the Christian Year (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979).
The preacher has gone through a lengthy process of study and personal reflection before delivering the sermon—or so we hope. The congregation has not. Members of the congregation have not had the opportunity to study the text or wrestle with the issue. They don’t know the situation which either the biblical author or the contemporary preacher is addressing. Questions are being answered they had not thought to ask.

Our texts and topics are introduced too early in the sermon. Before the listeners can understand the conclusion which the lection supplies, they must know the historical situation, they must enter into the context and view the passage with the hurt, puzzlement, and confusion into which the word was introduced originally. Before members of the modern congregation can hear the preacher’s conclusion about a subject, they must be enabled to identify with the issue, to recognize the crunch it produces in their own lives, and to cry out for deliverance from very real agony.

Most lectionary selections and most of our topical sentences are conclusions rather than introductions. They should be included in sermons near the end, rather than at the beginning. For sermonic use, the preacher should back off several verses and in some cases several chapters to discover what the issue was—to enter into the agony and confusion of the original audience. Once that is identified, the preacher can then begin to search where this modern congregation is experiencing a similar agony. Only after members of the congregation have experienced the problem in their own lives can the lectionary answer speak with anything approaching the original power.

Often the modern preacher will discover that the text, which has become placid and predictable, was experienced by the first audience as a startling new discovery. If the biblical Word is to be really recovered, it must be treated dramatically so that once again when it is finally introduced it again comes as an exciting reversal of conventional wisdom.

Paul’s opening words to the churches of Galatia must have exploded in the ears of the first hearers, leaving the local reader responding with perspiration rather than inspiration. It’s doubtful if many modern preachers will be able or willing to get for them such a hearing. It would probably take a local issue
about which there was heated opinion. The preacher might make the predictable speech: Let's be tolerant and open-minded about this, at all costs maintaining an attitude of acceptance so as to promote peace in the community. After all, I'm sure we are all equally sincere in our hearts. That viewpoint, says Paul (not once but twice) should damn you to hell!

Paul was convinced that the gospel of Jesus Christ was at stake in Galatia. He didn't speak softly.

Galatians is a marvelous book for preachers. It was written in the middle of a church fight. The hurt feelings, the perplexing issues, and the tearing agony are apparent immediately. To determine the depth of this conflict is not just an exercise in historical criticism. It is to discover the situation in which the gospel always must be proclaimed. However, for the preacher to be limited to a few verses near the end of the book (as on the sixth Sunday after Pentecost) is to miss the drama and the agony and to settle for a nice little homily on "Not Letting Your Physical Desires Control Your Life (Gal. 5:13-25)." Such a sermon reaches a predictable conclusion and gives the congregation practical advice rather than enabling them to hear the gospel. The gospel is most often heard while dealing with pressing personal problems or in the middle of wracking controversy.

Therefore, to preach on any lection in Galatians is to preach on the whole book—and to begin with the first ten verses. We will return to that later. Begin with the terrible dilemma—the broken relationships, the betrayal, the society that was threatening to fly apart. See what modern situations there are that look similar. Help the congregation experience that, until they are crying out in pain for some gospel word. Then, and only then, give them that word in such a form that it will be recognized as the radical word it is.

Let's see how this might work. Look forward to the second lection from the book of Galatians rather than the first because it illustrates our thesis so well. (See the exegesis of Gal. 1:11-24.) This is an example of a text that is not the place to begin. It is all argument and conclusion. The question or issue to which it replies is in the previous Sunday's lesson. If the first ten verses of Paul's Letter to the Galatians had been lost in transmission, the Galatians would have wondered what Paul was ranting
about. On this Sunday many modern congregations will have similar bewilderment.

Today's English Version begins the lesson, "Let me tell you..." Unfortunately, that's exactly the way many preachers begin their sermons. Paul continues, saying his gospel was given to him by Jesus Christ himself. For anyone who has read the first ten verses, this claiming is appropriate. It is highly inappropriate, however, for the minister on an average Sunday morning who wants to call in the ultimate authority at the beginning in order to impress or intimidate.

But wait. It gets worse. The minister who takes this kind of deductive text for a model often tries to impress the congregation at the beginning, as Paul does here, with his authority. Consider the experience, the degrees earned, the recognition given by others; in short, this is obviously a person who has been chosen by God and therefore the people had better listen! (Most modern preachers are more subtle in saying this than Paul was.)

Viewed in isolation, that's what this lesson is about. Most lessons in the lectionary tend themselves to similar treatment because the verses chosen can give only part (a concluding part) of the situation.

It's appalling how many sermons "stick to the text" and give answers that not only ignore the original question, but that are wrenched out of context and applied to whatever situation the minister chooses. This lection could spawn a great sermon, but the preacher would have to look at the context provided by the first ten verses of the chapter. We will be returning to that first lection again and again; it raises the issues that the rest of the book must address.

OVERVIEW OF THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

A. Paul's Problem in Galatia

The Letter to the Galatians should be a favorite for the preacher because it was written while anger was boiling and issues were hot.

The conflict was between Paul and Judaizers. Galatians
chapters 1 and 2 give Paul's perspective. (Acts 15 provides another perspective.) Paul had taken a bold new step, (apparently supported by the church at Antioch). He had founded churches of Gentile believers and had assured them that they were saved by grace through faith and that therefore circumcision was unnecessary. The Jerusalem view was that the old ties to Judaism, including circumcision, should be maintained. A party of Judaizers representing the connection to Judaism became so adamant that they not only pressed their argument in Jerusalem, but they also sent emissaries to churches among the Gentiles which Paul had founded. They not only tried to persuade the people of these churches that they should complete their commitment by complying with Jewish requirements, they also sought to discredit Paul. They apparently had some success among the churches of Galatia.

Paul was unable to visit the churches of Galatia, so he quickly wrote the epistle and sent it before he had time to reconsider or modify his abrupt language. If the churches of Galatia thought it was a minor matter of trying to satisfy everyone and so uphold the very highest standards, Paul set them straight. They had, Paul said, betrayed the gospel! They were in danger of giving up a gospel of free grace for a legal system of works. They would subvert the gospel of Jesus Christ and abort Paul's mission. In combating this heresy, Paul was forced to fight a related skirmish in defense of his own credibility. His opponents must have claimed that he was no real apostle but a liar and charlatan. Paul introduced a good deal of personal material in his defense.

Much of the letter is a closely reasoned, persuasive sequence of argument. The order is often interrupted, and Paul often indulges in inflammatory speech, but in general the letter assumes a rhetorical position in which there is a people to be convinced. The people and Paul are opponents. However, there is enough emotion here to show the letter to be more than a rational construction. There is another dimension of persuasion. Paul calls down a curse (1:8, 9) in the beginning and issues a blessing (6:16) at the end. Paul was threatening and cajoling the Galatians with the very curse and blessing of God as they faced this issue. The power of God is called into action as this epistle is read to the people of Galatia.
Paul's attitude toward the Galatians is also of interest to the minister. Paul does not assume a stiff, formal role with the Galatians. He does not take a stereotyped "ministerial" stance. Paul is a whole person, willing to express honest emotions, as he addresses the Galatians. He presents himself without restraint and gives expression to the whole range of human emotion.

"I am astonished," he says in the beginning. This is authentic amazement, not a mock stance taken for polemical purposes. Paul's self-defense in chapters 1 and 2 is delivered with heat as well as light. At the beginning of the third chapter, Paul suddenly attacks the Galatians. "O foolish Galatians!" As he has threatened them with a curse, now he accuses them of having come under the spell of an evil eye. Finally, in chapter 4, Paul pleads with the Galatians like a parent pleading with a wayward child. As he has shown his anger, now he expresses his loving concern and affectionate puzzlement. In the last chapter, Paul issues a solemn, serious warning.

B. The Threat to the Judaizers

Opposition to Paul must have been widespread, for not only does Paul address it as a problem at Galatia, but Galatians and Acts both cite this opposition at Antioch and Jerusalem. It is difficult to describe in detail, because Paul refuses to advertise his opponents. But his attitude toward the opposition is not masked. The defense Paul makes in the face of opposition does not indicate the general differing kinds of opposition represented by various groups. There may have been two parties of conservative Jewish Christians who came out from Jerusalem: one representing James, and the conservative group before which Paul privately presented his gospel (2:2). Another, even more conservative group, "of false brethren secretly brought in" (2:4), may have been the group that Paul attacks as subverting his whole mission. In addition, there may have been both a conservative and a liberal party at Galatia itself in opposition to Paul: one supporting the Judaizers, and the other charging that Paul was too much under the influence of Jerusalem.

A clue to persuasive preaching is to understand the opposition—and to make the opposition attractive enough that
people recognize themselves in it. Paul does not have time or inclination to describe the opposition. The picture he gives of opponents is so negative that no modern congregation is tempted to identify themselves with that opposition. Therefore modern preachers tend to set up straw opposition, and modern congregations feel smugly, “We’re certainly not like that.” On the basis of internal evidence and some speculation, it is possible to construct a reasonable and attractive opposition.

Paul, they said, was not one of the original apostles (true). He was changing the terms of admission into the movement that had been defined by the original apostles (true). The gospel Paul preached was different from that preached by the original disciples (there were some significant differences). Paul, contrary to the teaching of Jesus, was discarding the Torah (a possible conclusion). In fact, they said Paul was trying to construct an easy way of cheap admission into salvation (the Judaizers were not the last to make this charge against free grace). Finally, Paul would mislead people into remaining in a sinful condition, vainly trusting in Christian grace without real reform or obedience to the law (that remains an issue in the modern church).

There may have been a party on the other side, for Paul seems to feel it necessary also to defend himself against charges of being subservient to the apostles at Jerusalem.

Generally the Judaizers must have advocated:

(a) The practice of circumcision and other cultic practices such as “keeping seasons” as necessary to salvation (see 6:12-17 and 4:10).

(b) Acceptance of the Torah (see Paul’s references to the law and its purpose, such as 3:19-25).

(c) A refusal of Paul’s ministry. There were various reasons for this, but the central charge against Paul seems to have been that he was not an apostle. A more generalized charge was that Paul was breaking down the requirements of the law and making religion too easy (“seeking the favor of men”).

The opposition must have been insisting that for a person to become a Christian that person must first become a Jew. That meant the convert must at least be circumcised, keep certain
dietary laws, and obey the Torah. For Paul, this was a betrayal of the gospel. It meant that a person must work out salvation—that salvation was dependent on a person's ability to keep the law. Even if this were possible, Paul insisted, it would be a kind of bondage. No, Paul says, "no one is justified before God by the law" (3:11). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law" (3:13). The cross of Jesus Christ is given major emphasis in this epistle. It is God's act for our salvation, and it is pure grace. "I do not nullify the grace of God," Paul says, "for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (2:21). The role of the law, according to Paul, is to show us what sin is. In our attempt to keep the law we will discover our ability, our weakness, and will be driven to seek salvation elsewhere. In this way, the law brings us to grace.

So, out of a pastoral encounter in an obscure corner of the world, the agenda was set for the greatest encounter ever to take place between religions. Law or grace—on this issue Paul could not compromise. It became the great issue of his ministry. It was not a new issue, for Jesus had addressed the relationship between the new movement and the old religion; but it is addressed here with exceptional clarity. Played out here on a small stage, it is given a statement with universal significance. It was not to be the last time that leaders of the church would marshal convincing arguments for conferring on some group the status of second-class membership.

C. Relation to the Book of Acts

Hardly anyone questions that this is an authentic Pauline epistle. There is some question as to who the Galatians were: unknown congregations in northern Galatia or congregations such as Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra in southern Galatia (mentioned in Acts 13–14). This question of who were the recipients also involves the dating of the letter. Central to these issues of first readers and date is the relationship between Galatians and Acts. Biblical scholars provide a range of options in relating Galatians and Acts. The visit to Jerusalem described by Paul in Galatians, chapter 2, has been related to three different references in Acts:
1. Acts 11. This account mentions that Barnabas and Saul were sent by the church at Antioch, where they had been teaching for a year, to Jerusalem with money for the church elders there. Earlier in the eleventh chapter, Peter has dealt with some objections by Judaizers. There is no mention of any meeting or council in Acts, or of any consideration of the Gentile mission. If Paul in Galatians is referring to this visit, Galatians was written very early.

2. Acts 15. This is the most obvious connection and the one most favored by exegetes. The same persons are mentioned in both accounts, and there are similar conclusions in each. However, there are serious problems involved in associating these two accounts. Paul seems to describe private conversations, whereas Acts 15 presents a public council. Paul says this is his second visit to Jerusalem; Acts would make this his third visit.

A more important discrepancy is in the reporting of the conclusions of the meeting. Both accounts agree that Paul's ministry was affirmed, but the Acts 15 account includes a rather strong accommodation to the Judaizers. Acts is more politically compromising in that it wants "to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (vs. 28). The "necessary things," however, are Jewish dietary laws which would have been unacceptable to Paul and are not mentioned by him in Galatians. They are listed twice in Acts 15: "that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled." The Jerusalem letter as reported in Acts 15 did not require that Gentile Christians be circumcised. If Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians on his way to this council reported in Acts 15, it is his first letter and probably addressed to the congregations in the broad Roman province of Galatia mentioned in Acts 13-15. The Jerusalem Council is usually dated A.D. 49.

3. Acts 16:6 and 18:23. A third option is a letter written later following subsequent visits to Galatia (Acts 16:6 and 18:23) and discussions in Jerusalem not reported in Acts. The appeal of this option is that it allows a later dating of Galatians—at about time of the writing of Romans and the letters to the church at Corinth. There are marked similarities among these letters, and much of
the argument of Galatians can be filled out by references to Romans. This option would date Galatians about A.D. 55-56.

Some negatives: Galatians is not related neatly to any of the references in Acts, and dating on the basis of interrelationship is problematic. Paul's missionary journeys as outlined in Acts are secondhand accounts. The Acts material cannot be harmonized with Galatians. Acts fails to mention events of central importance in Galatians, and it may be that whole journeys are omitted.

There is general agreement that the issues of Galatians and of Acts 15 are similar. An appreciation of the difference in perspective of the writers would draw these accounts closer to a common historical happening. Acts is attempting a political accommodation of two major parties in the early church. The author of Acts has a tendency to give something to both sides. Whether dietary laws were required of Gentile churches, circumcision clearly was not. Paul, on the other hand, is hardly an objective, disinterested reporter. He claims a higher authority than the elders at Jerusalem and wanted to assure the Galatians that "we did not give in to them for a minute" (2:5 TEV). The only requirement that Paul heard in Jerusalem was to "remember the poor" (2:10).

D. The Central Issue

It is clear that the issue is the nature of the Gentile mission and the confrontation between law and grace. Paul is encouraged in his mission, and the circumcision of Gentile converts is not required. Because of the similarities of issues, basic principles, and results, there seems to be no good reason not to believe that Galatians and Acts 15 are reporting the same meeting from very different perspectives. If the Jerusalem Council had already reached a decision on this issue, Paul would have been likely to have mentioned it to the Galatians.

For the modern preacher, delineation of the issue is more important than determining whether the letter was written during the first or third missionary journey. If you intended to use the material in Acts 15, you would do well to accept the earlier dating (A.D. 48-49). Galatians does seem to reflect an early
stage in Paul's exercise of leadership in the church. There is some lack of theological development in Galatians, compared with that which occurs later in Romans. The so-called north or south Galatian hypothesis must remain open, however, for internal evidence in Galatians is lacking and gives no indication of the boundaries of the Galatian territory.

If it seems impossible for you that Paul may have forgotten an earlier trip to Jerusalem (that resulted in confusion of trips as numbered by Galatians and Acts), that the author of Acts may have overemphasized dietary laws, or that the two writers could have seen things so differently, then you must seek other solutions.

The preacher needs a sense of the whole book in order to preach on any part. The following overview is designed to give such a holistic view (the typographical symbols mark lectionary lessons):

- 1:1-10 Lesson for the second Sunday after Pentecost (of Year C). This lesson provides the salutation and outlines the basic issue.

- 1:11-24 Lesson for the third Sunday after Pentecost. This begins Paul's personal defense, and gives his conversion, visit to Jerusalem, and first missionary preaching.

- 2:1-10 This reports a second visit to Jerusalem and reports the recognition of Paul's apostleship by the apostles in Jerusalem.

- 2:11-21 Lesson for the fourth Sunday after Pentecost. Paul describes the conflict at Antioch and gives his affirmation of faith.

- 3:1-5 Here is direct confrontation and the citing of the Galatians' own experience.

- 3:6-22 This continues Paul's defense and develops it on the basis of Abraham's faith and the practice of law in general.
HOMILETICAL RESOURCES

• 3:23-29 Lesson for the fifth Sunday after Pentecost. Describes the function of the Torah, and how the law is an interim provision to bring us to Christ.

4:1-11 The end of slavery and the coming of spiritual maturity is described by Paul.

4:12-20 Paul makes his personal appeal to his spiritual children.

4:21-31 Paul provides an allegory based on the story of Sarah and Hagar.

5:1-12 Paul issues a warning against returning to the slavery of the law.

• 5:1, 13-25 Lesson for the sixth Sunday after Pentecost. A warning is given against the dangers of the flesh, and an exhortation is provided to live as heirs of God.

• 6:1-18 Lesson for the seventh Sunday after Pentecost. The lesson urges the practice of love within the household of faith and gives a postscript reemphasizing the main points of the epistle.

With this background, we can turn to the several lections in the Letter to the Galatians. Paul, in the first lesson, leaps directly into the middle of the issue.

MAY 29, 1983, SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lection: Galatians 1:1-10.

The stakes are high and Paul is so angry that the second word (in the Greek) blurs out the decisive issue:

"Paul, apostle. . . ."

An apostle? Is Paul really an apostle?

Already sensitive to the response, Paul immediately adds an
explanation that clearly states the issue before the first greeting is completely spoken:

"... not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ...

And there it is. Paul had come to them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. There followed others who disputed both Paul’s credibility and Paul’s gospel. Now Paul raises the stakes. It is not Paul’s credibility or gospel that is questioned, but that of Jesus Christ!

Paul continues with a formal greeting, but it is more significant what is not said in that greeting than what is said. He is in no mood for his typical diplomatic note of thanksgiving, such as Rom. 1:8, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you,” or I Cor. 1:4, “I give thanks to God always for you...” In fact, he is not thankful, because both the core of the good news—the work of Christ—and his own integrity hang in the balance. The characteristic reminder of the unity shared by all God’s people is also missing (I Cor. 1:2, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:2). The union has been broken and the church of Jesus Christ is threatening to split apart. Paul does not even pause at the beginning as he often does to mention his prayers for them. Certainly there is nothing like the intimate note to the church at Philippi: “every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy” (1:4 TEV). There was no joy in Paul’s heart when he wrote the letter to the church at Galatia.

To read Galatians is like listening to one end of a heated long-distance telephone call: the opening rebuttal makes certain the position at the other end. Before the second breath is taken, Paul denies that his authority comes either from a human source or a human channel. He declares an independent apostleship and thus distinguishes himself both from the false apostle he is opposing and also the original twelve—whose authority is centered in Jerusalem.

