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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 relevance 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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EDITORIAL

Television and Religion

When the space shuttle Challenger exploded on January 28, many of us experienced a familiar but disturbing chain of events. People tended to remember where they were and what they were doing when they first heard the news. In my own case, we were having a staff meeting and had just returned from lunch. Our department head returned from his office to say he had just talked with his wife, who was visiting relatives 1,500 miles away, and that she had seen the explosion on television and described it to him. We were disturbed, and, as the afternoon went on, I at least began to dread returning home that evening because of what I would see on television. In many ways my fears were borne out, particularly in the incessant repetition of the event that television news seems to dote on.

The explosion of the Challenger was as much a media event as it was one of the failure of space technology. The space program has used television all the way along in its program, so that the various space shots and explorations have come to resemble a space-age soap opera. The difference between a staged event and a real one has become hard to detect by merely watching the screen. This difficulty led one viewer to remark, after the lunar landing in 1969, that he thought the event actually took place in a television studio.

This close relation between large public events and television impressively brings to our attention the power of television. The media in general and television in particular have become so powerful that conventional wisdom dictates that political candidates must adapt themselves to these forces to survive. And since religion also deals with power, it seems appropriate to ask about the relation of television and religion.
To begin with, it seems clear that television news, as distinct from programming, does record events in the real world. The camera, in fact, exposes, potentially, the entire world, an activity that is usually characterized in media studies as surveillance. All the media, not just television, monitor events and report them for diffusion. This activity of reporting is highly selective, because with an almost infinite number of events from which to choose the media can select only a few. The role of the media is to gather information, edit it, and produce an interpretation in a format that can be appropriated by the public, or certain publics. Since people in the media have some genealogical ties to that dubious activity known as public relations, they cannot resist claiming that they "cover the world," or serve as "eyewitness" to the news, and so on. These pretentious claims quickly dissolve once we begin to examine the way media institutions do their work. Economic limitations prevent any given medium, whether newspaper or television station or whatever, from doing very much investigative reporting. And each kind of medium is limited as well by its technology. It is no accident that local television news thrives on fires, whereas newspapers do their best work on crimes. The one medium depends on visual excitement, the other on secrets made manifest.

These criticisms of television do not mean that television surveillance is fictional or imaginary. But they do mean that television news presents an interpretation of reality, an interpretation very evident despite the fact that some "factual" events in an "objective" world are involved. The nature of this interpretation emerges in one of the most notorious aspects of television, its continual dwelling on bad news. The reason for this seeming bias is, paradoxically, the assumption that daily life consists of normal and healthy patterns. "News" by definition becomes reports of the abnormal, the exceptional. Understandably, many consumers of the media abhor bad news, particularly when they are featured in it, and nearly all of us have learned to fear media reports, just as we were horrified to watch an explosion that incinerated seven courageous astronauts.

Stanley Cavell, a writer and thinker who has written a great
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deal about the media, has made a point about the reporting of this bad news that applies especially to television: "The fear of television—the fear large or pervasive enough to account for the fear of television—is the fear that what it monitors is the growing uninhabitability of the world, the irreversible pollution of the earth, a fear displaced from the world onto its monitor . . . ." ("The Fact of Television," *Daedalus* [fall 1982], p. 95). Cavell goes on to comment that this fear probably explains the artificial friendliness assumed by many news reporters on television. Because the news they report is dreadful and even threatens the existence of society, they must offer a palliative, which comes in the form of small talk, a sort of "whistling in the dark." News programs regularly include a humorous incident or a human interest feature at the conclusion. It is as if the media wanted to be a parental surrogate.

What Cavell seems to have in mind is not just that crimes, accidents, and immorality often seem to dominate the news, but also that television has very close associations with the rise of technology that menaces humankind. Television became a force immediately after World War II, when nuclear weapons also became a factor in human survival. It was during this same period that the accumulated effects of industrialization began to be evident in ecological crises. The nuclear threat and environmental disasters together make up one continuing crisis, one brought about by a misuse or abuse of science. The immediate signs of this crisis appear regularly on television in the form of reports of air and water pollution, chemical waste dumps, and spills from ships and trucks that harm people and nature. The ongoing nuclear crisis appears not only when television reports on nuclear spills and nuclear accidents like the one at Chernobyl, but also when international conflicts threaten to get out of hand and lead to nuclear war.

Surveillance, then, has the effect of giving us a continuous vision of approaching disaster, a vision that becomes real on "live" television when we witness an event like the explosion of *Challenger*. ("Live" is not a very apt term, since what is being described is direct transmission simultaneous with the event under view, but it has become the vernacular and I accept it as a succinct if not accurate term.) The way television professionals
respond to such disasters tends to underscore this sense of being threatened. When news reports are prepared under normal circumstances, they seem to have practically the same quality as entertainment programs. They are presented as dramatically as possible, and many of the devices we ordinarily associate with fiction are used to interpret events. For instance, reporters “tell a story,” or report on a “tragedy,” or point to a “mystery.” Television news even assumes a taxonomy of types into which stories are fitted—weather stories, war stories, corruption-in-politics stories, etc. And these types are tightly scheduled—no matter what the quality of news on a given day, the news program runs just the length of time allotted for it, no more and no less. But when television news reports on a crisis as it is happening, these artificial constraints are lifted and reporting becomes open-ended. The reporters and announcers often do not know what to say, editors are unable to cut and trim as usual, and production is determined by the nature of the event, not the schedule or the market. Viewers then become highly conscious of the limits and ambiguities of the situation. The event does not fit into a “frame.” Interpretation must be developed as the event occurs, which may be a period of several days or even weeks.