After attacking both the motive and the position of his detractors, he provides a further clue to their charge against him as he asks rhetorically: “Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men?” (Gal. 1:10).

From the opening assertion of vs. 1 and the rhetorical
question of vs. 10, we can quickly infer the position of his opponents, who apparently followed him into Galatia and sought to undercut his proclamation of the gospel. Whatever else they did or said, they challenged his version of the good news, utilizing such tactics as declaring that: (1) Paul was not a bona fide first-class apostle of the faith, (2) at best he was under the direction of the Jerusalem authorities, and (3) at worst he was a crowd-pleaser. As a consequence, they asserted, Paul was not to be trusted—nor was his message the real gospel. Later in his letter he will explain the decisive issue of faith at stake: namely, whether a new convert needs to become a Jew following the Mosaic law in order to be a first-class Christian.

Paul confronts the Galatians immediately, but it is more with amazement than anger. "I am astonished to find you turning so quickly away from him who called you by grace . . . " (1:6 NEB).

Paul uses strong, political language in describing the unfolding tragedy. Desertion (vs. 6), agitation (vs. 7), perversion (vs. 7), all give color to the kind of political climate where partisan politics caused shifting of loyalties, the unsettling of commitments, and the overturning and polluting of God's intention.

It all comes to a clashing denunciation in verses 8-9, where Paul calls down a curse on any who preach a false gospel, and then repeats the curse.

From a distance of twenty centuries, the personal charges against Paul must appear ludicrous, but were it not for our tendency to harmonize the New Testament accounts, we could find clear references to support their interpretation (some written as long as thirty to forty years later). Compare, for example, Paul's account of his life following his Damascus Road experience as provided in this letter (1:11-2:10) with the quite different rendering found in Acts 9 and following. Note too, that as one reads Acts, Paul seems always to be going wherever the Jerusalem church sends him—even to the point of being a carrier of their messages for others. He even engages in a second-mile tribute to the law in Acts 21—in order to set at rest the "rumor" that somewhere he might have suggested that one did not need the law of Moses. Observe also that in Acts the Christians
typically worship in Jewish settings, unlike the worship settings common to his writings.

Given the charges against him, Paul lodged a countercharge—namely, that those who followed him into Galatia brought a "different gospel" (Gal. 1:6), which, since there is only one true gospel, is not really the gospel at all. Undergirding the charge is the supporting belief that they (the Judaizers) are not just misled or off the mark slightly, but actually maliciously willed, and "want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:7).

The result for the Galatians, as Paul views the matter, is a major tragedy which is happening so quickly that he is amazed (Gal. 1:6), and so serious he can refer to it only as desertion—a willful change of allegiance from one side to another! That Paul sees any hope at all of recovery is manifested at this point only in the fact that he uses the present tense rather than past: "that you are so quickly deserting" (1:6). His dismay toward the situation, and in particular toward the presumed motives of the opposition, is such that he reaches for the strongest language possible: "If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed" (1:9). Later in his letter he will express hope that "those who unsettle you would mutilate themselves" (5:12).

With Paul fighting fire with fire in this letter, we should immediately ask: Will it preach? That is, how do we remain true to the text and true to our preaching task, pastorally conceived? It is not often that Paul used this kind of sledgehammer communication strategy—nor should it be for us! The one-sided pulpit debate ought not to be our model or norm. Yet the issue raised here is clearly appropriate for our times.

But anger is not the first homiletical temptation to be encountered in the use of this lection. Providing answers for unasked questions is the first. A topical rendering of Paul's theme of the work of Christ, the one "who gave himself for our sins to deliver us" (Gal. 1:4) would be homiletically fatal. Our first step is to note that the issue is a past given, assumed by the text. We are picking up an argument in the middle of the process. Hence, some means will be necessary to assist the hearers of the sermon to get on board. A narrative form would be particularly appropriate—one which begins with Paul's anger, not his conclusions. His anger will provide enough
homiletical torque to make possible a flashback to the source of the dispute, which in turn will provide the momentum toward the resolution of Paul's answer.

What is particularly helpful in the use of a lection like this is that a prophetic sermon can ensue with the biblical characters taking the heat rather than the preacher. Note, for example, that the issue Paul raises about the faith and its perversion has its corollaries in our time. Today, numerous individuals and groups wish to lure the allegiance of the flock of Christ. They, too, generally insert some kind of legalism which—as they tell it—becomes utterly necessary in addition to faith. One must have this kind of experience or that kind of view—or one is outside the faith, or at least second-class. Often they too will charge others with being crowd-pleasers—even offering cheap grace. The church needs to answer these charges, and Paul's Letter to the Galatians is a fitting vehicle for the task.

Moreover, in most cases it is more appropriate for the preacher to allow Paul his righteous anger and rebuke than to presume one's own pulpit righteousness. Better to hear this text with the congregation than to throw it at the congregation. Besides, Paul’s credentials are impressive!

JUNE 5, 1983, THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lection: Galatians 1:11-24

Have you ever been caught? Caught in such a crunch that you were no longer credible? Have you ever looked around at the committee and found all with their arms folded? They looked straight at you, and one of them spoke for all, “You’re a liar”?

Maybe it was the family council that had you on the hot seat. We’ve all been there. The preacher’s job at the beginning of this sermon is to help people remember and relive that time when the people who mattered no longer believed you or believed in you. That is a caughtness big enough for a sermon. Don’t let it be a little white lie. Paul’s whole reputation was riding on this one. It was at the beginning of his ministry, and if he didn’t turn this situation around he would not be believed in any city around the Mediterranean.
Paul was defending his right to preach and to minister. He had to cite his credentials as an apostle. He was forced to tell his own story. Once he had "persecuted the church of God" (vs. 13). He had been turned around by the direct intervention of God and given the message which he had preached faithfully to the Galatians. Paul was forced by the climate of doubt at Galatia to swear that he was telling the truth (vs. 20).

Have you been there? Can you dare talk about that to this congregation? Out in that congregation a lot of relationships are coming apart because of lack of credibility. If the minister understands, if the minister has been there and is going to talk about that today, then a lot of people will hang on every word.

It is a circumstance in which the gospel can be heard. It also has at its heart the kind of reversal that reveals it as an authentic gospel. The people will expect Paul under these circumstances to reach back and ground his authority. Suddenly, in the middle of what we would turn into a review of our credits, it becomes clear that Paul is not reciting his own accomplishments. Instead he tells them how wrong he was. He admits the gospel is not his, and if he should preach any other gospel then he should be damned. Suddenly we see that Paul claims a credibility grounded not in his endeavor but in God's initiative!

There are implications here for reconciliation. There are also implications for courageous witnessing heedless of the cost. Implications may be as various as there are persons in the congregation—particularly if you give this sermon a narrative shape. This lection certainly can bring people to a hearing of the gospel, but the people must be delivered into a crisis such as Paul faced before their lives are open to it.

In the process of preparing this sermon, the preacher may also be delivered into a crisis. This lesson may have an unexpected personal impact. The two things most important to a preacher are at issue here: (1) the preacher's theology and (2) the preacher's credibility. When the preacher loses these, the preacher loses everything. To be attacked at these points is to be attacked in the citadel. That's a time when many preachers begin looking for somewhere else to go.

Paul did not give up so easily. All his instincts told him to go to Galatia and fight it out. He could not do so, but he would not let
the churches of Galatia slip away. Even if he could only write a letter to them, he would turn it into a major confrontation. Churches have been rocked by his words ever since. Paul didn’t avoid the confrontation. He probably knew that whenever the preacher speaks words that have personal impact people will ask: Is it true? Can we believe it?

(Thus is illustrated, by this lection, our understanding of the dangers and possibilities of lectionary preaching.)

JUNE 12, 1983, FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lection: Galatians 2:11-21

Paul is bringing his personal defense to a climax and is ready to launch into the central theological argument. He uses a story both to cap his prior point and to launch the next. (This use of story as transition and not simply illustration is worthy of note as a homiletical model.)

We pick up the narrative thread of the text as Paul recalls the story of his conflict with Cephas at Antioch. We are given a narrative (Peter/Paul at Antioch) within a narrative (the Galatian story), and both narratives demonstrate how easy it is to slide back into a religion of works even after tasting the liberty of the gospel of grace. What has fallen into the lectionary crack, since the last pericope, is Paul’s continuing insistence on his independence from Jerusalem’s authority or direction. It is important to note that he is not claiming separation from Jerusalem—as though they had no connection with one another, or were distinct movements, or had no interdependence with one another. The church is one. What he has been claiming is that he did not receive orders from Jerusalem—nor from the false brethren: “to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you” (Gal. 2:5), nor from “those who were reputed to be something,” who “added nothing to me” (2:6). Only after fourteen years did he even visit the brethren (except Cephas and James, whom he had seen earlier).

Now the Galatian accusations against him bring to mind a further point. Not only had he not been taking orders as a
second-rate follower, he had had to confront Cephas—indeed "opposed him to his face" (Gal. 2:11). Moreover, the conflict between them centered precisely on the present Galatian conflict, namely, whether Christians were required to follow the Mosaic law. But most impressively, the conflict arose not because Cephas and Paul were in basic disagreement, but rather because Cephas under pressure did not remain consistent with their mutual view.

Prior to the arrival of the "men . . . from James" (Gal. 2:12) Cephas had been eating with the Gentiles. One can sense the impressive unity of Christians both Jew and Gentile as they broke bread together. Some have suggested that the Jerusalem conference had been an eye-opener for Peter, manifested now by this unity. This is all the more noteworthy when one recalls that the Jews considered a meal as God's "table"—with the participants not only giving thanks and observing all the dietary regulations (of course), but also conversing about the Torah. It was indeed a religious rite bound up with the Jewish legal system. To eat with "pagans" would be to become a pagan, and spiritually contaminated. Peter's eating with the Gentiles at Antioch had to represent a remarkable theological and spiritual decision.

Now, notice the rising crescendo of Paul's argument. Not only did Paul not submit to Jerusalem authority, but on this very crucial issue Peter and Paul are in substantial agreement. (Surely a happy coincidence for his strategy now!) But Paul now recalls that "certain men came from James" and their presence caused Cephas to fear "the circumcision party" (Gal. 2:12) and hence to separate himself from the Gentile Christians. Perhaps Cephas considered the decision a prudent practical concession which would not upset things theologically, but Paul knew that at the very moment Cephas moved from one table to the other the significance of the work of Christ was undermined. Now there is not only body of Christ, but two groups—one "in" and one "out," or one superior and the other inferior.

The problem has persisted on to our day, and still the more rigorous and "disciplined" position is more likely to be regarded as right. For example, most ministers have found themselves, like Peter, happy to join in some community or social activity
until some "Bible-believing Christian" calls the whole practice in question. The questioning is generally given a deferential hearing. Why? Why, in fact, do ministers often reverse their practice under this pressure? Perhaps it is because we too have a high regard for law—surely if it is religious it must have some abstentions, some negations, and some strenuous endeavor connected with it. At Jerusalem, these people came from James. Our correctors also will speak with authority, and will insist their practice is the one true expression of Christianity.

Peter's move, followed by others (including even Barnabas), could only be labeled by Paul as insincere. Their failure to be "straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:14) drew Paul's letter. (Again, Paul's strategy—this time by the use of "overhearing"—is important for preachers to note. In this instance it is difficult really to discern just when Paul's message ceases to use Antioch as the referent and shifts to Galatia.)

Paul's theological explication here is a classic example of "action-reflection" methodology (another good homiletical model): working inductively from experience to generalization. We Jews, Paul asserts, have good reason to know, better than the Gentiles ever could, the impossibility of being justified "by works of the law" (Gal. 2:16). Rather, we are justified "through faith in Jesus Christ" (2:16). It results logically that if to abandon our legal proscription (that is, to eat with Gentiles) is to enter sin, then "Christ . . . is an agent of sin" (Gal. 2:17). This obviously cannot be, Paul asserts—and who could disagree, whether in Antioch, Galatia, or Peoria? His argument results here in his strongest critique of the law. Not only has he "died to the law, that I might live to God" (2:19), but also any behavior suggesting that the law participates in justification results in an untenable conclusion: "then Christ died to no purpose" (2:21).

Perhaps all this seems remote to the issues of our day. How utterly unrelated are first-century Jewish dietary regulations and next Sunday's sermon! Except, of course, for such "minor" matters as the relationship of confirmation to ordination, open or closed communion, Jerry Falwell, the ordination of women, interfaith dialogue, homosexuality, so-called empowerment of the laity, the charismatic movement, retirement with dignity, and poverty in our time. In fact, none of these issues can be
addressed in depth without considering the central question of the relation of gospel and law.

The truth is that while Paul apparently won the battle at Antioch and perhaps Galatia, he is still losing it in our congregations. Our parishioners are still listening to Pauline theology in the pulpit, fresh from their Sunday school lessons on the Ten Commandments. In many parts of the country, "I found it" bumper stickers still accompany the faithful to the house of grace. Popular Christianity ever raises new proscriptions, new requirements of salvation. The American myth still supports those who claim persons can be everything they want, if only they will it hard enough, and those who persevere successfully will join the ranks of the "good." Says Paul, "I do not nullify the grace of God" (Gal. 2:21).

Paul closes his argument with four ringing affirmations which must not be dulled in the modern setting:
1. "I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God."
2. "I have been crucified with Christ."
3. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

His letter to the church at Rome (chapters 2, 3, and 4) elaborates these affirmations in greater detail. In Galatians it is not elaboration but powerful impact that is desired, for at stake is the question of sinners' only hope, grounded in the new life given in Christ Jesus. To tamper with that is to undercut the good news.

JUNE 19, 1983, FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lection: Galatians 3:23-29. (3:1-5 should be added.)

This lection is a particularly good example of the kind of biblical summary which (1) poses such temptation for preachers to begin with conclusions, and (2) requires both preacher and congregation to back up to preceding verses—even chapters. In this example, matters are made even more difficult in that the lectionary selection committee somehow and unfortunately left out the watershed climax, the decisive turning point of the entire letter.
Paul’s writing to Galatia provides us with a picture of a decisive mountain, so to speak, with Paul climbing inductively through chapters 1 and 2, reaching the summit at chapter 3, verse 1 through 5, and then coming down deductively—carefully and inescapably—through the rest of chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6. Unbelievably, those critical and powerful first five verses of chapter 3 are not included among the selected passages. The mountain is before us—but the top is missing.

Prior to Gal. 3:1, Paul has made his case, utilized every stratagem possible, provided such shocking claims that he even has had to swear that he is not lying (Gal. 1:20). By the first verse of chapter 3 he is ready to call the Galatians idiots—(as rendered in the Phillips translation). After 3:5, his tone changes dramatically—with anger spent and turning to lament (as in 4:11: “I am afraid I have labored over you in vain”). Continuing his explication of the faith, Paul will provide historical rationale, ethical consequences, and practical advice—derived from his affirmation set in rhetorical question form in these five verses.

As rendered by the RSV, the text reads:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publically portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so many things in vain?—if it really is in vain. Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? (3:1-5)

Before setting verses 1-5 into the context of the lection (vss. 23-29), we should note with precision the preaching model that Paul is utilizing—a model worthy of our attention. Unlike traditional homiletical models of our day, Paul begins inductively, not deductively. Apparently he was never taught to write a thesis statement at the top of a page and then organize the content into three major sub-theses, each parallel to the others and equally subordinant to the major thesis. Rather, he opens his letter by announcing his astonishment at their desertion of true Christianity. He then takes them on a brief recounting tour of his own religious pilgrimage, beginning prior to his Damascus Road experience, into the solitude of Arabia, on
through fourteen years (including his trip to Jerusalem with Barnabas) and finally to Antioch, where the critical issue drew to its climax.

Now in these five verses he asks them to review their religious pilgrimage. Only then is he ready to move deductively into the consequence of the decisive turn. (The same kind of sweep from induction to decisive turning point to deductive ramification can be observed in the first several chapters of Romans, with the climaxing turn occurring at Rom. 2:22b-24).

Study of the next three chapters will reveal how ethical ramifications and practical advice follow Paul's decisive turn rather than precede it. Otherwise put, the indicative of the gospel preceded the ethical imperative. To do it the other way around would produce ethical admonition and moralism outside the context of the proclamation of the good news of the gospel. This order of proclamation is more than good strategy for Paul (and us); it is basic to his understanding of the gospel, which can best be seen as a "because . . . therefore" not an "if . . . then . . ." formulation. It is the grammar of the gospel.

With the power of Paul's proclamation in the first five verses of chapter 3—and spelled out in detail in the present lection—one wonders how it was that the Galatians were bewitched by the Judaizers. In verses 23-29 Paul explains the transition that is affected by the gospel: from confinement to faith, from ranked distinctions to family membership, from restraint to promise. So what was the enticement held out by the Judaizers? The unspoken question Why? rides through all six chapters of his letter (and the same question is riding through our time of strange religious groups and movements). How could the Judaizers have successfully raised doubts about Paul's gospel? Why would the Galatians even give them a hearing?

It is not enough to know that they questioned Paul's credentials. Their personal attack could work only if other basic issues were involved deeply. Had the Galatians been Jewish, one could surmise that they might have feared the loss of their tradition—their roots. Or could it be that the gospel was too good to be true? Certainly the earlier reference to the charge of Paul being a crowd-pleaser suggests this possibility.
Verse 23 offers a clue. Here Paul speaks of the confinement of the law, the restraint at work "until faith should be revealed." Although numerous commentators have noted that Paul means not protection (of beneficent guarding) but rather enforced restraint, nonetheless there is real safety in being watched-over and considerable risk in being free. When Paul announces once more in verse 25 that "we are no longer under a custodian," one can feel the dizzy anxiety of freedom. It may be too much and too wonderful to handle. Rather than the gospel being too good to be true, it just may have been too true to be good! Perhaps the Judaizers caught the Galatians precisely at the "right moment" of their newly experienced and hence nervous freedom in Christ. If so, then we can understand in a new way the meaning behind Paul's later admonition: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). Imagine that, Paul's needing to tell them not to choose slavery! Slavery must have some advantages, and the Galatians were not the last to be tempted by them.

Again, if the gospel abolishes ranks and distinctions among us, with "neither Jew nor Greek, . . . slave nor free, . . . male nor female" (Gal. 3:28), then how do I really know where I stand? The threat of this new order is enormous.

Today we live in a culture that practices active hatred of the poor—a hatred that, at this writing, is being made more explicit with each new act of Congress. One wonders how it is that we can hate the poor instead of pity or aid the poor. Except, of course, that we also need the poor because they provide us visible norms by which we find our own place. Our hatred of the poor is the back side of the coin of our own acceptability. Such a legalistic works ethic, indeed, also requires that we envy the rich and powerful. But we have learned to re-name this cancerous lust; we call it the American Dream! In it, at least, we know where we stand.

Paul pulls the rug out from under this sick but enticing mentality and names it the curse it is—noting that "if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law" (Gal. 3:21).

But it cannot! And since it cannot, only a radically new base for human salvation will do. That base is Christ Jesus, and he makes
us “heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:29). That promise may appear both too little and too much, but Paul announced the result: that we “are all one in Christ Jesus” (3:28).

CONCLUDING SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PREACHERS

These lections from Paul’s Letter to the Galatians provide an excellent opportunity once again to address what could be called the twin perils of biblical preaching. Stated in question form, the first peril can be identified by asking: How can I be true to the particulars of the text without becoming lost in esoteric detail? The second peril is “like unto it,” only found at the other end of the homiletical continuum: How can I be true to the universality of the gospel without becoming lost in pale generality? And the Galatian letter is a tailor-made context for considering this apparent dilemma.

The first peril is immediately obvious in the text. Who really cares whether Paul talked only to Cephas and James, the Lord’s brother, during his first trip to Jerusalem as contrasted to those living in Paul’s lifetime and eager to know more about his travels? And, shall we date the second trip to Jerusalem as fourteen years after his Damascus Road experience, or fourteen years after the first trip to Jerusalem? After looking at the evidence and announcing one’s decision about the matter, the only appropriate response is: What difference does it make?

Although providing a proper setting for the hearing of the text is no doubt both a good pastoral and homiletical virtue, it is a quite unprofitable excursion in many biblical sermons. Many preachers actually slip into a Bible study session for the first third of such a sermon, preventing effective hearing of the gospel. Many of us in fact were taught to start a sermon with exegesis, then move to exposition, and finally conclude with application—for those in the congregation still awake by that time. Paul’s letter to Galatia is particularly apt for presenting this problem, because without some explanation of the situation-in-life out of which he was speaking, the letter makes little sense.

Likewise, what is at stake in this writing is everything relative to the gospel. For five and one-half chapters Paul goes over and over, in, around, and through the subject of justification. He
seems not to move forward at all—simply paces nervously about the theme. Reading the text is like viewing dozens of snapshots, all of the same object, but taken at varying perspectives and distances. Without careful attention to the problem the preacher, too, may spend twenty minutes waltzing around the doctrinal theme of justification. "By faith in Christ," "through faith in Jesus Christ," "because of faith in Christ"—the theme is certainly centered, but by becoming everything, it becomes nothing in particular. The problem here is complicated by the fact that the theme of justification "feels" more particular than, say, the "love of God," but in fact stands at the same high level of generalization.

Hence the preacher is apt to become frozen at one level of abstraction: either at the level of particular detail or at the level of universal generalization. These two extremes may be compared, on the one hand, to the experience of hearing a child report on last night's television show ("she said and he said and . . .") or, on the other hand, to the eager report of the first-time world traveler ("it was just so awesome and majestic and wonderful and . . ."). Dead-level abstraction is at the heart of these twin perils. Is there a way to avoid the problem?

There is indeed, and it, too, is found inside the text itself. The key to the solution is textual torque. There is good reason Paul could go in and through the topic of justification for five and one-half chapters, and still have anyone still reading his letter. It is that the generalization regarding justification was in Galatia in fact more ambiguous than it appears to us twenty centuries later; and that the particulars were required in order to solve the ambiguity. The ambiguity at the generalized pole, and that requiredness at the particular pole, provide the torque which causes the text to come alive.

What we have in the letter to the churches of Galatia is comparable to a courtroom scene in which a remarkable amount of detail is not only tolerated, but found necessary in order for a proper verdict (generalization) to be reached. Even uninvolved spectators become glued to the enumeration of detail because there is so much at stake.

It was the heart of the gospel, and with it, of course, the entire matter of whom to trust, that was at stake. Hanging in the
balance were their very lives in the faith. But, of course, as viewed from the perspective of centuries, Paul obviously won the theological/doctrinal battle for all time, did he not? Surely the case is closed, and merely to recall that decisive time is of interest only for those fascinated by antiquity. Or so it seems. Is there any equivalent battle now raging, any parallel verdict yet to be reached in our time? Or shall we reverently move on to another text? Perhaps there is something vital in the gospel lection for the day... 

In fact, the theological/doctrinal battle has not been settled by Paul’s crisp summary. This issue re-emerges repeatedly throughout church history, escalating to polar extremity, subsiding to harmonized compromise, and then rising again. In our time and place the issue has risen again with the church becoming increasingly polarized, even divided. Although the particulars of the issue do not revolve around dietary regulations as in Antioch (and although the question does not involve the possibility of viewing Christianity as a form of Judaism), nevertheless, the issue is centered on the question of justification.

What is the basis of our salvation? When the folks “from James” arrive for dinner, are there separate tables for charismatics and noncharismatics, for the Moral Majority and the others, for mainline Protestants and fundamentalist Christians, for the local congregation and the television faithful? What does it mean when official charges against a bishop regarding his appointment of a homosexual minister center on Old Testament passages, or the question regarding the ordination of women hovers around I Timothy 2:12? In short, the tension of law and gospel is with us still.

Transcending the focal issue of Galatians, we can identify the basic homiletical strategy involved for whatever biblical text is under consideration. The key is textual torque between the ambiguity of the generalization and the requiredness of the particularity. Once the torque of the text is identified, the preacher’s next task is to discover the equivalent or parallel torque present in the world today. Such identification and correlation are not always as easily made as they are with the Letter to the Galatians, but the task is central to faithful preaching that is both relevant and biblical.
HOMILETICAL RESOURCES

NOTES

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THE UNMALE GOD: RECONSIDERING THE TRINITY

MARJORIE SUCHOCKI

To move beyond God as male we must work not only on language but also on theological concepts themselves.

On an impressive church facing Fifth Avenue in Pittsburgh there is a large and vibrant mosaic. A white-bearded man and a brown-bearded man hold their arms out toward the busy street; beneath the two men there is a dove. Few passersby need words to tell them that here is a portrayal of the triune God.

A popular song sways its way over the airways, and in the midst of the lyrics is a doublet referring to three admired men named as Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost; and once again, in yet another setting, we find the Trinity.

An Academy Award-winning film of the recent past portrays some extraordinary "ordinary people" and interestingly enough, these folk form two triads, the one male and the other female. The plot revolves around the union of the father and the son through the work of a spirited psychiatrist. As this male bonding completes and enriches the three men, two of the three women (who never meet each other) disintegrate and disperse, while the third, the young virgin, remains. The first of the three women is a mother who brings death, both physical and psychic, to her sons; the second is a daughter who is an analog to the son but fails where he succeeds. The telephone voices of her parents give the progressive news of her disintegration and death through suicide. The virgin, like the psychiatrist,

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facilitates the union of the father and son through her inept but charming adoration of the son. She alone of the female triad remains, revolving like a satellite around the triumphant male trinity.

Art, music, film: through each medium the maleness of God is reinforced, with the implication that the maleness of God is ineradicably engrained on the cultural consciousness. Feminists have worked diligently and with some success in the past few years to raise the consciousness of the church with regard to sexist language, so that a nonsexist hymnal (Creation Sings) is now available for use in churches, and liturgies and prayers are beginning to be more inclusive. Even the language for God is beginning to be freed from exclusive reliance upon male pronouns and masculine imagery—but against these advances there is the power of the deeply masculinized symbol of the Trinity, telling us that regardless of language, God is internally, eternally, supernally male. Must the symbol be masculine? Perhaps we can retain “trinity” as a designation for God rooted in a biblical understanding without at the same projecting maleness onto deity.

The problem of the masculinization of God is twofold, involving (1) the adequacy of theology to express the nature of God and (2) the sociological effect of theological symbols. Theologically, the church has always decried the anthropomorphisms that reduce God to human proportions, using the via negativa as one way of moving beyond this. Yet more than one church adorns itself with larger-than-life white- and brown-bearded men (usually apparently Caucasian), and the depicted assertion is louder than the theological qualifications. The sociological effects of this assertion tend to cast men in the image of God, and women in the weak, sinful, dependent role of humanity. The effects can be devastating, for few men can live up to expectations of impassible omnipotence and omniscience, and while women may have a somewhat easier time with the more attainable human qualities, their “success” is a bit grim. Given the pervasiveness of a seemingly ineradicably male trinity, such that it shows up in nonreligious as well as religious settings, have we reached an impasse? Will feminists achieve consciousness-raising with respect to inclusive language only to
have these gains negated at the deeper level of symbolism through a thoroughly masculine Trinity?

Traditions change. Granted, the changes are slow—so are those which have carved the Grand Canyon. Fortunately, sociological changes happen at a relatively quicker pace. Every tradition lives through the changes it encounters and creates, just as people do. However, to make a meaningful change in a tradition, one which can be heard, one must deal with the texts of the tradition, showing that the changes do not violate continuity between the contemporary mode of insight and the texts. Otherwise, the change carries the threat of identity-loss rather than identity-enrichment.

Christian tradition grounds its notion of God as male Trinity in the biblical texts, but only indirectly. It is a commonplace that trinity is not a biblical naming, but one which grew slowly within the tradition, culminating in the Nicene formula of A.D. 325. The Scriptures themselves make no direct statement that God is to be understood as eternally male, certainly not in the Old Testament, and only by reading into the New Testament ideas not explicitly there. Looking at the biblical texts in their sociological context can give a renewed significance to the trinitarian terminology.

Throughout the Old Testament, God is referred to as the One who acts in human history. There is an intensity of responsiveness to this portrayal, so that God is incredibly personal—God takes initiative, helps, loves, is angered, woos, and rejects. But these attitudes are not portrayed chaotically or arbitrarily. To the contrary, there is a deep consistency of character to God in the Old Testament, and a unity to the responsiveness of God. The great words of Malachi, "I, the Lord, do not change," are set in the context of God's unfailing purpose for the societal good of the people. Honesty is to be the hallmark of relationships; wage earners are not to be oppressed; widows and orphans are to be cared for; the stranger is to be welcomed in one's midst. There is not to be one measure for the rich and another for the poor; one group is not to be exploited for the benefit of another, and periodically the land is to be redistributed to ensure that no tribe in Israel shall be lost for want of economic fortune. The actions of God are inexorably measured by how closely the Israelites do or
do not achieve justice in their society, for justice is the very foundation of the universe, and God wills its manifestation in human life. When justice is achieved, then God is truly worshiped in hymns and deeds which themselves continue to perpetuate the joy of justice in the land. This is the Old Testament portrayal of God; it gives us a picture of infinite resources and complexity mobilized into the unity of the divine will for the well-being of the world. The Old Testament exhibits a complexity in unity, a manyness of responses organized around the unity of divine purpose.

Is this the great father of the Trinity? The Old Testament seldom denotes God through that particular term, but it does abound in other equally masculine images: God is king, judge, shepherd, husband, warrior, wooer. But the Old Testament God is also a midwife, mother, nurse, and childbearer, as Phyllis Trible has so ably pointed out in her works. (See, for instance, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality [Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1978].) The organizing motif of the images is God’s responsiveness to the people’s growth in justice. Hence neither maleness nor femaleness is the issue, but rather the complexity of God’s responsiveness to the developmental stages of Israel. God’s unchanging will toward justice is manifested in the changing nuances of appropriate divine action. Unity of purpose requires a complexity of responses.

Complexity in unity: is this the closest the Old Testament comes to trinity? If we think of it, we, too, are a complex unity, so that if complexity in unity within the human personality isn’t necessarily triune, why can we say it is triune in God? Or can we? What does the New Testament reveal?

There we see Jesus. He, too, manifests a passion for justice; he, too, takes initiative in breaking all boundaries society has raised to exclude some from well-being. Outcasts are drawn in by Jesus; food is provided for the poor; widows are healed; a widow’s son is raised; children are touched, healed, and blessed; honest measures in the market are demanded; publicans and sinners are raised to the dignity of being embraced within the just kingdom of God. Jesus loves, is provoked to anger, woos, rejects, and all in a consistency of purpose, working the works of . . . his father, God. His father! Have we uncovered the Trinity, then? For obviously
Jesus is a man, a son—and God is his father? On this mighty evidence the church through the ages has deemed that God is ever Father to the Son in the deepest reaches of the divine nature, before all worlds.

Biblical scholars tell us interesting things about the relation of a father and son in ancient Palestine. Physical paternity is not a particular issue—to hold a child on one’s lap and announce a formula for adoption could confer paternity; to work for a master could likewise be understood in a paternal sense—in fact, our own use of the word paternalism still reflects this, and then, as now, physical generation is not at all the issue—far from it! Physical generation was not the most critical Palestinian cultural understanding of the father/son relation. What was critical in this food-and-craft oriented society was that the father should teach the secrets of physical and spiritual living to his son, and the son should respond in obedience to the teaching. Torah was transmitted from father to son, and each son was called to obedience to the teaching. In a similar way, a father would teach the secrets of his trade to his son, guarding the perpetuation of the family craft. Transmission of knowledge rather than physical generation is the primary functional significance of a father/son relationship. And whereas the act of generation is a single and past event from the point of view of the son, the transmission of knowledge constituted the meaning of life itself, creating a continuing vibrancy to the relationship of father and son.

Again and again Jesus appeals to the fact that he knows and does the works of his Father in heaven. He knows the Father’s will. He goes about the Father’s business. “If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe me; but if I do them, though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father” (John 10:37, 38). In this fairly typical passage the evangelist cites the works which Jesus does as the evidence for the intimacy between Jesus and the Father. The obedient representation of the Father’s work is itself the sonship of Jesus.

Thus to persons of Jesus’ day, the particular meaning of Jesus’ calling God Father was not that he was in a situation of physical generation to God, but that he knew the secrets of God’s purpose, claiming particular instruction in the work of God.
God was revealed to and in Jesus, with this revelation itself constituting Jesus' sonship. This is not a primacy of maleness, but a primacy of conformity to God's purpose, and a primacy of revelation of that purpose to the world.

In contrast to this *functional* form of sonship, some would point to the birth narratives of the Gospels as guaranteeing an *ontological* sonship as well. God, not Joseph, is literally Jesus' father. The argument is buttressed by those passages which speak of Jesus emptying himself and taking the form of a slave, with the assumption that this emptying must take place prior to birth. However, it is quite possible to read the birth narratives not as adumbrating the functional sonship of the rest of the Gospels, but as being a theological preface to that form of sonship.

Nelle Morton has called attention to the sociological hierarchy prevailing at the time of Jesus. ("Holy Spirit, Child Spirit, Art Spirit, Woman Spirit," *Women's Caucus-Religious Studies Newsletter*, Summer, 1976, p. 8.) The universe was ordered in descending ranks of value, with God, of course, at the summit, followed by created orders of angels. A little lower than the angels came men, who were further divided into ranks ranging from king to slave. Below men were women, and below them, children. The children were also categorized in terms of social value, with legitimate sons taking precedence, followed by legitimate daughters. Next came illegitimate daughters and finally, as the lowest of the low, the illegitimate son. The illegitimate daughters could marry into one of the legitimate houses of Israel, and thus gain a home, but the illegitimate son, though he marry, would not bear a patrimony. When two Gospels begin with the strong implication that Joseph was not Jesus' father, is not the most obvious result that Jesus is an illegitimate son? Yet this same Jesus is the one who calls attention through his works to his unity with God. God's purpose is Jesus' purpose, and the statement is even recorded, "I and the Father are One." This same Jesus also makes an identification between himself and a slave—not simply in words, but in his works of serving others. God, slave, illegitimate son: how do the identifications take on comprehensibility?
God's purposes through the Old Testament were ever toward a society of justice, where each was accorded dignity in patterned relationships, and where the vulnerable in society—the stranger, the widow, the orphan—were integrated into structures of caring. Again and again Jewish society, like all societies, built up the barriers of preferential treatment, even while declaring glory to God in the highest. In Jesus, the highest is identified with the lowest—slave, illegitimate son, Emmanuel. God's eternal and unchanging will toward justice throughout creation, including the creations of human societies, becomes incarnate in the faithful obedience of Jesus of Nazareth to that will. But if God is identified with Jesus through this revelation, then "highest" and "lowest" cease to make sense. God breaks the barriers against justice, embracing all of humanity in a fullness of identity.

The theme is carried through in the teachings of Jesus: in Nazareth Jesus preaches release to the captives and freedom for the oppressed; he identifies himself with the thirsty child; and in the great judgment narrative of Matthew, he associates himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. The exalted one is the lowly one, so that the lowly are exalted. The import is that all are to be regarded as God's chosen ones, and so all are to be treated with honesty, dignity, respect, and loving care. "You have done it unto me," is the judgment.

The virgin birth narratives, therefore, are of a piece with this identification of God with the lowly for the purpose of justice. Theologically, they serve as the great preface to that which will follow, preparing the way for the one who will live out God's purpose in society. Ontological sonship is not required.

And what of Spirit? In the Scriptures Spirit has a long, complex, and rich history; by no means does it lend itself to attributions of masculinity as easily as do the other two designations of the Trinity. To the contrary, the Hebrew word for spirit, ruach, is feminine, with the connotation of wind, breath, and life. The same word is also used for the human spirit, with the implication that God breathes the divine vivifying spirit into creation, withdrawing it at death. The breathed-in spirit, however, is as it were released from God,
becoming creaturely. As such it can become good or evil, and so the word ruach in references other than God can signify that which is evil as well as that which is good. The divine Spirit, in contrast, is a pure force for justice, continuously guiding the people toward a knowledge of God which is conformity to God in justice. Prophets, inspired by the divine Spirit, foretell a day when God will bring about a new creation by the power of the Spirit; in that day the knowledge of God shall be clear and the works of God manifest in a new community of justice.

The New Testament, like the Septuagint before it, uses the neuter Greek word pneuma for Spirit. In the New Testament context this is no radical departure from the feminine connotations of ruach, for particularly in the Gospel of John pneuma and logos alike are intimately related to sophia, which is the wisdom of God, expressed through a feminine word and often through a feminine personification. Yet whether the word is masculine or feminine is minor, compared to the amazing content given to pneuma in the New Testament.

In Paul's usage, spirit is used for both the Holy Spirit and for the spirit of a human being, following the Hebrew pattern laid down in the earlier writings. But in Paul, the use of pneuma for the human spirit is always in the sense of an openness to the Spirit of God. (There is some precedent for this in the Septuagint; in a departure from the Hebrew, anthropological uses of ruach were translated as pneuma only in a context of human goodness.) The prophetic eschatological presence of the Spirit appears to be appropriated through trust in Christ, so that God's Spirit now directly empowers the human spirit for the just community. Indeed, the vaunted "fruits of the Spirit" are communal rather than private, for love is the deed of justice, joy the delight in justice, peace the fruit of justice, all experienced in relationship in the new community. The indwelling Spirit of God is the upbuilding of the community in love; in short, the gift of the Spirit is the new creation of community. The community, in turn, harks back to the society of justice toward which God so persistently led, cajoled, or drove the Old Testament people of Israel. Widows and orphans are cared for, hospitality abounds, one congregation reaches toward another congregation with sustenance in need; and, throughout, a power of preaching proclaims the living God.
The communal nature of the spirit is portrayed perhaps most graphically in John’s Gospel through the term *paraklete*. The word has been translated variously as comforter and counselor, but perhaps helper is the more accurate rendering. Further, this helper is “another” helper, paralleling the function of Jesus for the disciples. At just this point it is well to look literally at the meaning of *paraklete*. Its most concrete meaning is “the one who is alongside you,” and in reference to Jesus, he was indeed alongside the disciples, teaching, healing, and guiding. What if we apply the same “alongside” rendering to the Spirit? Against our tendency to regard the spirit as a wraithlike presence, or a peculiar inward feeling, we would then be forced to look for the Spirit in the person of the Christian who is alongside of us. (This was suggested to me by William F. Orr, professor emeritus of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.) God’s Spirit is given for the sake of the upbuilding of community; therefore, God’s Spirit is given to each for the sake of the others. The *paraklete*, the one-who-is-alongside, is to be found for each in the whole community, and the Spirit given to each one is given not for private advantage, but for the others. Here the eschatological meaning of the Divine Spirit, bringing about a new creation in which the human spirit is infused with the power of the divine, is brought to its dearest, most concrete fulfillment. God’s Spirit is given to us for our good through each other. In such giftedness, the Holy Spirit creates the new community of the church.