Does this live coverage contribute to our fear of the world, a fear that we transfer to the reporting medium of television? The answer is yes and no. Live television news, in contrast to regular news reports, has the curious effect of reinforcing the power of television while at the same time undermining it. The power of television is reinforced because the immediate amplification of a crisis, with its attendant visual effects, demonstrates the difference between television and mere verbal reporting. But this very experience makes us dissatisfied with normal television reporting because it shows us what events are really like. Once we know the true power of the medium, we become aware of the promotional and phony devices of daily news reporting. We become aware that news programs are all too brief because we have learned that a serious interpretation of events requires more information and analysis. We begin to have the same attitude toward the media that real participants in events often do: we sense the complication of reality, the pluralism of
perspectives, and the limitations of "frames" that force particular events into stereotypes.

Live television thus has a dual but contradictory effect. On the one hand, we sense an identity with large historical realities and feel a part of them. We no longer feel as controlled by television, because we can clearly see that television itself has lost some of its control. On the other hand, our sense of being threatened may be augmented because we know that no single or simple interpretation of events will do and that the resolution of the problems posed by historical events will be very complicated.

But the reports shown on live television do not lose their vitality with the end of the events that produced them. As soon as live coverage ends, the regular news reports begin to incorporate an interpretation of events into day-to-day coverage. This coverage by regular news tends to domesticate crises. We experienced this domestication after the Challenger explosion when we watched television reports on the panel investigating the cause of the disaster. The domestication of crises is related to a second function of television news, which is the development of "icons." The interpretations that the media make of reality often coalesce into certain powerful images. These images are repeated and treated in popular culture but also in high art, serious literature, and formal education. They thus become visual or mental determinants for society's self-evaluation and expectation.

Many of these images are simply of famous persons, and we are used to seeing James Dean, Andy Warhol, and Marilyn Monroe in iconic poses of the rebel, the artiste, and the femme fatale, respectively. Other images may evolve from pivotal events rather than celebrities. For instance, Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his speech with the famous passage, "I have a dream"; a South Vietnamese policeman was shown in a photograph holding a pistol to the head of a prisoner, whom he shot at that moment; and the earth was shown rising over the horizon of the moon. All of these images symbolized critical moments in our recent history, and the repetition of them on television and in books and movies and other media continually reinforces our memory of the events surrounding their origins. Probably the explosion of Challenger will become one of these icons,
symbolizing perhaps the Promethean weakness of space technology. And of all the media, television most forcefully imprints these iconic images on our minds and in our psyches.

Television thus seems like religion in many respects. Both have the power to evoke fear—in fact, depend on evoking fear in order to exist. Both evolve images that transfix masses of people and in some ways stir their imaginations. We could probably argue for other similarities, such as the obsession of both television and religion with apocalyptic futures, their reliance on texts, and their power to make us conscious of history as a dynamic reality. But perhaps it is enough here to note the common factor of fear.

Fear may be a positive force, of course, since it may embody elements of reverence and respect toward a holy reality. Religious fear may also be creative, just as live television engenders a sense of power in viewers. And if we are going to appraise fear in this constructive way so far as religion is concerned, perhaps we can also acknowledge that television may invoke fear for worthwhile purposes. It would seem, for example, that we are right to fear nuclear war, and the inception of this fear may very well lead to pacific solutions to international problems.

To compare the fear brought about by participation in religion and the fear created by television may seem discomforting to religionists, since it seems to support the view that religion has lost its power. The words we speak, the stories we tell, and the symbols to which we point, as we go about our religious ministries, all seem to pale beside the power of television to interpret and define reality. When we examine this apparent "god in a box" more closely, however, we find it strangely vulnerable and quaintly built on many conventions that we had thought were outdated. Most of us are aware, for example, of the development of illustrations in books or magazines, in which the text comes first, and then the pictures are added. Television still seems to operate on the same principle. Furthermore, the fact that television commercial producers have only recently discovered the advantages of putting words on the screen at the same time those words are being spoken says worlds about the intellectual lag of the media. Thus television
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has its weaknesses, too, and it seems questionable to regard it as an irresistible, dominant power.

It is said that the pygmies of Africa have a method for killing elephants with primitive weapons. They wait until the elephant is asleep, which it does standing, and then creep underneath and ram a spear into the soft underbelly. The consequences of failure are obvious. But as in so many cases, here the hunter and the hunted live symbiotically with each other. The elephant benefits from having small enemies with primitive weapons, and the humans benefit from having access to huge supplies of raw materials. Perhaps symbiosis portends our way of relating television and religion, where we religionists think of ourselves as the pygmies underneath ponderous pachyderms. It may be, though, that television and religion seem to be enemies precisely because they have an affinity for each other.

We would benefit from research into questions about this seeming symbiosis: Will television become as critical in the formation of religion as was the print media? Have certain symbols or motifs in religion nurtured the growth of television? Does television news reporting compete with religion as the social basis for the definition of reality? What will be the effect of a medium that arouses historical consciousness on the most historically sensitive of religions—Christianity? These speculations do not necessarily eliminate a justified fear of television, but they might provide a basis on which we could begin to understand television and the other media, and we seem to be a long way from doing that in the church today.