By relating the Spirit to the building of a community of justice—and the two early idealistic descriptions of the church in the Book of Acts portray just such a community—the sense in which the Spirit is that of Jesus and of God becomes clear. Jesus is united with the purposes of God, therefore, through Jesus, God’s work is manifest. The Spirit, likewise, is and manifests the divine purpose for the human community, hence the Spirit is both of Father and Son. The unifying force is the divine purpose, expressed through all three terms. The biblical God acts in history with a consistent force for creative justice in human community.

If the words *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit* thus function in the Bible to show the consistency of the divine will toward justice,
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how did the words come to designate not primarily justice, but a maleness attributed eternally to God? It would seem that the least important aspect of the words, and in fact that aspect which was necessitated by cultural usage, and therefore appropriated by God as the medium of revelation, came to be seen as not cultural at all, but as the truest depth of the nature of God.

In the course of Christian history a new cultural necessity arose through the expansion of Christianity into the Gentile world. Here the primary medium for understanding the ultimate nature of reality was not the actions of God perceived in history, but philosophical categories which provided a conceptual grounding for the existence of the world. Gentile Christianity had to express the God who acts in history for our redemption as being likewise the goal of philosophical contemplation and understanding.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were not only seen as designations for the action of God through and in history, but also as designations for the nature of God in and for “himself.” Philosophical categories of being, knowledge, and life (or love) were equated with Father, Son, and Spirit, and attention was focused on the internal and eternal relations of the three-in-one. Cut off from their Palestinian cultural grounding, the biblical terms lost their overriding connection with the purposes of God toward justice and instead reinforced masculinity as integral to the nature of God. In history, the terms revealed God’s will toward justice; cut off from history, the terms became only the shell of maleness.

This is not to say that the developing Christian theology lost a concern for justice, only that justice was no longer so specifically associated with the meaning of Father, Son, and Spirit. If in history all three terms functioned as metaphors, using human language and human experience but breaking through both to portray the dazzling power of God toward justice, they became instead literal portrayals of maleness in God. And finally, through art forms which continue to our present day, we see the results: the old man, the young man, and the dove become unspoken depictions teaching us that God is male. The inevitable societal effect makes men the primary representatives of God. Paradoxically, the very means initially used in the
biblical context to break down injustice became a means of reinforcing the societal injustice against women. The “walls of partition” broken down by God have been raised again in the very name of God.

What are we to do, then? Must we “throw out the baby with the bathwater” and eliminate all trinitarian usage of Father, Son, and Spirit from our religious language? Will substituting Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, as sometimes is done, resolve the problem? While these terms have no explicit connotations of maleness, and may well become redemptive substitutes given time and frequent usage, it is quite likely that the terms will be used along with Father, Son, and Spirit instead of as a total replacement. Further, I suspect that too often Creator is understood as what it is: a substitute for Father-as-Being. Redeemer likewise is Son-as-Knowledge (or Life), and Sustainer is Spirit-as-Life (or Love, or Will). That is, the philosophical/theological rather than the historical meanings attributed to the Trinity are retained in the substitutions, meaning that the fullness of the biblical usage of the terms is not restored. We must recapture the biblical connotations of Father, Son, and Spirit; only then will we have an “unmale God,” speaking to us of radical communities of justice created through the Spirit.

I suggest three procedures by which we might regain a sense of the biblical power of God. First, we must heighten our sense of the metaphorical nature of historical terms used to reveal God’s nature for us. Second, we must remove pronouns, which are designative rather than metaphorical, from our language for God. Third, we must respect our philosophical/theological tradition as well as our biblical tradition by finding and utilizing a more appropriate philosophical/theological language to express our understanding of the nature of the biblical God.

With regard to metaphorical language, human terms used for God must be used in such a way that ordinary usage is transcended. The words must become broken, allowing the light of God to shine through them. It is as if each word were a container, accustomed to a finite meaning which it appropriately conveys; but when the word is used for God it is broken, shattered by a divine power which it cannot contain. How can
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we use language so that it itself is not deified, but becomes instead a word revealing God? The metaphorical power of our language about God might be heightened for us if we should use contradictory images of God, thus reinforcing the nonliteral content of the words. Is God portrayed in the Scripture as father, so that we call God Father? God is also portrayed as a mother, particularly in Isaiah. If in our speech we juxtapose references to God as Father with references to God as Mother, we jolt the human understanding, for how can one be both Father and Mother? We force the words to break and to reveal the God beyond male and female, the God who is revealed in Hosea as thundering out, “I am God and no man!” If God is like a man looking for the prodigal, God is also like a woman looking for a lost coin; if Jesus is a shepherd, Jesus is also a hen. By opening our references to God to the full spectrum of imagery conveyed to us in the texts, we might avoid deifying any one image, and allow instead the Godness of God to shine through each image. In the light of that hallowing, we see the power of God as the one who wills communities of justice which reflect God’s own nature.

The second suggestion involves eliminating all use of pronouns in references to God. Images, after all, can be seen as metaphors, but pronouns are concretely designative. When we constantly speak of God through masculine pronouns, we belie the metaphorical nature of the imagery, undercutting it with a “nevertheless” of maleness. To use female pronouns for God is no more appropriate than using male pronouns; we again designate human gender for the divine being who is beyond gender. Language for God must not limit God to the human scale.

There is some indirect biblical precedent for a refusal to use male or female pronouns for God. In the Old Testament there was a great hesitancy over use of the divine name; YHWH was the awesome designation of a God whose name was too holy to pronounce. To this day, many a pious Jew writes G-d for God, not presuming to encompass in a word that which cannot be encompassed in a word. If we eliminate all pronouns for God, we confess the Godness of God. The uniqueness of the divine nature is such that no human pronoun is adequate to designate
this deity. Why not allow that theological reality to be reflected in an unusual use of language in which pronouns are simply not used?

There could in fact be a salutary religious effect from using different language in reference to God from the language used in reference to finite being. Practically speaking, the word God will begin to appear far more often in our sentences, interspersed with words such as “divine nature,” and “deity.” Again and again we will say the divine name. The analogy to this situation in human references is in the situation of loving: the name of a loved one is “sweet upon our lips,” often spoken. By naming God so frequently in our speech, will we not encourage our own acts of worship? “Let God be God,” cried Luther, and perhaps the feminist sensitivity to move beyond maleness to the Godness of God creates again the urgency of that cry. When God is God and not man, then worship emerges more vibrantly.

Finally, there is the philosophical consideration. Our tradition is formed both by biblical texts and by philosophical and theological reflection upon the implications of those texts. What is needed now from the feminist point of view is not to jettison philosophical/theological reflection, any more than we are called upon to eliminate all references to God as father. Rather, we must redeem and perpetuate our tradition to nonsexist ways, letting the goodness of God shine through. Process theology offers a contemporary way of formulating the Godward meaning of the Trinity which is consistent with the historical revelation of God.

The process notion of God is based upon a divine reality who feels the world and responds to the world in keeping with the self-determined divine character. Further, this understanding posits God as a mighty complexity-in-unity, one subjectivity grounding many subjectivities in a harmonious reconciliation of all things within the divine nature. The “many subjectivities,” however, are the recreated and transformed world. How can these things be?

Perhaps one way to illustrate the process vision of this is through recourse to a singularly powerful literary scene drawn from the writings of Shakespeare. There is a famous line uttered
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by Gloucester in *King Lear*: the blind Gloucester encounters Lear on the wild heath. Lear, devastated and half-mad, holds out a letter of betrayal to Gloucester, asking him to read. Gloucester protests his blindness, to which Lear replies, “Yet you see how this world goes.” “I see it feelingly,” exclaims Gloucester, and in this one line is the powerful suggestion that ultimate knowledge and true insight are gained through the distillation of feeling into thought. In the process vision, God knows the world feelingly, and in the divine feeling of the world God recreates the fullness of the world, thus knowing the world from the inside out. This amounts to a resurrection of the world in God, and a retention of every subjectivity which ever formed itself in the world in a transformed state within the divine reality. In God, the resurrected world moves through judgment and transformation into justice. The multiple subjectivity in God, then, is precisely God’s living, creative, transforming knowledge of the world-as-it-was and the world-as-it-can-be.

But this God who knows the world feelingly is no whim of the world, no victim of the world’s deeds. Rather, the God who determines to feel the world does so from the eternally self-determined divine nature of justice. God’s feeling of the world is purposeful, feeling the world in judgment and transformation till the world be conformed to God in the depths of the divine nature. God is the will toward and the realization of justice.

Process theology cannot stop with a portrayal of the nature of the divine reality in and of itself; rather, the dictates of the philosophy demand that every action have a reaction; to exist is to have an effect. God exists, and the God who feels the world also has an effect upon the becoming world. God’s effect upon the world, based upon God’s full knowledge of the world in the divine subjectivity, is to lead the world toward a sustainable form of justice suited to its historical realities in every moment. God is a power in the world for justice, with that power stemming from God’s transcendent self-created nature as the one who wills justice. Insofar as the world becomes a place of justice, a place of love, the world reflects the image of God.

Thus the process vision sees God as a mighty unity of all that is
with all that can be through the singularity of the divine will. God is a self, an integration of feeling according to purpose, with an effect of that integration upon every becoming reality in the universe. God, unlike the world, is an ever-living, inexhaustible reality; God, unlike the world, has the capacity to be positively related to every finite actuality which has ever existed; God, unlike the world, is an unfailing will toward the good. Earlier, in our discussion of the Old Testament texts, we found that scriptural images seemed to point to God as a mighty complexity-in-unity; the fuller expansions of God through trinitarian terms indicated that the unifying nature within Father, Son, and Spirit is the will toward justice. The philosophical development of God in process terms likewise suggests that God is a complexity-in-unity, one whose will toward justice has been expressed to us in our history through a particular usage of father, son, and spirit. But the process depiction of God is no more male than is the fullness of God's depiction in the texts. If "trinity" is understood philosophically as a complexity-in-unity surpassing human existence, and historically as God revealed to us through imagery of father, son, and spirit, then perhaps we have a new way in our tradition to express the biblical nature of God in philosophical as well as historical terms.

When we lose the notion of "trinity" from its sexist moorings, we move beyond thinking of God simply as human being larger-than-life, like the mosaic adorning the church. Trinitarian thought should force us beyond our usual human categories, asking us to intuit a manyness-in-unity far beyond our experience, yet communicated to us in the deepest reality of communal justice.

Feminists, like the reformers of the sixteenth century, are crying out to the church again to "let God be God." Images which once bespoke justice in and through the creative caring and lading of God have become strangely distorted, leading to injustice by rendering God as male. Let us recapture our biblical heritage, letting its language lead us to the God who transcends mere maleness and femaleness and who deigns to bend to our condition, encouraging and empowering us toward communi-
ties of justice through imagery which we can understand. If we can re-infuse the meaning of the biblical trinitarian terms into our religious and theological language, then “Trinity” may yet be for us the symbol which is most deeply appropriate as an expression of deity. Through it, we might yet let God be God.
SPIRITUALITY: A LITURGICAL PERSPECTIVE

ROY REED

The rediscovery of worship involves a rediscovery of the meaning of community.

Spiritual and liturgical are certainly old words in our Christian vocabulary, and words which, in our own time, have achieved a new popularity. When I was in seminary neither term was in vogue. "Spiritual" had the connotation of escapist preoccupation with personal salvation, while "liturgical" indicated ritualism, the lifeless recitation of prescribed formulas of worship.

But times change. "Spiritual formation" is a lively concern today. The return to prayer and meditation is attested by new direction in church life, in seminary studies and a variety of new publications intended to help us. And "liturgy" is a much used word and represents new activity: new structures, new words, new vestments, new art, new music, new dancing, new clowning! At least it seems new; much of the "new" in liturgy is the rediscovery of models of worship from the early church.¹

Interestingly the worlds of interest represented in the renewals of "spirituality" and "liturgy" all too seldom interrelate. In the house of the church, the prayer folks and worship folks seem often to live in different rooms. This unfortunate situation represents a misperception which might be cleared up by an inquiry of our earliest and best theologian, the Apostle Paul, who seems to me to tell us how "spiritual" and "liturgical" belong to one another.

The source which best articulates the meaning of a liturgical

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spirituality is the teaching of St. Paul concerning worship in the Christian community, one he provided the church in Corinth and that is found in I Corinthians 11:17-14:40. Paul expresses in this passage, in the first place, a definition of liturgy. This definition has been stated best perhaps by Ferdinand Hahn:

Nothing bespeaks the novelty of Christian worship so plainly as the terminology employed for its concepts. Almost none of the traditional concepts occur in the New Testament; and where they do, they are unmistakably used metaphorically. Cultic terminology is consciously avoided for Christian worship; it serves only to characterize the temple worship of the Old Testament, and to describe the Christ-event or the conduct of Christians in the world. The only term that occurs with a certain regularity is *syntercheisthai* ("come together") or *syngegesthai* ("be gathered together"). The "coming together" of the faithful is the significant feature of Christian worship; and where the community comes together, God is praised, his mighty acts are proclaimed, prayers are said, and the Lord's Supper is celebrated.

Hahn proceeds to demonstrate that other words we might translate, "worship," "liturgy," or "cult," appear only incidentally in Paul and the entire New Testament and where they do, they refer to pagan worship or Jewish worship, or occur in a context where aspects of worship as cult are not the subject of discussion. In his instruction and advice to the Corinthian Christians, Paul was speaking about activities of liturgy which were then and are still the most commonplace elements of our worship. His concern was for baptism, the supper of the Lord, preaching, hymns, praying, hearing and appropriating—the ordinary activity of cult. He had at hand terminology of the culture to refer to such activity. He didn't use this terminology. Instead he said, "when you gather together," "when you come together," "when you assemble." For Paul the first principle of liturgy was mutuality—to be gathered together in Jesus Christ. (One might object at this point, maintaining that what Paul is defining here is not liturgy, but the church. The problem with this distinction, in my estimation, is the truth of Günther Bornkamm's conclusion that, for Paul "primarily and pre-eminently the Ecclesia is in fact the church assembled for worship." We can understand liturgy from Paul's point of view if we appreciate the
qualities of this gathering. What he says about this gathering, I think, is that it is unitary, diverse, traditional, spiritual, intelligible, evangelical, and loving. All of these qualities are of high importance and while they are interdependent, in this paper I shall concentrate upon liturgical spirituality.

In the mind of St. Paul we find meanings for “spiritual,” which like those of the other side of our topic, “liturgical,” are not quite what we might expect. What is most notable about Paul’s discussion of Spirit and the spiritual is its generally plural context. We are not always aware of this, because while the distinction is clear in Greek, it is sometimes not in English. I could not count the homiletical admonitions I have heard on the words, “You are God’s temple and God’s Spirit dwells in you” or “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” (I Cor. 6:19; I Cor. 3:16); it took some time for me to find out that Paul, in the first passage, was writing about the church, that he was saying, “God’s Spirit dwells in the church and makes it God’s temple.” Paul can express concern about the varieties of spiritual gifts to individuals but typically he sets such a concern in the setting of community (I Cor. 12:4-11) where everyone does not and cannot do every task (I Cor. 12:29-30). When he writes about God’s Spirit bearing witness with our spirits in our prayer (Rom. 8:15 ff.) it is a communal perspective which witnesses to our new life together as children of God and heirs of Christ. The realism of the Spirit of God in the church is so clear to Paul that he believes he can impart spiritual gifts to other Christians so they might be “mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (Rom. 1:11-12). The implication is that they can impart spiritual gifts to him. His most specific advice to Christians who sought spiritual endowment was about life together: “since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church” (I Cor. 14:12).

The observation of William Orr and James A. Walther in the Anchor commentary on I Corinthians is relevant here:

... it is surprising that Paul regards speech addressed to people more highly than speech addressed to God. The reason is the scope of edification; speech in a tongue builds up only the speaker. He seems to be saying that private devotion has its place; but it is not as important as public devotion, which builds up the entire group.
When we use the term *spiritual*, we are most apt to apply the term to individuals and their religious and ethical understandings, commitments, and actions. To think with Paul about spirituality we have to shift our accustomed way of thinking. We need not belittle the importance of the individual encounter with the Spirit of God in order to think in a Pauline way about the church in the light of its life in the Spirit, “but theological reflection must not begin with the believing individual and proceed from there to the church; as if the church were an aggregation of individuals each of whom has contributed gifts and experiences in order to create one whole church.” The spiritual understanding of the church, for Paul, proceeds rather in the opposite direction. Paul’s foremost consideration is the Spirit which is given to all. He sees the life of the Spirit not as the privilege or genius of individuals, but rather as power at work in all in diverse ways. Gifts of the Spirit are primarily “matter-of-fact duties and functions of everyday living together.”

Seeking understanding of St. Paul, it may be helpful to investigate some contemporary and corollary thinking concerning Spirit and spirituality. I would cite the work of John Macquarrie as example.

Macquarrie is at pains to establish as a biblical meaning for spirit a term applicable either to divinity or humanity. The first principle to establish is that spirit is not a substance, as a divine quantity of God sent from the heavenly realm or as a human “soul” imprisoned in a body. Spirit is not a substance contrasted to physical substance. To talk of spirit as a thing is in some sense to assimilate spirit to the material world. “Spirit refers to a mysterious dimension of existence stretching beyond the empirical and the manipulable.” Talk of spirit is not to designate a special godly or human essence, but is “meant to express the perception that reality is not exhausted by the things we discern by the senses.”

In these terms, how might we describe the human spirit as such a “reality,” or mode of being? Macquarrie describes it as the “capacity for going out of oneself and beyond oneself; or again, as the capacity for transcending oneself.” This capacity is the most distinctive constituent of our priesthood. Our freedom and creativity, what Macquarrie calls *experience* (“Spirit is *experience*, that is
to say, ‘going out’”), is what distinguishes us as “not just another object among objects that make up the world.”

The more man goes out from himself or goes beyond himself, the more the spiritual dimension of his life is deepened, the more he becomes truly man, the more also he grows in likeness to God who is Spirit. On the other hand, the more he turns inward and encloses himself in self-interest, the less human does he become. This is the strange paradox of spiritual being—that precisely by going out and spending itself, it realizes itself. It grows not weaker but stronger, for it is not a quantifiable thing.

Spiritual life is thus a life that is ecstatic (ek-stasis); it goes out of itself. Macquarrie’s description of spirituality is, I believe, faithfully pauline. When Paul describes the gifts or fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) they are what Macquarrie would call exient; they are mainly a catalogue of human out-going: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” These gifts, according to Paul, are not the possessions of some Spirit-filled persons, but are distributed throughout the body of Christ. Each individual is given a “particular manifestation of the Spirit,” but “for the common good” (I Cor. 12:7). And Paul is specific that these gifts find an out-going expression in worship:

What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification (I Cor. 14:26).

The sole standard Paul sets whereby elements of worship might be tested is their capacity to edify, that is, to “build up” the church. Edification is surely not, for him, an “individual subjective religious experience;” he even speaks critically of “edifying oneself” (I Cor. 14:4).

Exactly what Paul objects to about the Corinthian church and its members’ worship is their communal indifference. He explains this to them according to his understanding of Christian “first principles,” and tells them it is the nature of the faith that they should be in the Spirit and in Christ. As far as one can tell, these are not different ideas for Paul, but analogs of
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one another. Paul speaks of the Spirit “only in terms of the coming, life, and work of Christ.” By nature people are alien—Jews, Greeks, slaves, free (I Cor. 12:13)—but in the Spirit, we are all one body in Christ. Therefore, Paul tells the church, when you assemble, “wait for one another” (I Cor. 11:33). He doesn’t say wait for the bishop or other proper persons, or follow the proper order, although he does appeal to tradition in recalling the Upper Room (I Cor. 11:23-26). Even though he recalls tradition he does not say that they have profaned the holy supper, not by “liturgical” error, but by a failure of community (I Cor. 11:27 ff). “One goes ahead . . . one is hungry . . . another is drunk” (I Cor. 11:21). Such moral factiousness and greed Paul calls eating the bread and drinking the cup unworthily (I Cor. 11:27). When he admonishes that this “profanes the body and blood of the Lord” (I Cor. 11:27) he is repeating what he said earlier: “Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ” (I Cor. 8:12). The church is not simply the body of Christians but the body of Christ and it is only in Christ that spiritual gifts exist, “since spiritual gifts were bestowed in order to make it possible for the human community to do the work of Christ.” There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord” (I Cor. 12:4-5).

Paul is in no way unclear about what is the essential spiritual gift required for the true service of Christ and he rises to his most eloquent and inspired statement to describe it. Love provides the scale by which every gift may be measured. It is, Barrett puts it, “the indispensable addition which alone gives worth to all other Christian gifts.” One of the implications of Paul’s great hymn of love, following as it does his instruction about human mutuality and interdependence in the Spirit and in Christ, is that love is not a virtue, or a new law that Christians must achieve, but that it is rather, “the presence of the Spirit and the presence of Christ in the church.”

Love is an activity, the essential activity of God himself, and when men love either him or their fellow-men they are doing (however imperfectly) what God does.
What Paul tells the Corinthians is that when they "gather together," human community is transcended; they are no longer alien from one another or from God. Their "gathering" (worship) is a gathering of Christ and of the Spirit; what they are to do is the creation of Christ and of the Spirit. This creativity has a clear and distinct quality. It is not a possession to cherish or guard; it is not a personal gift to define our individuality; it is rather what we can share, possess in common, and what we can express in out-going human relationship; it is love. Paul is not unclear about the essential form of the spiritual gathering. The shape of a liturgical spirituality is love.

In our own time the theologian who has most developed this conclusion into a doctrine of Spirit is Joseph Haroutunian. Haroutunian's work is a corrective to that habit of Christian thought which thinks naturally of the Spirit of God working within us rather than among us.

Nobody doubts that a holy life is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, we have been prevented from thinking this thesis out adequately by a failure to do justice to the church as a communion of believers.

We have, therefore, no "proper understanding of the work of the Spirit in the church." For Haroutunian, the key to such "proper understanding" is a right understanding of Jesus as the Christ and bearer of the Spirit. We should not "allow our imagination to present the Spirit to us as wind or fire, or oil, or water, without the confession that the bearer of the Spirit is the Son and our brother." Spirit is not my brother, but "the Spirit is he without whom I would not have a brother; or I have a brother who is God's servant to me by the working of the Spirit between me and my brother."

If the Spirit is thus among the people of God, then it follows that our brothers and sisters in the church belong with our conception of the Spirit and that among the community of Christians "we may not think or imagine the Spirit apart from the human face."

This does not mean that Christians have a monopoly on the Spirit of God. It does mean that for Christians there ought not to be talk of spirituality of life in the Spirit, no "vertical dimension"
of communion between God and believers, apart from a “horizontal dimension” in Christian life which is human relationship and bondedness. What Paul has told us, in his message to the Corinthians, is that this matter reaches a particular cruciality in the situation of Christian worship. If Christian worship is not a charade of “holy role-ers” it is an “activity of a people being sanctified in the world.” This sanctification is exactly the Spirit’s work among us as life-transforming power creating those who were no people into God’s people (I Peter 9:10), whose spirituality is “patient and kind . . . not jealous or boastful . . . not arrogant or rude . . . does not insist on its own way; is not irritable or resentful; does not rejoice in wrong, but rejoices in the right” (I Cor. 13:4-7).

I believe that Gabriel Braso, abbot of Montserrat, had the matter expressed correctly when he wrote that a liturgical spirituality is the church’s spirituality. His meaning, however, is rather different from mine. For Braso a spirituality was liturgical in that it was primarily formed by participation in the church’s worship. It was a “style of private sanctity” wherein believers may “imitate totally and exclusively the method and the style used by the church in her official relations with God, that is, in her liturgy.” I think, following St. Paul, that a liturgical spirituality is a spirituality of the church, not because the liturgy is correct and official and the proper way for every Christian to be trained and formed, but because the worshipping community is the community of the Spirit. This means to me that liturgical spirituality is not first and foremost the result of our participation in a Christian cultus of Word and sacrament, but is rather the mutuality of Christians—the liveliness of Spirit among us in the gathering of worship itself.

NOTES


3. This judgment might be contested concerning a few quite isolated passages, e.g., Acts 24:14, and Phil. 3:3.


6. This statement both quotes and paraphrases a christological affirmation of Dietrich Ritschl in *Memory and Hope* (Macmillan, 1967), p. 64. What Ritschl writes about christology fits pneumatology exactly. Paul uses these categories as analogs of one another.


11. Macquarrie.

12. Macquarrie.


15. Bornkamm, p. 156. Cf. I Cor. 6:17, 12:3-4; II Cor. 3:17; Rom. 8:2, 9 ff.


24. Haroutunian, p. 76.

25. Haroutunian.

26. Haroutunian, p. 76.

27. Haroutunian, p. 79.


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TWO-CAREER CLERGY/LAY COUPLES: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

PAMELA C. DUNLAP AND KEITH H. KENDALL

“When Shirley decided to go into social work, she felt she needed the proper credentials. In 1970 she was accepted to the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. I had started Bethany United Methodist Church in Rochester and felt very much the indispensable person. I thought about it for three or four weeks and then talked to the district superintendent about a possible appointment near where she could go to school. I wanted to stay in Rochester, but I wanted her to go to school,” Richard Harper, now a district superintendent himself, recalls about his first experience with the two-career life-style.

Such events in the life of a two-career clergy/lay couple, in which one is a clergyperson and the other is pursuing a non-clergy career, often produce a high level of stress. Some of the stresses on the clergy family are their goldfish bowl existence, unwanted expectations on the clergy spouse, and unyielding time demands. The symptoms of these stresses may be in part revealed in the increasing rate of clergy divorce and professional dropout. In addition, major stresses in the two-career life-style include lack of time together, competition between the spouses, and forced company relocation. Consequently, a given couple may be attempting to mesh two life-styles already noted as stressful on their own.

Historically, the clergy marriage has been cited as a prime example of the two-person career in which both partners contribute to the husband’s career. In reaction to this diminution of the wife’s individuality, the focus became the separate identity of the clergyman’s wife, with or without her own

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Our research indicates that the two-career clergy/lay couple represents a third main type. Major factors giving rise to this life-style include the economic situation, desire on the part of couples for more egalitarian marriages, and the increasing number of ministers' husbands. For these couples the primary concern has become the identity of the relationship as it is influenced by both careers and the issues which affect both partners, rather than the identity of the spouse in light of the clergy profession, although some aspects of the latter may be included. The "new" couple is the focus of this study.

When the stresses which are unique to this life-style are identified, couples, appointing cabinets, and concerned congregations will be able to deal with career and family situations in a more knowledgeable and supportive manner. Our efforts to identify these stresses included research of two-career and "ministers' wives" literature, a questionnaire which was administered at two seminars of two-career clergy/lay couples to forty-nine persons, and follow-up interviews. From this embryonic research, indications of the primary stresses in this life-style and how couples cope with them began to emerge. As anticipated, time management and career priority appeared as major stresses. Contrary to expectation, competition and "goldfish bowl" issues were reported as creating little stress.

**TIME**

The time demands on a clergyperson are tremendous. When the two-career factor is added to a clergy marriage, the stress multiplies. "Proliferation of activities" and "unwelcome surprise," partners—one or both—"married" to their careers, close professional relationships, emotional fatigue, and the resulting lack of quality time in the relationship are time-related stresses for both clergy and their spouses. Even when time alone was felt to be quite satisfying, clergy wives claimed that more time alone with their husbands would be a major way that their marriages could be improved.

Balancing the time demands of the couple's careers with the
time demands of their family was the single most highly stressful issue for our participants. The main complaint was "too much to do and too little time," which was complicated by the problems of scheduling the time demands of two careers with those of the family. Coping strategies for this included intentionally setting aside certain "sacred" family times, clustering meetings for the clergy and emphasizing the ministry of the laity, identifying both areas of guilt over time and the desired priorities in the couple's lives, and then acting on this new or renewed awareness. Two-career clergy/lay couples, as well as dual-clergy couples, can be a source of faithful role models in their intentional use of time.

From assumed role models, partner expectations, and the realities of time and energy limits come the stresses surrounding housework. The stress is felt by both partners, although in different ways, at different levels, and for different reasons. One may feel caught between one's own or one's spouse's expectations about house maintenance, and one's own time limitations. The other may then feel pressured into assuming household tasks which may not fit into his or her expectation of "male" or "female" tasks. One or the other's accepting a household task and then not doing it "properly," and differing definitions or what is "enough" housework may cause mutual stress.

Tension over housework seems highest among couples in the midst of role definition or redefinition. It lessens as that is more clearly delineated either toward the "traditional" solution of one partner taking primary responsibility, or the "egalitarian" solution where housework is divided according to time or interest factors. It also lessens for couples who hire someone else to do it. Consequently, stress around the division of household tasks centers first on the partners' role expectations of themselves and each other in terms of what is appropriate for each to do and how well each accomplishes a given task, and becomes complicated by the time limits imposed on them in the two-career life-style.

A major area of time stress includes scheduling weekly leisure time and vacation. The relative flexibility and length of the clergy vacation schedule is frequently seen as an advantage; yet
for many couples this is balanced by the problem of the lack of weekend and Sunday time. One wife commented that in eighteen years of two-career marriage, "throughout the whole career, vacations have been a problem. I have limited vacation time and it would have been possible to stretch it by taking long weekends, etc., but it has been very difficult to get him to do that—he almost always has a Sunday responsibility." Another couple discovered that she, as a member of a multiple staff, could choose her vacation time but then became locked into that choice; while he, as a businessman, needed to match his vacation time to lulls in the business routine which could not be forecast long in advance. The flexibility in the clergy's daily scheduling is offset by a lack of guaranteed weekly leisure time, since unexpected pastoral duties are often as near as the telephone and may conflict with a spouse's more structured weekly schedule. The postponement of scheduled time together may be a source of major frustration and disappointment for both spouses.

Emotional fatigue is also a block to spending quality time with one's spouse: often after a long day for both partners, each simply feels too exhausted to meet the other's emotional needs. So the challenge becomes the creative use of this fatigue time. One couple with older children handles this by setting aside a specific time every day after work and before supper to be by themselves in the master bedroom with the door locked and the children instructed to respect privacy and to write down any phone messages. Another couple, both in helping professions, states that rather than feeling drained, both spouses look forward to their time of sharing.

Underlying the high-level stress over time-consuming, career-related relationships may be the issue of intimacy (meaning "relationships of depth based on sharing, professional commonality, etc., which may or may not become sexual") and the couple's response to it. Professional relationships may also be seen as competition to the marriage. For some, the demands of constantly relating to professional associates, family, and others makes time alone a much-needed and rare commodity. Few other professions contain the possibility of intimacy with so many people as the clergy profession.

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Yet clergy's spouses, too, often work closely with professional associates, entering into intimate relationships. This presents various stresses on the couple. One partner may be jealous of the other's heavy involvement with his or her career or with a parishioner, for example, feeling that the time spent in these other intimate relationships is in direct competition with time that could be spent as a couple. On the other hand, the partner who is heavily invested in relationships outside the marriage may feel that he or she does not have energy to go around, and so may be stressed over the feeling of being caught, drained, and having little or no support in the predicament.

Given the immutable fact that there are still but twenty-four hours in a day, we see several implications for this type of couple. First, in this life-style there needs to be an increasing intentionality in the use of time: managing time efficiently within the couple's careers as well as setting explicit priorities as guides to the most beneficial use of leisure time. In this regard, the use of leisure time will turn more to the building up of relationships, not only within the family and with the spouse, but in personal friendships and with the self, as well. But intentionality in itself will not greatly lessen the stress over time; a certain amount of ruthlessness when dealing with time commitments and priorities is necessary. Second, with the increase of such couples and their families, we may be seeing a continued change in the self-image and in the church's view of the professional clergy. In this period of role redefinition, the support agencies in the church need to be sensitive to the stresses on the marriages of their clergy and to move to meet clergy needs. This is true especially in the area of time because of its primacy, pervasiveness, and elusive character.

CAREER PRIORITY

The importance that each partner assigns to his or her career pervades the thoughts and assumptions in the relationship and directly influences not only the individuals' identities but the identity of the relationship as well. This becomes apparent in situations in which decisions must be made concerning whose
career has priority, especially when the choices include a career modification or relocation for one or both partners.

In contrast to the "traditional" relocation pattern of the clergyman's wife when he was reappointed, the increasing number of two-career marriages and ordained women has rendered this lopsided commitment unacceptable to many couples. As a result, the issue of relocation was quite stressful to the couples interviewed, especially those in the United Methodist system. The frustrations resulted primarily from a perceived lack of alternatives which were in the control of the couples. A new appointment or job transfer often results in a partner's being torn between the desire to enable one's spouse's career and the necessity of responding with integrity and commitment to the demands of one's own career as an equally valuable vocation.

Some positive possibilities for resolving the stress of relocation are being explored by many couples. Some of the most promising grow out of the concept of "career stages," in which it is recognized that often partners are in different career stages at one time in their marriage, thus offering the possibility of slowing down one's career development in order that the other's has a chance to grow rapidly. For example, partners may alternate opportunities for further education. Second, alternatives in the use of time and energy related to careers are being explored. Rosemary Ruether offers one such alternative by suggesting a workweek that involves fifty hours per week per couple. Alternative life-styles, some catering to the differing career stages, are being tried, including living apart and commuting to be together, or the temporary interruption of one career in the interest of the other. Recent changes in United Methodist polity which allow part-time ordained ministry, in addition to the new right of clergy couples to claim or waive two minimum salaries, are advances which will enable the practice of alternative life-styles. Last, the conferences, seminaries, and employers are addressing the career priority issues through awareness, educational programs, and facilitating support groups to offer a place to explore alternatives and release some of the inevitable frustrated anger.

These developments offer some promising possibilities in this
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vital issue, for often the area of career priorities is the “jugular” area in the identity of the relationship. Here decisions are made that have far-reaching effects on the family as well as the couple. The couple and the involved employer or church need to continue to work together if the identities of each partner and the relationship are to remain healthy.

COMPETITION

Jealousy over a spouse’s successful career is popularly expected to be an issue for the two-career couple. Competitive feelings may arise when one spouse appears to be more competent or successful, causing the other to judge himself or herself to be inferior, resulting in a “status struggle.” One might anticipate, given the seeming competitiveness of two careers and the problems of status inherent in the “two-person” ministerial career where the husband is professionally trained and the wife is not but is an “adjunct” to the husband, that competition would be doubly severe for a two-career clergy/lay couple. Instead, competition rated as an exceptionally low stress for couples in both seminars.

One might account for this surprise in many ways. The Halls state that competition is most likely to be a problem if the partners are in the same career stage or in the same career. One clergy wife suggests that she sees more competition along single career couples than among two-career clergy/lay couples. In the latter couple, professional strivings of the partners are being focused into separate, less easily compared careers, rather than being channeled into one career to which the participants come with unequal status and from which they derive unequal rewards, and which hold ambiguous expectations as in the two-person career. Likewise, this type of couple is likely to be at separate career stages since one spouse often puts the other through professional school, the two-career situation being created as the spouse returns to work or as increasingly more people enter the ordained ministry as a second career.

Some couples reported that what could have become competition contributed to a sense of increased mutuality in their marriages. One couple, consisting of a clergyperson and a
helping professional, discovered that, through sharing insights of their own profession with each other, each could benefit by the other's career both personally and professionally: "Now we can't wait to get home to compare notes and share." Another lay husband takes an active role as a congregational member but avoids roles in which he would impinge directly on his wife's "territory" and refrains from discussing issues to which he feels it would be inappropriate for him to speak.

The inherent competition noted in other two-career situations may be diffused for the two-career clergy/lay couple by the peculiarities of the clergy/lay situation, of those who become clergypersons, and of those who marry clergy. The low stress over competition may indicate the value of two capable people having a place to offer their talents in separate careers.

**GOLDFISH BOWL EXISTENCE**

Expectations placed upon the clergyman, his wife, and his family have been at the heart of what has been traditionally known as the "goldfish bowl" existence. A lack of privacy, expectations of the congregation regarding childrearing, being an example in the community, expectations of denominational leaders, unwelcome surprise, and loneliness and set-apartness are noted in various literature as stresses among clergy and their spouses. Accordingly, we were surprised by the low rates of stress over privacy, expectations of co-workers or congregations on the spouse, and congregational expectations of childrearing.

Seminar discussion about privacy ranged from coping with unwanted interruptions (telephone calls during dinner, etc.) to larger issues of the clergy family's right to choose a life-style (such as living in a parsonage versus owning one's own home). In a conversation about expectations one couple recalled receiving no criticism from the congregation of the wife's career but continuous negative reaction from the other pastors' spouses. In many respects, the pastor bore the brunt of this criticism.

Historically, the tension between undesired demands upon the clergyperson and his or her family and desired opportunities
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for choosing social contacts, in addition to lack of control over life-style choice, seemed to indicate that the heavy pressure came from outside structures: conferences, congregations, etc. Low stress in this area could indicate a growing acceptance of the clergy/lay couple's right to a private life and choice of life-style, both on the part of the outside structures and on the part of the couple. Therefore, the responsibility for privacy and life-style is thrown back under the marital roof: again, an issue of identity of the marital relationship to the clergy profession. The unusually low stress in this area could indicate that couples are assuming the responsibility for and successfully managing privacy needs.