—CHARLES E. COLE
CAN WE DETER DETERRENCE?

EDWARD LEROY LONG, JR.

Is it possible to work toward a limitation of deterrence in relationships between the nations analogous to that achieved in relationships between individuals and groups?

This discussion considers the moral issues raised by deterrence, particularly those forms of deterrence that have come to have so central a role in the relationships between the major powers in the last thirty-five to forty years. The atomic or nuclear age has raised urgent questions about the safety and morality of keeping the peace by threatening to use force. The possible miscarriage of the means of deterrence has become an increasingly serious threat to the continuance of human life on this planet.

On August 6, 1945, a weapon of an entirely new genre and of unprecedented power was dropped on a Japanese city, followed by similar action against another Japanese city three days later. Although there have been informed scholars who have suggested that the Second World War was practically over before these two bombs were used, the dominant popular tendency has been to defend the actions at Hiroshima and

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Nagasaki on the grounds that they did much to end a war that might have been concluded by conventional means only at a much higher cost. According to this view, the use of the two atomic bombs ended the war, not because one side achieved victory in the ordinary military sense of attaining strategic superiority in the use of arms, logistical outflanking in the deployment of forces, or success in battle, but rather because it demonstrated in the horrendous destruction of two whole cities how great a calamity could be visited on those who dared to continue the conflict. Japan surrendered suddenly and almost unconditionally, possibly less because it had been defeated in the normal processes of warfare, than because it had been made so afraid of what would happen if it continued to engage in conflict.

The strategy of ending a war by making one of the parties too fearful to continue waging it has given a tremendous impetus to the idea that war can best be prevented by making others too afraid to wage it at all. Terms like “nuclear umbrella,” “massive retaliation,” “mutual assured destruction,” and “instant and total retaliation” became common on the lips of strategists and statesmen and have been employed to make others afraid to resort to aggression.

The possession of the atomic bomb and, later, of nuclear weapons has created a qualitatively different kind of world situation from that which characterized traditional conflict. The capacity to create a great fear in order to keep others from doing what you do not want them to do has given a heightened—almost new—dimension to the arms race. Instead of developing strategic instruments with which to thwart the particular actions of others at the time and location of such actions, defense has become a general posturing designed to convince others that they must not make any steps or missteps that displease those who have nuclear firepower at their disposal.

The development of the nuclear standoff—starting from victory by blackmail and resulting in deterrence by terror—has created a confrontation in which each side that has nuclear weapons can destroy the other side—and perhaps the very life processes of the world itself. It has shaped four decades during which the ever-escalating use of fear has become a cornerstone
of policy. As nuclear weaponry has been further developed, dwarfing even the destructive potential of the bombs used against the cities of Japan, the threats relied upon to deter others have reached dimensions that defy normal imaginations. The means to carry out the threats upon which deterrence depends have come to involve higher and higher capacities for unleashing violence. Even those who advocate the usefulness of modern forms of deterrence often admit that if the brinkmanship does not prevent a nuclear conflagration the consequences will be devastating.

II

The situation in which the world now finds itself has crept upon us so slowly that we do not always perceive the staggering nature of these changes. One way of becoming aware of the striking transformation that has occurred is to pause to compare the kind of deterrence that was common before the advent of the Second World War with the kind of deterrence that has become increasingly characteristic of the nuclear standoff.

France once developed a famous line of underground fortifications aimed at preventing the German army from marching west and conquering its territory. That massive effort was defensive deterrence. It was intended to maintain the safety of French territory without mounting a direct threat either to the territory of Germany or to the lives of the German people. Admittedly, this strategy proved unsuccessful when mobile strike forces were able to go around the end positions of the underground installations and to come upon them from the rear, but that does not change the fact that this whole undertaking was a complex military version of a fence.

With the advent of air power and the use of obliteration bombing in the Second World War, and with the development of atomic and nuclear firepower capable of destroying large centers of population, the quality of deterrence has undergone a momentous shift. Instead of preparing to strike against an invading military force with an essentially defensive response designed to neutralize a particular military thrust, the nuclear powers have escalated a form of deterrence in which the
generalized threat has reached the highest imaginable levels. Instead of creating the military equivalent of fences, such deterrence relies upon the massive use of intimidation—making hostages out of vast civilian populations.

Moreover, because it relies upon the capacity to inflict massive destruction on the whole infrastructure and population centers of other nations, this form of deterrence becomes qualitatively different from threats to use specified retaliations for specific wrongs. In some ways, this shift is like a shift from the behavior of parents who tell their children that they will lose certain privileges or even suffer certain punishments if they transgress specified rules, to the behavior of parents who try to ensure good behavior by raising the level of projected punishment so high that the children live in mortal fear that they will be mercilessly bludgeoned for any transgression of the parental wishes.

This kind of deterrence is curiously bound by a logic of escalation. Each side must feel it is the strongest side in the sense that it can most quickly and most thoroughly annihilate its potential enemies. An increase in the strength of any party causes other parties to make themselves still more capable of quick and total retaliation, even if such retaliation can only be delivered from an outpost station after the main geography of the “deterring” nation has been destroyed. Nuclear technology makes it possible not only to have more destructive capacity at a nation’s disposal than would be needed to destroy another nation, but also to place that destructive capacity in relatively small logistical units—units that can be hidden and kept operative even after a major devastation of a nation’s main centers of habitation.