Traditionally, raising children in either a dual-career marriage or in a clergy family has been expected to be conflictive. Hall and Hall summarize the strain the birth of a child places on any marriage in terms of competition for attention, child-care demands, changing physical patterns, and enmeshed spouse and parent roles. In addition, two-career couples are burdened by society's accusation them that "their children suffer for want of full-time parental care." Although dual-career couples are faced with the stress of sharing parent roles and finding suitable child-care arrangements, the Halls report a definite trend among career couples to delay having children until after their relationship, and often their careers, are well-established, which may help them to be better prepared for the responsibilities of being parents.16

Likewise, among the seminar participants, persons interviewed, and couples whose cases we studied, no person reported that combining children and career was a major marital problem in the way that time and career priorities are; instead, children are part of the larger time issue of finding time for career vs. finding time for the family. Our couples, however, frequently reported the increased benefit to fathers and children who have developed a one-on-one relationship. As one couple stated: "The children don't have a primary parent. We each have significant parenting responsibilities." Likewise, a mother stated that while some rearranging was necessary when she went back to work, the flexibility of the clergy schedule was such that child care "was never really a problem." In addition,
the recent allowance in United Methodist polity of maternity and paternity leave for any ordained minister at the birth or adoption of a child testifies to the concern of both women and men for the responsibility of parenthood. Further research is necessary to substantiate whether the high value on family and nurture by people who become or marry clergy also helps to account for seemingly low rates of stress in combining careers and parenting.

Similarly, couples seemed much less stressed about raising children in the clergy family. In a recent study, similar results led the Kansas East Conference Committee on the Role and Status of Women to conclude that either people have exaggerated the congregational expectations placed on clergy children in the past or "it is changing." In our interviews, couples confirmed that they felt little pressure from the congregation about the way they raise children.

Several reasons for this change may exist. As clergy families claim more freedom to choose their own life-style, and when the lay spouse is employed rather than contributing to a two-person career, children are more often cared for away from the congregation's eye. In addition, when both parents work, both are more often called upon to be primarily responsible for children at different times; therefore, congregations and pastors might be less likely to blame their spouses for children's behavior. The level of stress, however, could fluctuate with geographical locations (rural, suburban, urban) or with the relative confidence that the couple has in themselves as parents.

CONCLUSION

The "embryonic" nature of this study suggests that further research in related areas would be valuable to couples, to professionals who counsel them, and to their appointing cabinets and bishops. Issues unique to the situation of "pastor's husband" will need to be identified as more women enter the ordained ministry. Research which searches out couples such as the Harpers, who have successfully but heretofore quietly answered the challenges of this life-style could be a "gold-mine" resource for others. In the unfolding stories of experienced and
newly committed couples, creative options for addressing the life-style's issues will be discovered. Even more important, such study and implementation into enrichment opportunities could help to promote "marriage stewardship" for couples as a positive and important endeavor, pointing to the maturity of the couple who choose such opportunities. Such stewardship is not characterized by maternal or paternal protection of each other or the relationship but works toward confronting the questions and resolving the problems which arise in the ongoing process of marriage. Promoting both the quality and the worth of such opportunities can help couples stabilize and enrich their own marriages. Furthermore, such an example in the church will help spread the "good news" among congregations that marriage is indeed an honorable and sacred institution, and worthy of the time, effort, responsibility and commitment necessary for stewardship of the gift of being called to marriage.

NOTES


3. This research would have been impossible without the vital assistance and support of Dr. Rosemary Keller, the Rev. Alison P. Weatherby, and Dr. Douglas Wingeier through their leadership at the Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary seminar; the Rev. William C. Behrens for his leadership at the Concordia College (Moorhead, Minn.) seminar; Richard and Shirley Harper, Kathy and Steve Mahle, and all the participants in the seminars; the Rev. John Gleason, Jr., for the rough draft of his article; and our patient families.


5. Shirley Foster Hartley, "Marital Satisfaction among Clergy Wives."


14. The use of "clergyman and his wife" is traditionally used and is accurate; we have yet to discover a study which deals with the traditional situation and includes a clergywoman and her husband.
Christian perfection, or "holy living," follows and depends upon justification. It is best thought of, not as a finished state, but as a living relationship in which God continually furnishes the gifts by which Christians are enabled to move toward the finish of the course on which they have started.

Carl Michalson begins his interesting and challenging essay "Holiness and the Maturity of Faith" with the statement "Preaching and not theology was the main concern of John Wesley." It is evident, in such a conclusion, that preaching was of high importance for Wesley. But on the other side he knew that without discipline and continual personal discourse, the best preaching could remain without results. In the Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. John Wesley and Others, from the Year 1744 to the Year 1789' this problem is described:

And we have many difficulties to grapple with in our people. Too many of them will be unwilling to be taught, till we conquer their perverseness by the force of reason and the power of love. . . . And when we have made some impressions on their hearts, if we look not after them, they will soon die away. But as great as this labour of private instruction is, it is absolutely necessary. For, after all our preaching many of our people are almost as ignorant as if they had never heard the gospel. I speak as plain as I can, yet I frequently meet with those who have been my hearers many years, who know not whether Christ be God or man. And how few are there that know the nature of repentance, faith, and holiness! Most of them have a sort of

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confidence that God will save them, while the world has their hearts. I
have found by experience, that one of these has learned more from one
hour's close discourse, than from ten years public preaching.4

These two aspects illustrate very well, the importance of
sanctification and its role in the life of a Christian.

John Wesley was interested in preaching that was rooted in
sound doctrine. This is evidenced by his fifty-three Standard
Sermons and the Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament. Every
preacher was expected to “preach no other doctrine than is
contained in Mr. Wesley’s Notes Upon the New Testament and
four volumes of Sermons.”5 “In both the Sermons and the
Notes, the primary doctrinal norm is Scripture, first and last, but
always Scripture as interpreted by living tradition and vital
faith.”6

John Wesley’s theology never was an elaborated system of
thoughts. His theology was informed constantly by new
experiences. He was interested in Christian experience and
encouraged others to make their own experiences with God.
These experiences had not their weights in themselves. They
had to be proved in the light of the gospel. Sanctification is more
connected with Christian experience than with Christian
doctrine. And John Wesley was primarily interested in the
change of heart rather than change of doctrine.

RELATION BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

Albert Outler explained in a convincing way that before 1738
John Wesley “misplaced ‘holiness’ (or pure intention) before
justification, as preparatory to it . . . . One of the decisive shifts in
his 1738 transformation was the reversal of this order. Thereafter,
justification always stands first as a necessary precondition of
human salvation.”7 This change in John Wesley’s thinking
becomes evident in the way he extracted “The Doctrine of
Salvation, Faith and Good Works . . . from the Homilies of the
Church of England.”8 And it becomes much more evident in his
Standard Sermons where he again and again underlines this very
point: justification comes first, then follows sanctification. I quote
from Wesley’s sermon “Justification by Faith”: 
What is justification? And it is evident, from what has already been observed, that it is not the being made actually just and righteous. This is sanctification; which is, indeed, in some degree, the immediate fruit of justification, but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies, what God does for us through His son; the other, what He works in us by His Spirit.

And in another paragraph of the same sermon Wesley underlines:

This seems not to be at all considered by those who so vehemently contend that a man must be sanctified, that is, holy, before he can be justified. . . . So far from it, that the very supposition is not only flatly impossible (for where there is no love of God, there is no holiness, and there is no love of God, but from a sense of His loving us), but also grossly, intrinsically absurd, contradictory to itself. For it is not a saint but a sinner that is forgiven, and under the notion of a sinner. God justifieth not the godly, but the ungodly; not those that are holy, but the unholy.

Justification comes first, sanctification follows. That is clear for Wesley. He denies, on the other side, that these are two different aspects of a single event. Wesley insists on the "real change that takes place in our hearts, lives and loves—as we become 'new creatures in Christ.'" Thus (Wesley) is able to interpret salvation as a process: one that begins with justification but that continues thereafter as the regenerate person grows in grace toward sanctification as a flying goal.

Justification is what God does for us; sanctification is what God does in us. In justification we gain God's favor; holy-living is the life-process in which we seek to retain it. . . . Justification is the threshold of faith; sanctification its fulness.

I do not understand my task to work out in detail the difference between justification and sanctification. After this short introduction I want to concentrate on sanctification. And I do not only speak as a theologian but also as a minister in the church of Christ, being involved daily with parish-people and unbelievers and those who are seeking the kingdom of God.

SANCTIFICATION—HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS

It opened a new horizon for my understanding of Christian perfection when I was informed by Albert Outler that John
Wesley learned his understanding of perfection from the early fathers. "Perfection" meant "perfecting" (telos), "with further horizons of love and of participation in God always opening up beyond any given level of spiritual progress." It is hard for people brought up in or influenced by Latin thought-structures to understand "perfect" in this way. "Perfect" for them means a finished state of growth. In order to understand Wesley this notion of an open process must be taken into consideration. It offers a solution to the difficult question of Wesley and many of his contemporaries of whether sanctification should be described as a gradual transformation or as a sudden change. Wesley was wise enough to leave it open. In the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, edited 1798, under Section IV "Of Christian Perfection" the attempt is made to balance it out.

The question is raised: "But as to the circumstances, is the change general or instantaneous?" And the answer is: "It is both the one and the other." But then the advice is given to insist on the gradual change and that earnestly and continually. But on the other side it is said that the hope of a total change is a stimulus for the growth in grace. "Therefore, whoever would advance the gradual change in believers, should strongly insist on the instantaneous." This advice is inspired by pastoral experiences but also by the theological insight that being a Christian means to be on the way. Today it might be better to speak of relationship, a relationship between God and persons. Wesley sounds very up to date when at the end of a long discourse (A Plain Account of Christian Perfection) he writes:

In one view, it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is the giving to God all our hearts: it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is devoting, not a part, but all our soul, body, and substance to God. In another view, it is all the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of Him that created it. In yet another, it is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.
All this means that persons open themselves wholly to God. Holiness or sanctification then is a result of this lived, vital relationship with God. Christians live with God and therefore go on to perfection. “This is God’s method. First, a sinner is pardoned; then he knows God, as gracious and merciful; then God’s laws are written on his heart; he is God’s, and God is his.”

John Wesley was very much influenced by writers like Bishop Taylor, Thomas a Kempis, and William Law. They were his teachers in the art of holy living. Till 1738 he understood holiness as something man has to do to prepare himself for justification. His Aldersgate experience helped him to understand that God’s grace is nothing a man can work for; it is God’s free gift to the ungodly for Christ’s sake. Here he left the Anglican way of piety he was instructed in. But he didn’t drop the idea of holy living. He placed it differently. Holy living was not any more an attempt to win God’s grace, but an answer of that living faith that had been brought to life in the act of justification. It is life in the presence of God, “being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” (Luke 1:74-75 KJV). John Wesley explains this verse in his Notes Upon the New Testament this way:

Here is the substance of the great promise, that we shall be always holy, always happy; that being delivered from Satan and sin, from every uneasy and unholy temper, we shall joyfully love and serve God, in every thought, word and work.”

Albert Outler describes the fact that John Wesley binds faith alone and holy living together as his “most original” contribution, as another of his characteristic “third alternatives.” Wesley’s own way of living was not always agreeable to others, though it must be said that many of his friends and followers have understood his message. The natural man does not want to live in tension. So always again one can observe one-sided reactions; on the one side a kind of passive piety, comparable to the “German stillness” of the Moravians in London, on the other side a proud claim to have reached the goal, Christian
perfection, which in such cases always meant a state of a "sinless life." Methodism's temptation never was so much "stilness" but a certain kind of enthusiasm which has found expression in holiness-movements, self-righteousness, pentecostalism, and legalism. John Wesley saw these dangers and tried to meet them.

The minutes of the early conferences show this clearly. The most impressive document in this struggle for perfection against all kinds of misunderstanding is a pamphlet entitled "Cautions and Directions Given to the Greatest Professors in The Methodist Societies" which later was woven into A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. It shows how temperate and clear-headed John Wesley was without losing the goal. He gave six counsels (I refer to the headings): (1) Watch and pray continually against pride, against every kind and degree of it. (2) Beware of that daughter of pride, enthusiasm (defined as grasping for happiness without submitting oneself to its necessary preconditions; or as Wesley put it himself "expecting the end without the means"). (3) Beware of antinomianism (doing your own thing, regardless). (4) Beware of sins of omission (getting tired and supposing that what you've already done is plenty—or at least enough). (5) Beware of desiring anything but God. (6) Above all beware of schism, of making a rent in the church of Christ.

Faith alone and holy living belong together. Sanctification means "going on to perfection," not in my own power but empowered by the Holy Spirit who provides every newborn Christian with "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22 RSV). These are, according to Wesley, the "ordinary fruits" of the Spirit. All the possible extraordinary fruits and gifts the Spirit might give to one or the other must be judged by the "ordinary" Christian virtues. This distinction between ordinary gifts and the extraordinary gifts is crucial for Wesley's understanding of holiness.

John Wesley's keeping together faith alone and holy living can also be seen in his understanding of the law. "The gospel embraces the law." Holy living is not a precondition for justification but the necessary consequence. In explaining 1 Pet.
“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”

Wesley says: “The oracles of God teach that men should repent, believe, obey. He that treats of faith and leaves out repentance, or does not enjoin practical holiness to believers, does not speak as the oracles of God: he does not preach Christ, let him think as highly of himself as he will.”

To the ceremonial law of Old Testament times Christ has put an end. The other, the moral law, is not ended by Christ. Only its condemnation and curse is ended in the gospel. “The moral law is holy, just, and good in its own nature; and to guide believers in all holiness.” Wesley calls it the “law of love,” the holy love of God and of our neighbor. The law is used, according to Wesley, (1) to convict of sin, (2) to bring sinners to Christ, and (3) to “keep alive and prepare the believer for larger communion with God.” In the New Birth a person enters into a new relationship with God. “Holy living” therefore is an adequate expression of this new relationship to God. The newborn person hears the command of the law as a promise because he or she now knows who wants obedience. As Michelson has put it:

The preaching of the law on the lips of Christ is the preaching not of command which burdens, but of permission and promise. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” heard as a command is quite a different kind of reality when heard as permission or promise. As promise, it is Gospel. As a command, it is a curse. The commandments of Christ “are not grievous,” because in him all the commands of the law are “proposed by way of promise.” “Every command in holy Writ is only a covered promise” and Christ removes that veil from the law.

Luther and the other reformers discovered the biblical and early-Christian reality of the priesthood of all believers. This opened for normal Christians new ways of responsible living in this world and in the church. The Magna Charta text of this understanding is I Pet. 2:9 (KJV): “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of the darkness into his marvellous light.” Baptism is the act of ordination into this priesthood, Luther underlined. But as history shows, the discovered possibilities for laypeople were not used. The concept of the priesthood of all
believers was more a theory than a reality. In enjoining “practical holiness to believers” Wesley opened a way to put the idea of the priesthood of all believers into practice. The class meeting makes it evident that “going on to perfection” is not the isolated attempt of the single individual but is a continual experience in the fellowship of believers. So Wesley could write: “As princes, ye have power with God, and victory over sin, the world and the devil; as priests, ye are consecrated to God, for offering spiritual sacrifices.” Sanctification is a work of God in the soul of man. Without God we are nothing, but in communion with God we have power and victory over sin. But this experience took place in fellowship with others. So, to speak about sanctification and not to consider the class meetings would be misleading. Wesley preached and taught Christian perfection, but it wasn’t just a theological concept he tried to communicate; he wanted genuine Christianity to be understood and lived to the full. Genuine Christianity finds its adequate expression in a life of holiness. And a holy life is a happy life, too. Christians whose hearts have been filled with the love of God through the Holy Spirit are happy people. It’s interesting to note that John Wesley was not interested in eschatology because he was convinced that all has been reached in the experience of love, love of God and man. So he could say: “I will not now shock the easiness of your temper by talking about a future state; but suffer me to ask you a question about present things. Are you now happy?”

In the context of the priesthood of all believers, another aspect must be mentioned too. Holiness and Christian liberty were almost the same thing for John Wesley. A person going on to perfection was one who lived in this Christian liberty. In a letter to Joseph Benson, Wesley wrote:

Perfect love and Christian liberty are the very same thing; and those two expressions are equally proper, being equally scriptural. “Nay, how can they and you mean the same thing? They say you insist on holiness in the creature, on good tempers, and sin destroyed.” Most surely. And what is Christian liberty, but another word for holiness? And where is this liberty and holiness, if it is not in the creature? Holiness is the love of God and man, or the mind which was in Christ. Now, I trust the love of God is shed abroad in your heart, by the Holy
Wesley was very much aware that with class meetings and band meetings, Methodist people realized the priesthood of all believers. The rules given for band meetings began with the sentence: “The design of our meeting is to obey that command of God ‘Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed’ (James 5:16 KJV)” In explaining this verse Wesley wrote: “To one another—He does not say, to the elders: This may, or may not, be done; for it is nowhere commanded. We may confess them to any who can pray in faith: he will then know how to pray for us, and be more stirred up so to do.” In the class meetings believers learned not only to articulate their beliefs (an important process of human maturing) but also to build up each other and to bear one another’s burdens, a real priestly function. Could the priesthood of all believers, understood as holiness, find a better expression than in those words of the covenant service? “We take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience, and engage ourselves, for love of thee, to seek and do thy perfect will. We are no longer our own, but thine.”

SANCTIFICATION—ACTUAL OBSERVATIONS

Some personal remarks. On the whole, in contemporary Methodism—if I may generalize—Christian perfection is for many people more a theory than a practice. But the notion and experience of Christian perfection remains a continuing challenge to Methodism and the whole Christian family.

In the last five years I have discovered in my pastoral work that “going on to perfection” today is as real and exciting as it was in the days of John Wesley. We have started Methodist class meetings again and have discovered the same difficulties which John Wesley described in his letter to Vincent Perronet: Many were at first extremely averse to meeting thus. Some, viewing it in a wrong point of light, not as a privilege (indeed an invaluable one) but rather a restraint, disliked it on that account, because they did not
love to be restrained in anything. Some were ashamed to speak before company. Others honestly said, "I do not know why, but I do not like it."

But we also experience the joy John Wesley talked about:

Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to "bear one another's burdens," and naturally to "care for each other." As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And "speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, increased unto the edifying itself in love."30

It was surprising for us that we could almost with the same words describe our actual experience.

It must be said again: Christian perfection is nothing man can produce. It is a work of God. Today I would like to say it is a result of my relationship to God. As any living relationship it is like a dynamic process, open to the future. Our future is open because we love God. He calls and we follow. In the moment we hear his voice the ability to answer is awakened. In the ongoing relationship we learn to hear better and to respond more adequately.

I have won a new relationship to discipline. First I have heard it with German ears. The German word Disziplin sounds more like "law and order" and a life under military rules. I have discovered that discipline is the life of those who live as disciples of Jesus, being under the law of Christ (I Cor. 9:21), who bruise their own body and make it know its master (I Cor. 9:27). But this one can learn only in Christian fellowship. In one of Charles Wesley's hymns it is clearly pictured:

Help us to help each other, Lord
Each other's cross to bear,
Let each his friendly aid afford,
And feel his brother's care.