Although it is widely recognized that open conflict between the major nuclear powers would result in unthinkable horror and the annihilation (or at least the destruction of the civilized viability) of each, many people harbor a hope that neither side will ever be so foolish as to make a move to set these mechanisms of destruction in motion. Thus, although there is a rational realization of the need to bring the process under control, that realization has less effect on defense policy than does the pressure to build greater and greater weapons and more and more “sophisticated” schemes to deliver them.
Moreover, deterrence is covertly considered to be exempt from moral judgment because it is felt that as a mere threat it avoids the moral problems that would come about with the actual use of violence. “Sticks and stones will break my bones,” goes the ditty we learned in childhood, “but names will never hurt me.” In the present mind-set of the nations this sentiment has been recast to say, “Threats to destroy the other country and all its people will keep them from mounting an attack on us, and as long as such threats are made credible by the technical capacity to carry them out they will never hurt because they won’t have to be used.” Deterrence is exempted from moral judgment precisely because it is intended to prevent, rather than actually promote, the violence of conflict.

III

This escalation of deterrence in the nuclear context exhibits a pattern of development that is almost directly contradictory to the patterns that can be observed in matters involving deterrence in other aspects of life. Rather than escalating the means of deterrence as they develop, civil orders bring the use of threatened retaliation under increasing restraint.

Posted at the entrances to many campuses are signs indicating that the facilities are for the use of students, faculty, staff, and visitors. In big letters at the top of these signs there is usually a word of welcome, but in rather small letters at the bottom of each of them there is often a phrase that conveys the warning, “Trespassing policies are enforced.” Such signs are erected, in part, as deterrents to the misuse of a campus by unwanted or malicious intruders. Few would raise an issue concerning the moral legitimacy of these signs—though from an aesthetic perspective they do sound a trifle inhospitable. Were a university, however, to shoot holes in the tires of every car found on its property without authorization, it would soon face suits for damages. If it beheaded trespassers caught on its property, it would soon face criminal charges. While a university has a right to deter the misuse its facilities, that right is circumscribed by both civil sanctions and criminal law.

Similarly, on the streets in many communities there are signs
posted that say, "This is a Neighborhood Watch District." People on the streets where these signs have been posted have banded together to deter crime in their environs by paying attention to what goes on and alerting law enforcement officials to suspicious incidents. These signs represent a morally acceptable form of deterrence, not least because there are limits to what people in such neighborhoods can do to deter crime, even as there are limits to what a college or university can do to prevent trespassing. The people of a neighborhood cannot conduct a massive assault on those who they feel are doing wrong in their part of town. There may be some social circumstances, such as on the frontier, in which people do—in Lone Ranger fashion—take drastic action to maintain a semblance of order, but the very process of civilizing a community leads to the imposition of limits on the means that can be employed to deter wrongdoing.

When, under extreme and unusual circumstances, citizens take private actions to protect themselves from threats to life or limb, prosecutors and juries sometimes recognize the right of self-defense and do not prosecute or convict people who have done violence to those who have threatened them. But no serious student of the legal order would advocate private retaliation as the most desirable means of preventing crime, nor would any informed criminologist argue that the essence of police work is merely to escalate the capacity to destroy wrongdoers by violence.

Sometimes the restrictions that deter deterrence seem annoying. Many feel they ought to have the right to prevent being wronged by whatever means are necessary to accomplish that purpose. The great American penchant for possessing handguns is a manifestation of this attitude. Similarly, it is not easy for the police to accept scrutiny of their operations by civilian review boards, particularly if those boards are not familiar with the hazards and dangers of police duty. The dampening effect of possible review on the freedom to deter crime by whatever means it takes to keep communities safe is understandably feared, yet such review is crucially important to prevent law enforcement becoming a kind of tyranny.

In all of these instances the legitimacy of deterrence is
acknowledged, but distinct limitations are placed on the kinds of actions that may be taken to prevent wrongdoing. The limitations on the actions that can be taken to deter people from trespassing or malfeasance against others vary from social context to social context and show up more clearly in situations of well-established order than in situations where the legal system is less reliable. Under revolutionary or frontier conditions the actions that may legitimately be employed to deter wrongdoing may be far less restrained than is the case under more stable social conditions, but even in such conditions limits are often tacitly agreed upon. Primitive societies often rule out any kinds of actions between tribes that would threaten the viability of the life of all the tribes. For instance, where all tribes are dependent upon a common water supply, no one poisons the wells. The logic of civilization is to limit the range of condoned deterrence, to limit rather than to expand the kinds of threats that are mounted, and (as much as possible) to confine the use of coercion to deputized officials whose job it is to protect public safety without letting the exercise of coercion get out of hand.

The logic of civilization is to limit the range of condoned deterrence, to limit rather than to expand the kinds of threats that are mounted, and (as much as possible) to confine the use of coercion to deputized officials whose job it is to protect public safety without letting the exercise of coercion get out of hand.

The question posed by this article is, can we deter deterrence? The issue to be explored is whether, given the kind of deterrence now relied upon by the major nuclear powers, it is possible to work toward a limitation of deterrence in relationships between the nations analogous to that achieved in relationships between individuals and groups in civilized societies. The inquiry being pursued here does not seek to arrive only at a moral judgment on the legitimacy of deterrence or certain forms of deterrence. Rather it examines how the position one has with respect to the
nature and necessity of deterrence is likely to stem from the basic belief one has about the nature of the human situation and the grounds upon which people, either as individuals or as national groups, interact with one another. We will examine how four different groups respond to the question.

IV

There are those who believe that we dare not let down our guard against aggression in an international order in which there are no operable legal restraints upon the power to threaten others. This belief is so deep-seated that its adherents answer our question with a vehement no. Their judgment that we cannot limit deterrence stems from a belief that the interactions between large political groups have progressively (or, might one say "retrogressively"?) arrived at a situation where (whatever may once have been the case) nothing but the threat to destroy or terrorize an opponent has credibility as a means of keeping that opponent from violating the rubrics of decency. One thoughtful observer of the modern scene once called this condition "The Death of Ethics" and suggested that just as the sensed reality of a transcendent God has slowly evaporated from the consciousness of Western culture, so the felt restraints of moral scruples have ceased to be operative in relations among nations. The only thing that deters nations from undertaking wrongful actions against each other is the fear of suffering massive damage if they try to do so.

This judgment about political affairs—which is a form of political realism carried to a reductionistic extreme—holds that nothing operates in the dynamics between the nation (or, in dealing with outlaw or terrorist groups) but the threat of retaliatory power. It may be more clearly manifest in the actual conduct of policy makers than explicit in the rhetoric of scholars. Indeed, many scholars who designate themselves as political realists are deeply disturbed by the idea that there cannot possibly be any limitation on deterrence. Nevertheless, in the last forty years the contention of political realism that there is a sharp distinction between the behavior that is possible in dealing with individuals and closely knit groups and the
behavior that is possible in dealing with sovereign nations has comforted policy makers who have been determined to maximize the threat to use force as a means of preserving peace. The difference that we have identified between the escalation of deterrence in the international sphere and the control of deterrence in civil orders is judged to be a normal and inevitable feature of political life that must, however regretfully, be accepted as a given feature of a divided world.

Realists like to talk about the need to take power seriously. The reductionistic misuse of political realism has taken this to mean acting as though only coercive threat is effective in countering aggressive behavior and as though moral suasion has no possible utility in curbing the misdeeds of large hegemonic bodies. This view considers any effort to limit deterrence in the international arena foolish at best and dangerous at worst and proceeds to uphold and legitimize the exercise of power amidst the harsh contests of will that occur in the world. Its main locus of trust is the hope that the balance of terror will indefinitely prevail in warding off destructive conflict.

Another kind of thinking, almost the opposite to such extreme realism, nevertheless offers a similar no to the query, can we deter deterrence? Political pacifism believes it is impossible to limit nuclear armaments to morally acceptable levels of deterrence, and therefore that we must do without the reliance upon armaments, and particularly nuclear armaments, as instruments of national policy.

Considering the very making and possession of instruments of horrible destruction to be immoral, and the imposition of limits or restraints on the use of these instruments to be impossible, the pacifist calls for an utter turnabout in national behavior which repudiates the paraphernalia of nuclear deterrence altogether. Those who find the pacifist approach to the problem of war in traditional terms congenial find that the escalation associated with nuclear armament reinforces the moral maxim that “those who take to swords (or other weapons) will perish.” Moreover, there is a group that has embraced a position known as “nuclear pacifism” that believes we must altogether repudiate reliance upon nuclear weapons because there is no possibility that the size or the deployment of such
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weapons can be sufficiently curtailed to make their use morally acceptable—though the “nuclear pacifists” are not all agreed about the continuing moral status of conventional means of warfare.

There are others who belong in a third group who suggest that it is possible to limit deterrence by negotiating about deterrence in much the same way one negotiates about other matters of international disagreement. This does not remove deterrence from the realm of power conflict but makes it a variable in that conflict, subject to modifications in scope and method.

Negotiation realists share with reductionistic realists a belief that the exercise of (or the threat to exercise) power is the main operative dynamic between nations, but unlike the reductionistic realists, they believe that nations can find it in their self-interest to reduce, on a carefully orchestrated basis, the level at which power balances are maintained.

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No proposal for arms reduction can be seriously advanced without believing that deterrence can be limited. Those who contend that it is legitimate to think of nuclear weapons as counterforce devices aimed only at specific military threats, but not as counterpopulation devices that make hostages of entire populations, would seem to imply that deterrence can be limited. Both of these approaches treat deterrence as a strategic and/or operational matter. The deterrence of deterrence is
advocated as a pragmatic achievement with instrumental values, such as reducing the vulnerability of centers of concentrated population, lowering tensions, creating conditions that make it less likely that conflicts will escalate, and even perhaps (at the most self-interested level) reducing defense costs.