Help us to build each other up,
Our little stock improve;
Increase our faith, confirm our hope,
And perfect us in love.
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

In John Wesley's time many were interested in perfection understood as a state of sinlessness. But this kind of expectation kills the dynamics of life. If one is interested in reaching a certain state he or she can lose sight of what a living relationship means. The center of the question how perfect one can become in love is: what is possible for me if I learn to love God and others from all my heart. I can love Him because He first loved me. This is a relation of a personal kind, open to the future, always growing in quality, never ending. If I am asked how one can get in touch with God I answer with the words of the General Rules:

“. . . by attending upon all the ordinances of God;
such are:
The public worship of God
The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.
The Supper of the Lord.
Family and private prayer.
Searching the Scriptures.
Fasting or abstinence.”

And I would add “Christian conference” as practiced in class meetings. By doing so we do not force him but wait for him. And he will speak at the time he appoints.

Holiness as the maturity of faith has two main functions in the “communion of saints.” It is a hermeneutical key in testing and interpreting the life of the church and the quality of the individual Christian life (John 13:34-35, 1 Cor. 13). For holiness is nothing else but to love God and the neighbor. In this Christians have to encourage each other as long as we live in this world.

The other function is: Holiness secularizes the world. Our danger is to love the world instead of God. He who loves God can accept the world as God’s creation as a place to live in responsibly.

“How shall we assume responsibility for the world without turning it into a new object of devotion?” and the Gospel answer would be, “Ye shall be perfect!”, which is to say, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor,” meaning, the new law of Life which is a word of promise and permission: “Receive the world from God!”
NOTES

4. Discipline.
8. Outler, p. 57.
12. Plain Account, pp. 5-9.
14. Outler, pp. 73-75. Cf. p. 35: "His driving passion was to find a third alternative to Pelagian optimism and Augustinian pessimism with respect to human flaw and the human potential."
17. Wesley, Notes; I Peter 4:11.
18. Wesley, Notes; I Tim. 1:8.
19. Michalson, p. 138
20. Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, "Allgemeines Priestertum."
21. Wesley, Notes; I Peter 4:11.
23. Wesley, Notes; I Peter 2:9.
25. The Theological Commission of the Council of European Central Conferences published a little booklet under the title "Geschenkte Freiheit" (Liberty as a gift) interpreting Christian perfection as a life in Christian liberty.
28. Wesley, Notes; James 5:16.
31. Michalson, p. 158.

Response to "Notes on Christian Perfection"

As one reviews Wesley's writings on the doctrine of Christian perfection, one is both comforted and confounded. He or she is comforted in the timeless similarity in the fellowship of the church and Wesley's refreshingly candid acknowledgment of
the resistance, apathy, and ignorance he encountered among the early Methodists as he sought to guide them into a knowledge and experience of disciplined, holy living. On the other hand, one is confounded by the endless controversy, contention, and confusion which always result as persons seek to interpret their own faith experiences and evaluate the faith experiences of others within a fellowship of mutual concern.

Helmut Nausner is very helpful in three clear observations relating to Christian perfection. First, he correctly sets Wesley's teaching within the context of the historic Christian faith. His citing of the early Fathers, devotional writers, and Martin Luther indicates that all of Wesley's ministry was carried out in an ecumenical consciousness. Responding to his particular situation of ministry, Wesley exercised his legitimate freedom to build upon accumulated scholarship. It is at this point that Wesley is often unfairly discredited, and unwittingly, Nausner joins an all-too-familiar chorus. He sees Wesley as choosing between preaching and theology, doctrine and experience. On the contrary, Wesley's genius was that he conceived the preaching and teaching of doctrine to be live functions which required practical application in close-up, day-to-day living with fellow believers. His courageous creativity is an encouragement to development of a contemporary Christian piety which is ecumenical, honest, and distinct.

Second, Nausner is very helpful in interpreting Christian perfection as a process, the prospect of which is a motivation to the believer's growth in grace. However, he is neither as sharp or specific as Wesley in answering the question whether the attainment of perfection is gradual or instantaneous. Wesley repeatedly used the analogy of death in explaining that although one is not always aware of the specific moment of death, nevertheless, there is such a moment. Likewise, the individual who attains perfection may not perceive the specific moment of realization; theoretically, there is such a moment when deliverance from unholy affection is first experienced.

Third, Nausner is most helpful in making a clear distinction between justification and sanctification. He reminds the reader that Wesley understood faith as an activating agent of divine grace which leads toward increased moral sensitivity and in-
creased moral possibility. The prior necessity of justification declares that faith can never be a passive response to a holy God. It also declares that faith cannot be an unassisted human enterprise.

No short article on Christian perfection could possibly be comprehensive. Nevertheless, as ministers seek to apply this Wesleyan emphasis within the local parish, they may encounter some perspectives of the doctrine which Nausner completely ignores. First, there is Wesley’s consistent teaching that all genuine believers experience perfection before the moment of death, with the mark of this perfection being a total resignation to all events as the divine will. Pastoral insistence on such a doctrine might raise more problems than could be handled in an ordinary class meeting!

Second, Nausner misses Wesley’s very forthright definition of perfection in relation to continued human frailty and mistakes. Perhaps the honesty and reality of the pastoral Wesley, in acknowledging human error by individuals whose love and intention are perfect, is one of the most appealing features of this doctrine for contemporary audiences.

Last, Nausner ignores the problem of properly interpreting the doctrine of Christian perfection within a local congregation in which (1) many are nominal members who have no apparent desire for Christian growth, and (2) many are skeptical concerning any pursuit of spirituality which sounds exclusive in nature.

It is difficult to evaluate what Nausner really means, at the end of the article, by the two main functions of an emphasis on maturity of faith. It seems that he suddenly springs two favorite theological words on the reader, that is, “hermeneutical” and “secularizes,” without giving proper warning before or proper explanation afterward. If he sees these as the two main functions of an emphasis on Christian perfection, the reader would have been more edified by his setting these functions forth earlier and then really grappling with how they are revealed in parish life.

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GOOD PREACHERS ARE GOOD LISTENERS

HAROLD BRACK

Parishioners detect the preoccupation of preachers who are concerned only with what they themselves are about to say, and in defense adopt a similar "monologic" style of response. But if preachers listen, as they speak, to the Word of God and to the congregation, their own hearers will be enabled to hear them gladly.

Preachers functioning in today's changing context need to keep open their lines of communication with God, with their people, and with the moving liturgical climate. Liturgically, the movement across a broad segment of the denominational front is toward a more celebrative worship style which rejoices in what God has done rather than mourns what people have failed to do, and in which laity are sharing more of a leadership role. Theologically, along with the evangelical thrust there is a growing awareness of process and of commitment to do theology in the world. Humanly speaking, the work is "liberation" for many groups from a variety of forms of oppression.

Just to be aware of and keep pace with this kaleidoscope of dynamics, preachers need to be keen and constant listeners. Monitoring the numerous dialogues is essential if we are to be aware of the yearnings and issues that should be addressed from the gospel. The participants crave a genuine, active, and empathetic hearing.

However, for a number of years I have listened to students in

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Protestant and Catholic seminaries, and ministers in pastoral renewal institutes and doctor of ministry programs discuss ways of improving congregational listening, of involving laity in the preaching event. Sometimes these discussions focus on sources of sermon materials and the possibility of utilizing the listening done by experts and distributed in various periodicals that intend to be a resource for one's preaching ministry. Better stories, images, illustrations, and examples selected from such digests are seen as means of stimulating interest in the sermon.

On other occasions the suggestion is made that we need to educate the laity about the place of preaching in worship and what they should expect and be listening for in the sermon. In short, the suggestion is that we train laity in the art of listening to sermons and gaining a better understanding of the Word of God as a sufficient rule and guide for the practice of faith.

Now there is no doubt that the concern to encourage more adequate listening to preaching is genuine. Neither could it be said that better sources of sermonic material or that improved methods for presenting the role of preaching and more productive ways of hearing the sermon are without merit. However, it does seem that improving the preacher's own listening skills holds greater promise for renewing the vitality of preaching.

Preachers have probably tended to overlook listening as a primary sermonic activity for themselves because they have identified listening as the parishioner's task during the proclamation of the Word. However, it is precisely this identification of listening as the paishioner's task that prompts us to make a priority of that same activity for the preparation and presentation of sermons. Parishioners need a better model of the listening activity in which they are supposed to be engaged.

If parishioners imitated much of the preaching they normally hear, they would go out and tell someone else, moralize at someone else, or abuse a captive audience with their personal stories. They would not listen to the situation or to the other person because by and large the preaching they have heard has been a model of monological nonlistening. Preachers have been preoccupied with schemes of being listened to and not with ways of becoming better listeners.
In some ways preachers are victims of their own profession. After having listened to so much bereavement, so much anger, so much guilt, so much bitterness, so much loneliness, so much despair, and so many complaints they develop a style of listening that saves them from being buried under an avalanche of bad news. They listen at a distance or through protective filters.

With many tasks to do each day preachers develop a knack of listening to two or three messages at the same time. They become adept at giving the appearance of listening while being primarily attentive to other thoughts or other conversations. They greet the persons before them at the door of the church while thinking primarily about another person farther back in the narthex for whom they have a message.

Ministers read the Scripture lesson for Sunday or sections from commentaries about the passage in preparation for Sunday’s sermon, but all the while their mind is also occupied with recalling a counseling conversation or with anticipating a committee meeting that they will be attending that night. Those engaged in ministry are in danger of developing a chronic nonlistening behavior.

To view the sermon as a nonlistening monologue to be performed with an expertise worthy of a climactic movement in the corporate worship event has a profound impact on the preparation of the sermon. Preachers strive to prepare sermons as finished pieces to be expertly performed for critical observers who possess limited capacities for biblical and theological appreciation, and are more responsive to pyrotechnics than to proclamation.

Even more damaging is the impact on the preaching of the sermon. Preachers come to expect that their hearers will listen only to what has been spoken in the sermon and that these hearers will be markedly impressed with the eloquence of that preaching. So preachers tend to preach in a way that is likely to evoke compliments about their performance. Paul would have said that they have yielded to the temptation to preach themselves.

Preachers should become more ambitious about the listening response that they want to evoke from their congregations. Their intention should be to carry the listening of the people
beyond the words of the preacher to the words of the gospel, so that preacher and people are listening together to the gospel.

The preacher's behavior is crucial in moving people to this second level of listening. A pivotal question must be asked of the preacher. Are you listening now, while preaching, to the gospel or just reporting on a listening done at an earlier date in your study? The kind of listening you do while you are preaching will prompt the kind of listening which the congregation will do. If you have focused your listening on what you have composed in order to speak it more ably then the congregation will focus its listening on what you have composed and not on the gospel itself.

We now come face to face with the question of whether the aim of preaching is good speaking or good listening. The answer, of course, is that the aim of preaching is to facilitate good listening to the gospel. A key question to be asked about any preaching event is not how well the preacher is speaking but how well the people are listening to the gospel. Are they where hearing the preached word as a potential revelation of God's redeeming love for them? Is there an awareness of the emerging voice of God?

Now if preaching is going to encourage more active listening to the gospel, then that preaching needs to suggest that it has been motivated and inspired by what the preacher has been sharing, is hearing, and expects to hear in the gospel. If preaching is to become a genuine gospel listening experience for the congregation, then it must first become a genuine gospel listening experience for the preacher.

Worshipers soon recognize that this immediate experience of listening to the gospel emerges from earlier listening experiences of the preacher which have occurred in a broader context of listening to the gospel, the liturgical season, and life in the parish.

Preachers may unconsciously shy away from any profound listening to the gospel for fear that they will feel called to make more of a commitment or more of a change in their own life than they feel that they can now manage at this stage with the responsibilities that they presently bear. Guarded listening on the part of preachers will be quickly detected by those hearing their sermons. Soon members of the congregation will be
hedging their hearing of God's Word as well. What a tremendous obstacle a preacher's guarded listening can become to the people and their hearing of God's Word.

Another pulpit-centered obstacle to the hearing of God's Word may be the preacher's own reluctance to have people listen to preaching with a keen and perceptive ear. The preacher may not want to risk any genuine self-disclosure—to reveal any personal impact of the gospel or any personal faith struggles with the gospel. A preacher's manner may say plainly enough, "Listen to the words I speak for you but not to my wrestling with the Word as it speaks to me."

If, as preachers look out on their congregations, people do not seem to be open to any real listening to God's Word, or if they are really listening but not open to sharing how that Word convicts or confuses them; then preachers might well ask if their congregations are simply mirroring the listening behavior of their preachers. It may be that the listening fault lies not so much in our people as it lies in ourselves as preachers.

Frequently, we skip the listening phase of sermon preparation because we are convinced that we have heard it all before and that we are not likely to hear anything new this time around. Some would call us gospel-hardened. We need a greater awareness that whether or not the gospel and the liturgical seasons are the same, the situation may not be the same and we surely are not the same. New perceptions of life in the parish and new struggles with our own theological understanding prompt us to bring new needs and new questions to our endeavor to listen to the gospel. In prayerful and faithful listening to the gospel we soon make the joyful discovery that we have not heard it all before. Indeed, we may hardly have heard any of it before.

Preachers may also shy away from any real listening to the congregation before or during the worship event because they do not want to risk being distracted from their own leadership focus. In some cases this is because their preparation is so minimal that they do not have a firm mental grasp of the content of the worship service. In other cases it may be due to a lack of confidence in their personal communication skills. Professor Forman stated clearly the necessity of moving beyond this stage
of preaching competency when he wrote, "I have never known a good speaker who was not at the same time a good listener and a keen observer." (R. C. Forman, Public Speaking Made Easy [Westwood, N. J., 1967], p. 104.)

Or preachers may have stereotyped their parishioners as critics of the worship service or mere observers of the worship service and failed to consider them as participating partners who have contributions to make which can enrich and enliven the worship event. Indeed, a greater awareness of an appreciation for the ways in which members of the congregation are responding to the preached word may well inspire and encourage the preacher to a fuller sharing and abandon in preaching. This observation is confirmed by Jack Daniel and Geneva Smitherman when writing about communication dynamics in the black church. "As a basic communication tactic, call response seeks to synthesize ‘speakers’ and ‘listeners’ in a unified movement.” They also describe the way in which responses to the call support the speaker: “... the audience’s linguistic and paralinguistic responses are necessary to co-sign the power of the speaker’s rap or call. They let him know if he’s on the right case. A particular individual’s linguistic virtuosity is rewarded with a multiplicity of fervent and intense responses.” ("How I Got Over: Communication Dynamics in the Black Community," Quarterly Journal of Speech [February, 1976]: 33.)

All preachers could improve their responsiveness to the congregation’s participation in the preaching of the gospel by more actively listening to the congregation during the delivery of their sermon.

While homiletic listening does facilitate preparation and presentation of sermons, its primary character is not privately productive but publicly pastoral. The listening which accompanies the preparation of the sermon is a kind of “prevenient listening” which goes before the congregation, scouting out the terrain of the gospel and discovering the best route to take for mutual explorations of its meaning.

This pastoral character of the listening continues in the preaching event itself and is accompanied with a prayerful petition that the Lord will so help us to hear the good news that it will become for us, now, the very word of life.
So, one might say that as we listen to the gospel with the congregation, even as we are preaching it, that we are engaged in a kind of intercessory or advocacy listening. Our intention in listening with them to the gospel is, for love's sake, to assist them in entering into a right relationship with God and with their neighbors. So we are talking about an active, faithful, loving, hopeful, empathic listening to the Lord, through God's Word, in the full expectation that God will come and save us. In addition, we are talking about an openness to the presence of the Spirit which recognizes that when we are gathered in worshipful listening to God's Word the Spirit may come among us freeing tongues to speak and ears to hear. God may choose to bless our listening to the divine Word with divine presence.

We have now come far enough in our discussion of preaching. Preaching is the initiating of shared, worshipful experiences of listening to the gospel. In the preaching event we are learning together with our people to become more perceptive and more appreciative hearers of God's Word and to share more fully what we are hearing.

Note the word *initiating*. Our aim is to start something, not to end it. We are not talking about a kind of "rhetorical" listening for which we preachers will state all the conclusions. We are not talking about a kind of listening for which we preachers have the only correct interpretation. We are talking about helping laity discover and develop their own creative capacity for hearing God's Word. We are talking about a preaching stance in which the preacher is asking "Do you hear what I hear?"

Instinctively, most of us do this when we read the service for the burial of the dead. We read the lessons as a kind of offering to the people suggesting that we hear in God's Word profound meaning and help for our lives during this bereavement experience, and we prayerfully hope that they will hear such meaning and help as well.

All of this is to say that if you are a Christian preacher then a primary task of your vocation is to be an active, faithful, prayerful, pastoral listener to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your sermons are to be answers to the question posed by the laity "What do you hear in the gospel for today that might have a saving meaning for us?" We would all do well to place over our
desk God's word to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!" As disciples of Christ we are commanded to listen to him.

Those who would take this advice to heart have probably already recognized that it will require some significant changes in how we go about our work. We will have to budget our time carefully so that we can achieve a leisurely experience of in-depth listening to the gospel. Moreover, we will have to go public with our listening and expose what we are hearing to what our people are hearing. Not only that, but we will figuratively have to come down off our pedestal and take a seat in the pew among the people trusting that our best proclamation will occur when we more fully identify with our people in their earnest, desperate effort to hear the good news. Good preachers are good listeners.

Responses to "Good Preachers Are Good Listeners"

"Good Preachers Are Good Listeners," by Harold Brack, is both relevant and timely for doing ministry. He has correctly identified a basic problem blocking the possibility of good preaching. As Brack argues, preaching is problematic because the process has become monological. Therefore, I agree with him in his appeal for good preachers to become good listeners.

He is right. We as preachers have become selective in listening to the Word of God, to people and their situations and to liturgical seasons. As a result, the efforts at hearing and seeing in the process of preaching are characterized as nonlistening.

Brack's significance is the analysis of the problem related to listening on the part of the preacher and the implications for the parishioners. When preaching, which is public, becomes monological, parishioners receive the impact of the behavior and the detected attitude. They too become nonlisteners, thus also monological and selective in their listening.

There is reason for what he calls nonlistening on the part of the preacher. The preacher for protection purposes, filters what
he or she hears against the constant complaining and negative bickering. It becomes an operative approach, affecting everything we do. It is further complicated and exaggerated because of our desire for the image of preacher as leader, and our wanting to stay on the pedestal. It creates for preachers and parishioners alike an enslaving situation.

These obstacles can be dealt with in the preaching process. Nevertheless, Brack wants us to start with the preacher, rather than continuing to work with parishioners. He thinks, and I agree, that the preacher must see the opportunity for liberation and good preaching in the area of listening. There is great risk. The preacher must sacrifice exposure, superficial image, and pedestal for the proclamation of the gospel. No longer is the preacher attempting to produce the final word or finished product. We are now identifying with the parishioners and struggling to see and hear what the Lord has to say to us before, during, and after preaching.