A fourth position in this scheme (a second way of suggesting that deterrence can be deterred) uses just war teaching to contend that we are morally obligated to repudiate those uses of power that exceed certain bounds. James T. Johnson of Rutgers University has suggested that we must reject the notion "that modern war is inherently incapable of restraint, as well as the cynical opinion that all justifying reasons advanced for the use of military force are but convenient rationalizations of state power." In his paper, Professor Johnson argues for the need to develop limits on the conduct of war and means of deterrence that are compatible with a limited and morally controlled use of force. He contends that we must reverse the assumptions that have guided policy for several decades—perhaps since the First World War (and certainly since the Second World War)—and says:

Whenever and wherever it began, this taking for granted that war must be a realm of actions outside of the pale of moral control is now exceedingly widespread, and it has infected deterrence strategy as well as war-fighting plan. By believing war to be this way, we have made it this way. Thus it is first of all this attitude that must be set right. The moral traditions of our culture provide wisdom on the purposes of military force, what limits hedge these purposes about, and what restraints should be imposed on defense and the use of military force, and it is to these insights, rather than to the wrong assumptions about war that have shaped our thinking in recent years, that we should now turn. (p. 81)

The Roman Catholic bishops of the United States wrestled with this same issue in their pastoral letter on war and peace. The part of the letter that probably aroused the greatest interest was the moral analysis of nuclear deterrence. Working from within just war teaching, the bishops granted the validity of war as a means of settling disputes between nations, provided that it
CAN WE DETER DETERRENCE?

is entered into with the right intentions and conducted within the proper constraints. In stressing the need for those constraints the bishops built on the work of many modern Catholic thinkers who had begun to question the legitimacy of nuclear deterrence. The bishops, like Johnson, clearly indicate that there are distinct limits on the morally legitimate use of deterrence, just as there are distinct limits on the conduct of war.

Many officials in the United States government were uneasy about what the bishops might say, and they worked behind the scenes to modify the statements with which the bishops were expressing their qualms about nuclear deterrence as policy. The bishops, knowing the gravity and difficulty of their position, worked hard to state it with great care, from time to time trying wordings that would make sometimes more and sometimes less room for the government’s concerns. They also were constrained in what they could say by a speech of the pope at the United Nations, in which he had expressed approval of the use of nuclear weapons as instruments of deterrence. Paragraph 188 of the final letter sets forth three criteria to be applied to the use of nuclear weaponry in the conduct of national policy. They are:

(1) If nuclear deterrence exists only to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by others, then proposals to go beyond this to planning for prolonged periods of repeated nuclear strikes and counterstrikes, or “prevailing” in nuclear war, are not acceptable. They encourage notions that nuclear war can be engaged in with tolerable human and moral consequences. Rather, we must continually say “no” to the idea of nuclear war.

(2) If nuclear deterrence is our goal, “sufficiency” to deter is an adequate strategy; the quest for nuclear superiority must be rejected.

(3) Nuclear deterrence should be used as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament. Each proposed addition to our strategic system or change in strategic doctrine must be assessed precisely in light of whether it will render steps toward “progressive disarmament” more or less likely.

It is possible to argue in this way only if one believes that moral considerations can be applied amidst political necessities.
Let us now try to evaluate the plausibility and significance of each of these positions in face of the realities of a nuclear age.

The reductionistic realist way of acting is increasingly problematic in the face of the potentially suicidal levels of destruction created by the nuclear arms race. Although to date policies based largely upon this view of things have been pursued without slipping into a large-scale nuclear war, they have allowed the accumulation of destructive potential to become so great that, if there is an explosion (even by accident), the future of viable human life will be so seriously endangered that it is no longer possible to think of realistic prospects for the future. An unrestrained pursuit of deterrence eventuates in a kind of nuclear gamble that puts the lives of entire peoples in jeopardy. Unless the escalation of deterrence is brought under some kind of restraint, the whole globe will likely become an increasingly explosive device with the safety pin already removed, and with the margin for miscalculation or error constantly shrinking.

The plausibility of the phrase “we must take power seriously” begins to take on new significance before the horrendous potentials for destruction that are now a part of the arsenals of major powers. Simply to assume that the process of amassing greater and greater destructive power under such conditions is an adequate strategy is not to take these new forms of power seriously at all. When one takes such potentials seriously, the proper response is to look for ways to bring them under some form of restraint and reduction, not to keep piling them up in a belief they will never clash in explosive fury. Whatever the value of political realism in the past, with its stress on using force to prevent injustice or piracy among the nations, reductionistic versions of realism as manifested in some forms of policy making have become anachronistic. Instead of continuing to exempt power—and particularly the power relied upon to create deterrence—from moral judgment and scrutiny with rhetorical admonitions about its necessity, we must become far more deliberate in scrutinizing military power for its dangers and taming its applications. Instead of thinking that there is a wide
and incompatible difference between the behavior of individu-
als and small groups and the behavior of large hegemonic
collectives, we had better begin to ask to what extent the lessons
learned in seeking to deter deterrence in the case of the former
can be instructive for avoiding suicidal conflicts between the
latter.

As nuclear weapons proliferate, people who watch such
developments take place and who can express themselves freely
are increasingly moved to make moral protests. It is primarily
because there are so many nuclear weapons that there are also so
many “no nukes” bumper stickers. The existence of Trident
submarines and Polaris missiles prompts the public protests at
submarine bases and centers where plans are made or the
controls are located for the launching of missiles. The pursuit of
nuclear armaments prompts the protests against them in a
symbiotic rhythm that has become familiar in those societies that
recognize and protect some form of free expression. Such
societies are politically more commendable and morally more
healthy precisely because such protests are allowed and are
carried on within their borders. Would the policemen who arrest
demonstrators at nuclear depots really prefer to live in a society
where protests are illegal?

Those who express moral outrage at the horrific levels of
armament that so entice and fascinate the nuclear powers have a
valuable role to play in the political process. Such protesters give
expression to the moral revulsion at destructive horror without
which reductionistic realism gives way to abject and simplistic
cynicism. Even if such moral protests against nuclear weaponry
could never directly be translated into public policy, they
remind the nation to which they speak in anguished protest that
it dares to possess power only to the extent that it is uneasy and
contrite about doing so and determined to bring such power
under restraint. Moral stands do not necessarily have to warrant
themselves as possible public policies. Prophets are not
necessarily called to do the work of the kings or governors. A
prophetic protest against the absurdity of pursuing a policy of
deterrence without restraint is one of the essential elements in
the quest for a more effective policy.
Those persons who hold that it is operationally possible to limit deterrence through a long and careful set of negotiations aimed at curtailing the nuclear arms race share the impulses of political realists in believing that power has to be taken seriously as a factor in international affairs, but they share the concern of the moral protesters in judging the present dimensions of power to be unacceptably hazardous. They may come to realize that one dimension of being sensible in deterrence means so contriving the balance among potential enemies that each will know what the others are capable of doing and that each will be so situated under the scrutiny of the others as to be unable to take actions without those actions being quickly detected.

A prophetic protest against the absurdity of pursuing a policy of deterrence without restraint is one of the essential elements in the quest for a more effective policy.

Traditionally, military accumulations of power have been attended by as much secrecy as can be maintained. Such secrecy is used to make possible surprise moves and advantageous strategies. It is sometimes used to protect logistical information and weapon designs that are particularly valuable in a nation's arsenal. But secrecy with regard to deterrence does not make sense in the way that it does with regard to strategy. After all, a weapons system cannot be a deterrent for those who do not realize it exists and cannot meaningfully calculate its potential threat. The macabre dance of nuclear deterrence ought, at a minimum, to be conducted in full view of all the participants. This means modifying traditional thinking so as to welcome disclosure, to invite inspections, and to keep planning open.

To be effective, arms reduction will require a major rethinking about military behavior. To be effective it must reveal the scope and extent of the arsenals it holds, it must act publicly on matters traditionally regarded as secret, and it must require similar openness from other parties. Electronic monitoring devices, such as those used in space flight technology, render it less and less possible for individual nations to concoct massive weaponry.
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without being detected, but such technical means of breaking through the veils of secrecy that surround armaments are not in themselves enough to bring about the attitudinal transformations that would make it possible to lower deterrence levels by negotiation.

Proposals for freezing, for a specified period, further development and manufacture of nuclear weapons have attracted considerable support in recent years in many parts of the country. Such proposals indicate that there may be a considerable body of public opinion that is willing to move in the direction of a carefully nuanced attempt to bring down the level of nuclear capability while not necessarily becoming committed to a unilateral or complete abdication of nuclear deterrence. The advocates of a freeze would make a still richer contribution to the deterring of deterrence if they would think carefully about and articulate the possible scenarios for reducing the levels of nuclear readiness as well as suggest policies that could be pursued with a reasonable degree of prudence.

Those, like the Roman Catholic bishops, who argue for the restraint of deterrence from moral grounds have shown us that just war thinking can have a potentially new significance in political affairs. Although there has always been a theoretical possibility in just war thinking that it would be used to judge particular conflicts as morally unacceptable, and although just war thinking was utilized in very general terms as the basis for opposition to the role of the United States in Vietnam, by and large the primary use made of just war teaching has always been to legitimize the actions of political units that have resorted to warfare as a means of seeking justice. Across the centuries there have been few instances in which just war teaching has been used to raise serious questions about the conduct of political rulers. But the letter of the bishops, despite its complexity, has left little doubt that a large group of clearly established moral leaders, not historically noted for challenging establishments, has raised the most fundamental objections to the present shape of nuclear policy.

We must wait to see what influence this will have on national policy making. Just war teaching has always been welcomed by those in power when it approves and legitimates their policies.
But when it raises objections to those policies, it may suffer the same fate as all other forms of moral protest against the use of violence. Only time will tell whether the advocates of just war teaching who feel that it renders preparation for massive nuclear interchange morally unacceptable will be heard and heeded by the makers of policy.

If just war thinkers find that, because they have moral grounds on which to call for the repudiation of national policy, they are unwelcome at the tables of power, perhaps they will have to understand their contribution to the political process as similar to that of the vocational pacifist. Such a realization will relieve just war theorists of feeling, as do most political realists, that the only responsible contribution to the shaping of public policy is to enunciate judgments that can be directly translated into political decisions. By saying this we no more deny the significance of just war teaching than we have discounted the significance of moral protests emerging from pacifist or quasi-pacifist perspectives, but it does help us to remain clear as to what may prove to be the scenario in the case of just war teaching whenever it seeks to question the conduct of military policy rather than legitimize it.

The time may be ripe for reversing the process that was identified earlier in this paper—a process in which the escalation of deterrence has made the capacity to mount terror the foundation of policy. The time may be ripe because the stakes have become so momentous.