Finally, I agree with Brack’s aim for preaching, the facilitation of good listening to the gospel. It is not an end in itself, but effective to the process. Good preaching is inclusive of our struggle toward faithfulness and liberation of both the preacher and parishioners. It calls for full participation in the preaching process, which includes good listening.

Russell McReynolds
Pastor, Bethel United Methodist Church
Flint, Michigan

As I read “Good Preachers Are Good Listeners,” I was reminded of the words of David in Psalms 62:11: “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.” Though the author of the article does not define what he means by the second level of listening, perhaps he means that we should listen twice as much as we talk. Zeno, a Greek philosopher wrote, “The reason why we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may listen the more and talk the less.”

The author states his case for listening to the lay people of one’s congregation very well. As an army chaplain (active and National Guard) and hospital chaplain, I have always felt that it
was important to listen to the needs of our people. If we ignore their needs (spoken and unspoken), we will find that we are preaching sermons that are not relevant to the people to whom we minister.

I do not accept his hypothesis that "preachers are victims of their own profession." If indeed we do "listen at a distance or through protective filters," we are not only failing as preachers but as pastors and counselors. In order to minister to people in their joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, health and illness, we must listen.

Though I found myself agreeing in most part with what the author wrote about listening to our people, I felt that he failed to follow through on "listening to the gospel." I kept searching for some guidance on how to be a better listener "to the gospel," but was left unsatisfied. He states well what listening is not, but left me wondering what good listening is. Even though I have some questions about good listening, maybe I will be more aware of the need to listen in the future. I am sure that when the preacher listens to his or her people and to the Word of God, he or she will be speaking words that will be heard.

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State Chaplain, Louisiana National Guard
Among the many candidates for the reading time of clergy, professors, and interested laypeople, quarterly journals are important. When one reflects, however, on precisely what is available through such publications, one may seek some data to help in assuring alternatives. There are, of course, many reasons for subscribing to particular journals, and some come in the normal course of affairs from one or more alma maters. But in deciding between alternative possibilities (and in this matter choices must be made, simply to avoid drowning in a sea of unread materials) perhaps it will be of some value to consider the issues addressed in this article. The kinds of comparisons made between the selected journals could be extended to any others of interest to any given reader.

The flood of catalogues, proclaiming recent and forthcoming books in the fields that religion comprises, threatens to inundate all readers. Despairing of even catching titles and authors in those subjects which happen to be among the staples of one’s inventory of interests or one’s current enthusiasms, how is anybody going to be prescient enough to recognize those books destined someday to become classics? One strategy many of us adopt is to subscribe to journals whose editors provide us the service of listing books received and of having a sample of them reviewed. Further, the editor, or some aide assigned the title of book-review editor, may occasionally have commissioned a review article in which one or several related books are more extensively reviewed. Well-done reviews may contribute to our decision to read or not to read that particular work. Knowing this about us leads some publishers to commission and publish short review pamphlets. Independent review journals are presumed, however, to be more open and less biased. Further, the significant portions of quarterly journals typically devoted to reviews is for many of us an important aspect of our decision to subscribe to them.

James B. Wiggins, at time of writing the head of the department of religion at Syracuse University, became in January Executive Director of the American Academy of Religion.
But quarterly journals provide much more than reviews of recent books. And significant numbers of persons subscribe to one or more. What do they find? When the editor of Quarterly Review proposed that I undertake an exploration of some journals in the fields of religion and theology, supposing that I had a fairly accurate impression of those to which I subscribe or into which I regularly dip in our library, I agreed. In the process, however, I became much more aware of the distinctive differences between the three which were selected to be considered.

No claim is made that these are necessarily the "best" journals. Rather it is claimed that any candidate list would likely have to examine the Journal of Religion; the Journal of the American Academy of Religion; and Theology Today. I determined to search out the purposes of those who founded these journals, which meant perusing some of the volumes from the early years of each. Further, I was interested in taking a careful look at such questions as: Who publishes in these journals? How broad are the respective journals, in the range of subjects addressed in articles published in them? Does stability of editorship have a perceptible effect? Are there "party lines" which characterize articles in them? Does the sponsorship of the journal perceptibly color the tone and tenor of the journal? Other less fully formulated questions also formed the deeper background, and the project was underway. The most extensively explored period was 1977-81. This five-year period might, I supposed, have turned up ideas, issues, authors, problems, and books, which I had missed but perhaps not irremediably.

What follows is decidedly not a "scientific" analysis. Rather, it is one reader's report and response to what is there for anyone sufficiently interested or perplexed to go and consider in his or her own terms. Some arithmetical data are included, but even they are subjected to no statistical analyses. Alas, a humanist who long ago became incurably cautious about statistically based efforts to claim more than the relevant data could support, would be reluctant to attempt such. Finally, then, it is an unabashedly impressionistic reflection. Make of it what you will!

THE JOURNAL OF RELIGION

This, the longest-lived of the three journals, dates back to 1921. The faculty of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago decided in the preceding year to strike out on the venture by generating the new journal as a continuation of The Biblical Word and The American Journal of Theology. Little imagination is required to realize that such a decision
would have been reached only after serious, and probably lengthy, debate. The predecessor journals whose titles named their respective emphases—the Bible and theology—must have been founded and perpetuated by persons deeply interested in those particular subjects. To change to a successor in which ‘religion’ was the featured subject surely must have occasioned intense discussions.

How rewarding it must have been to the first editors and the supporting majority of that divinity faculty to report the following in issue number 3 of volume I:

The number of subscribers gives evidence of a significant body of men and women in this country who believe that religion is worthy of the most careful scholarship and who expect that such a scholarly study of religion will enhance its prestige and usefulness. This widespread interest is shown not only in the subscriptions but, in the constant stream of contributions voluntarily sent to the editor.

The journal’s aims and purposes (which, it shall be shown, have remained the stated aims until today) were stated on the same page:

Can the results of scholarship be made interesting? Upon the answer to that question depends the future of religion. . . . Does religion continue to be interesting when the facts are carefully scrutinized? Here is the crucial test which scholars must meet. *The Journal of Religion* is established to discuss religion as a vital human interest.¹

High aspirations and ready response seem to have characterized this journal from its very beginnings. The editorship of the journal over the decades has consistently been provided by persons holding faculty positions at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. This has had the salutary effect of constancy of character for the journal even though there have been a number of editors or co-editors in sixty-one years.

There is high scholarly quality to the journal overall. The largest proportion of the articles and reviews falls into the areas of philosophy of religion/theology (60 articles and 32 review articles from a total of 84 articles and 44 review articles). Religion and culture, primarily religion and literature, articles are a distant second (9 articles and 4 review articles). Six articles or reviews are by women, 122 by men. Seventeen of the authors of articles or review articles appear twice and one, three times. The main emphases which appear to recur are Whitehead/process thought and Ricouer/hermeneutics. Although both are
characteristic aspects of religion study at Chicago, neither is unduly represented during the years under examination.

For a subscription rate to individuals of $18 annually (less for multiple-year subscriptions), this is a journal which will challenge and sharpen readers with philosophical and theological concerns. The articles are often very technical exegeses of writings by or themes in the works of major thinkers, past and present—Locke, Hume, Schleiermacher, Whitehead, Bunyan, SK, et al. As such, readers with prior familiarity with, or interest in becoming acquainted with, such figures will be repaid.

In the "Statement of Policy," which precedes the contents in every issue in recent years, one reads that this journal seeks "to promote critical and systematic inquiry into religion." No longer explicit is the emphasis found in 1921 on the determination to provide "interesting" scholarship. Perhaps it was long ago realized that the future of religion was not so dependent upon that! This is a professional journal for professionals. Relatively few books are reviewed in the journal. Several recent or current professors at Chicago have published in the Journal of Religion during the period 1977–81, notably Gilkey, McGinn, Browning, Scott, Yu, Gustafson, Brauer, Marty, Ogden. Several of the other authors are graduates of the Divinity School at Chicago and as such may have already been known to be significant thinkers when they submitted their work. I would, however, be inaccurate to regard this as only a journal for Chicagoans. Very few of the authors have published articles in either of the other two journals to be examined, and so far as I have discovered (excluding book reviews or book notices), only Professor Jacob Neusner of Brown University has had works in all three journals during this period.

In sum, one must conclude that this sophisticated, scholarly journal is not for everyone. In spite of the words from an advertisement for the Journal of Religion which appeared in 1978—"the Journal publishes essays on all aspects of historical and contemporary religion and religious life"—it would require more than the five volumes under review here to demonstrate that such is what really happens, rather than an aspiration. The current editors are Professors Brian Gerrish, David Tracy, and Anthony Yu, all highly regarded scholars in their respective areas of study.

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

A reader seeking to have familiarity with the greatest range of topics and issues in religion studies, the largest number of religious
traditions, the largest number of books reviewed, the largest number of authors, the largest number of pages published during 1977-81 and the highest subscription rate will subscribe to JAAR.

It was not always so. From modest beginnings in 1933 this journal was initially entitled Journal of the National Association of Biblical Instructors. The publishing organization dated back to 1909 and was primarily populated by undergraduate teachers of religion. In spite of the catchy acronym (all you Hebrew cognoscenti know the meaning of NABI), the title was changed in 1937 to the Journal of Bible and Religion. Despite several efforts to change that name during the next decades, it was not until 1967 that the journal became the JAAR. This was three years after the sponsoring organization had changed its name to the American Academy of Religion. Both changes were belated, since the membership had much earlier come to include persons in many disciplines in addition to biblical studies. In 1964 it was time to make a concerted effort to incorporate theological school and graduate school professors of religion in greater numbers. In short, the AAR aspired to be the most inclusive and representative organization of religion scholars in the country. This has largely come to pass in the almost twenty years since that decision was made. Never was it intended that the AAR would replace the more specialized societies. Many AAR members, perhaps most, concurrently hold membership in one or more of the related professional societies.

One of the pivotal thrusts of the AAR has been to develop its significant publication program. The JAAR has been the flagship publication of the organization. During the decade of the seventies it was among the most innovative journals available from any professional organization. Throughout that period Professor Ray Hart was the editor. The expansion of the journal during that time was remarkable. In 1970 the four numbers which made up that year’s volume contained 427 pages, which was approximately the size it had been for decades. By 1979 the four numbers contained 1848 pages!

In 1970 the JAAR published 18 articles; in 1979 that number was 67. An annual additional number of the journal was developed which contained related articles in a thematic study. Between 1977 and 1980 the JAAR included abstracts of a number of articles which any reader could order for a modest cost, either on microfiche or in hard copy. By the time of Hart’s retirement from the editorship and his replacement by Professor Robert Scharlemann, however, it was judged to have been an insufficiently successful innovation to warrant continuation. Since 1980, the journal has reverted to printing all the articles it publishes in full. The concept of a supplementary number containing thematically
related articles has also been dropped. And the number of pages was
reduced to 660 in 1980 and 770 in 1981.

In subject matter the JAAR has been remarkably inclusive between
1977 and 1981. The disciplinary foci: 48 articles in philosophy of
religion; 21 in theology; 20 in biblical studies; 17 in religion and
literature/arts; 13 in each of Judaica and religion and culture; 10 in
Islamics; 8 in each of ethics and Hinduism; 7 in Buddhist studies; and
20 in a variety of other subjects. Some of the articles are interface
studies which defy conventional categorization. Some of the articles,
but comparatively few, are review articles. Further, during the period
several hundred books were reviewed. The reviews are consistently
arranged under a listing of subjects such as biblical studies, theology,
East Asia, South Asia, etc. Finally, there is a listing in each number of
all books received by the journal. Some of those are destined to be
reviewed in subsequent numbers of JAAR, but there is often a
significant time lapse between book publication and review
publication.

The authors whose writings appear in JAAR are impressively
diverse. Excluding book reviews, 221 separate works by 204 different
authors appeared. Seventeen persons published twice during the
period, but none more than that. Seminary professors, undergraduate
teachers, graduate teachers; famous and first-time publishing authors;
theologians and historians of religion; state college and university
professors and independent university professors; men but also
women in significant numbers—these are but some of the diverse
characterizations of the writers. The encompassing field of religious
studies has had no more dramatic emblemization than in the JAAR
between 1977 and 1981.

Yet one wonders in the face of such diversity whether the whole
coheres. So diverse are the riches of this cornucopia that it is less than
immediately obvious what, if any, threads of commonality are there.
To be sure, a very careful system of refereeing lies beyond the
publication of anything in this journal. This, however, only testifies to
the scholarly quality as adjudged by the editorial consultants. It cannot
assure concurrence between those consultants regarding criteria of
quality and publishability. What counts for quality in one subdiscipline
may not be as important in the considerations of those judging quality
in another area. Finally, one is forced to accept and trust the
competence and judgments of many different people with a variety of
agendas and interests. This may be construed negatively, or it may be
construed, as I construe it, as a manifestation of what is meant by a
community of scholars.

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Thorough and thoughtful reading of the JAAR would provide anyone with an awareness of and significant insights into the reaches of contemporary scholarship in religious studies. If anyone were inclined to doubt their complexity and extensiveness, this journal should eliminate such doubts. On the other hand, the diversity may heighten a reader's frustration by underscoring that nobody, any longer, could possibly be master of the entire field. That, however, might be a salutary, even if sobering realization. For $35 a year, or as a part of one's membership dues in the academy, anyone interested in religion will have one valuable index to the scholarly work in the field.

THEOLOGY TODAY

With its editorial locus at Princeton Theological Seminary, Theology Today is the youngest of the three journals. The first number appeared in 1944 in the midst of the crisis of World War II. In the four decades which are concluding this year this journal has achieved a remarkable consistency and maintained great fidelity to its founding purposes. Those were clearly summarized in the initial editorial "Our Aims." John Mackay wrote: "Theology is never irrelevant to the affairs of men, least of all in days like these. In a period of confusion and crisis, . . . theology is the most important study in which men can engage as they make their pilgrimage from one era to another, and from this world to the world to come." That conviction was shared by Mackay's associate editor, Hugh T. Kerr, who succeeded Mackay as the journal's editor and has remained until today. Few journals ever enjoy the stability and continuity of a single editor's work for such an extended period. Thus, whatever judgments one makes regarding Theology Today requires assessing the editorial work of Professor Hugh Kerr as a prominent aspect of the judgment. In 1979 President James McCord, scarcely an unbiased but a judicious scholar, wrote of Kerr in a moving testimonial guest editorial entitled "Hail to the Chief." Thirty-five years of stewardship do, after all, provide a significant data base for some observations.

McCord wrote that a great editor of such a journal has three primary characteristics:

A deep knowledge of and commitment to a living tradition is certainly one. . . . Another mark of a great editor is the ability to sense trends as they develop but not to take them with ultimate seriousness. Theology Today was designed to be a literary journal, not a technical one, to illuminate new
ideas as they develop, to include articles dealing with disciplines cognate to
technology, and to attract as its readers interested and intelligent lay people as
well as clergy. . . . A third quality to be found in a great editor is concern for
clarity and style.

It would be difficult to express a more balanced evaluation of the
journal itself than to read McCord's word specifically characterizing
Kerr's editorial gifts. And people respond to it. In 1981 it was mailed to
9,778 subscribers, up from 7,562 in 1977. Its editorial council
membership consists of 30 to 35 persons, each of whom serves a five-
year term with five to seven new members beginning each year. Most
of the names on the lists are widely known scholars, editors,
churchmen. Some prominent Princetonians appear, of course, but
certainly not a controlling number and all are persons with impeccable
credentials.

Theology Today does not primarily focus its attention on academic
teology. Its interest in the current religious scene is expressed in
scholarly work but rarely in the specialist connotations of scholarship
which are far more characteristic of the Journal of Religion and the JAAR.
The closest comparable journal to Theology Today with which I am
acquainted was the now defunct Religion in Life. Theology Today is
Christian in its orientation in the sense that it presents concerns which
are important for Christians to consider and take into account and also
that the materials published are most often by persons worrying issues
which arise primarily within a Christian context.

Many issues of Theology Today are topically focused to a significant
degree. Some samples during 1977-81 are: Missions and Evangelism;
New Day, New Laity; Religion and Pain; Religion and Race;
Forgiveness; Women in Religion. In some instances proceedings from
various conferences on one of these themes are presented as a
symposium. In other cases articles on a common topic are assembled
by the editors. Recurrent features include editorials, articles, "Critic's
Corner," poetry, "Theological Table Talk," "Church in the World,"
and reviews, although not every number includes all of these features.

The authors in a significant majority of instances are persons
currently on the faculties of theological schools. Several ministers and a
few prominent lay churchmen published during this time. Only a very
few writers are from departments of religion in colleges or universities.
Doctor Kerr is, however, ever alert to programs of professional
organizations such as the AAR, the American Theological Society, the
Society of the Scientific Study of Religion, et al. Further, he often
solicits papers presented at such meetings for publication in *Theology Today*.

There is a recurrent "practical" thrust to this journal in the very best sense of that term. As the preceding list of topics indicates, there is a concern for timely praxis as a part of the continuing Christian tradition. Effective communication, both in style and content, related to a continuing wrestling with the authority of the biblical witness are two of the most recurrent features of this journal. The articles are more numerous than in the other two journals even though the number of pages (an average of about 540 during 1977-81) is roughly comparable to that of the *Journal of Religion*. This results from *Theology Today* publishing many relatively short pieces, poems, movie criticisms, etc. At a subscription rate of $9 for two years this is a remarkable bargain.

The differences between the other two journals and *Theology Today* need to be underscored. This is a serious journal but it is not a scholarly journal to the same degree as the others. It is a timely, relevant, practical journal which I suspect is of great value to clergy, laypeople, and church theologians. Given the distinction's merit (and it is surely debatable), academic theologians and scholars in other subfields in the study of religion are, I suspect, less likely to give equal time in their reading priorities to *Theology Today* in comparison with *JAAR* or *JoR*. This hunched observation, however, should not be misconstrued. It only underscores the differences in accomplishments as well as purposes between these respective journals. Every publication finds its own audience, if it is to survive. My further hunch would be that more consistent readers of *Theology Today* would read it from cover to cover with regularity, than is likely to be true of readers of the other two journals. That is due to the highly specialized and often quite technical character of many of the items in each of the others, which, I suspect, may be of arresting interest most often primarily to fellow specialists. But since so few numbers of either of those journals contain articles pertaining to only one field, it is very likely that some readers typically read some articles, other readers, other articles.

**CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT**

Journals are many things to many people, and these three journals are likely to provide as comprehensive a set of indices to the state of reflection on religious matters as is to be found. Readers with more specialized or focused interests may well choose other than these. But consideration to these is urged, if only to help readers establish their own criteria for selecting.
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Continuing education events

Women's Theology: Implications for Ministry
March 7-10, 1983  2 CEUs  $84 tuition
Dr. Rosemary Keller, associate professor of religion and
American cultural studies and co-director, Institute
for the Study of Women in American Church History,
G-ETS.

Biblical Preaching
March 14-17, 1983  2 CEUs  $84 tuition
Dr. Ronald E. Sleeth, professor of preaching, Iliff School
of Theology.

Career Assessment Lab
April 25-28, 1983  2 CEUs  $150 tuition and
materials
Dr. Douglas E. Wingeier, associate dean of ministry
programs and professor of Christian education,
G-ETS;
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