The reliance upon deterrence that seems so crucial is a form of cultural bondage to the power of evil in human affairs. The predicament of the nuclear powers is not dissimilar in its seeming intractability to the predicament of the individual sinner as understood in the theologies of the classical Reformation figures. We need a power of conversion and redemption that will “in-break” to release us from bondage to sin and death—as much in corporate terms as in individual terms. We seem unable to deter deterrence by our own resolves, for every means of placing the security of the corporate self on a
different foundation requires that turning around which the corporate self can no more achieve by its own power alone than can the sinful individual self. Such an about-face in the corporate mind-set cannot be patterned on some revivalistic model of

The predicament of the nuclear powers is not dissimilar in its seeming intractability to the predicament of the individual sinner as understood in the theologies of the classical Reformation figures.

being instantly saved. Yet, it must have some qualities in common with the newness of life that is associated with spiritual regeneration. We must be able to hope that nations can experience that change in thinking that enables them to take small steps in an utterly different direction from the one in which they have been traveling since obliteration bombing, massive retaliation, nuclear weapons, and the balance of terror became the stock in trade of policies based on a reductionistic political realism.

If the nations were to do such an about-face, they would be done with policies premised on a complete and utter distinction between civil order and international affairs. Too often a stress on the differences between these realms has functioned as a means for rationalizing the most blatant escalation of deterrence and for minimizing the role played by organizations like the United Nations. There are things to be learned from looking at how civil society has progressively curtailed and limited deterrence in order to make human life in community more viable. The levels of deterrence can be brought down only as more adequate levels of international order are built up—a task that is by no means easy, but which is certainly worthy of more than the incidental attention it gets when policy makers are obsessed with the achievement of deterrence capability in military terms.

A pluralistic democracy will have a variety of views about what can and ought to be done about a problem as vexing and as momentous as the nuclear arms race. The four views delineated

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in this discussion (and variations of them) will continue to exist together and in tension with one another, contributing to a public debate about the making of policy in a democratic society. It may be well (at least it is quite likely) that there will always be a group of military planners in our midst who are concerned with deterrence. But it is not well that their concerns be taken to represent the full extent of national policy making. Statespersons, educators, and members of the clergy must do something to avoid tacitly legitimizing this use of weaponry, by outimagining the military in devising ways to prevent the unthinkable, and by acting as we need to in order to legitimize those policies that promote a quasi-permanent standoff between the nations. What we need is more imaginative concern about the ways to adjudicate international differences, more skill and resolve in reconciling opposing factions in a very complex world, and the integrity to produce a degree of trust between the nations. Were thinking about deterrence only in military terms to triumph, we would be condemned to a technologically furbished barbarism unworthy of a democratic tradition, apostate as a religious orientation, and suicidal as a public policy.

NOTES

2. For a record of the materials that appeared before the pastoral letter see the many documents in Robert Heyer, Nuclear Disarmament: Key Statements of Popes, Bishops, Councils and Churches (New York: Paulist, 1982).
The Christian bookstore—the perfect source of reading for the enrichment of one's spiritual life. Or is it?

Many people are reading religious literature today. There is an enormous amount of it published. Religious literature in general and Christian publications in particular appeal to a wide audience. The topics range widely—for example, from *God and Vitamins*, by Marjorie Holmes, to *The Muslims Are Coming*, by Lowell Lundstrom. The practical, success orientation of many titles might suggest why this type of literature is so popular in our culture: *Steve Bartkowski Intercepted: A Game Plan for Spiritual Growth*, by Dan DeHaan, or *Your Key to God's Bank*, by Rex Humbard. Even books containing portions of the Bible or commentary are given an activist, "can do" twist, as the titles of two recent books on Proverbs show: *Proverbs for Easier Living*, by Jo Berry, and *Wise Up and Live!,* by Paul Larsen. Christian bookstores are now found even in relatively small towns. If there are no Christian bookstores, racks of religious literature can be found in variety, grocery, convenience, drug, and department stores.

How is the layperson, whose reading time is limited, to choose the right book to inform, challenge, or help him or her at
any particular moment in life? The time and interests of
members of our congregations are precious, not to be
squandered. As pastors, we bear a responsibility to aid them in
using that time and interest wisely. Our goal ought to be to bring
the simplicity and profundity of the gospel to each, and to
enable each to reason theologically (i.e., to think through their
beliefs in terms that are understandable to themselves in their
own situations). We also should want to enable them to develop
some prophetic or critical capacities so that they might read
astutely and might intelligently decide what to read and what
data not to read, and might in turn become resources for others on
their Christian way. This problem of choosing the best books to
read came home rather clearly to me after a recent frustrating
visit to a Christian bookstore.

I entered the store, passed many how-to books on everything
from writing my own will to losing weight, passed the charts
depicting various schemes for the end of the world, and resisted
the lure of religious jewelry and the excitement of balloons,
banks, and other toys bearing printed Bible verses. My trip was
soothed by religious music, emanating from speakers placed
throughout the store. Finally, off to one side, I found the section
in which I thought I could find the object of my search—a New
Testament in the original Greek language. I glanced over various
translations of the New Testament, then several grammars and
dictionaries of New Testament Greek, but found no Greek New
Testament. A second, more careful review of the stock failed to
turn up the desired book. I sought help from an employee, who
re-examined the same shelf and attempted to sell me a book
entitled New Testament Greek. (It was a grammar.) I clarified my
request to the salesperson, explaining that I sought a copy of the
New Testament printed in the original Greek language. Our
search admittedly a failure, we agreed that they would order one
for me. Here was a Christian bookstore, with its thousands of
books—but where was the Christian book?

Certainly there are not a lot of Christian bookstore patrons
who read Greek (or Hebrew). But the experience did provoke
me to think of my responsibilities toward the individual spiritual
and intellectual lives of those more mature Christians in my
congregations. If I had had such difficulties locating the best
book, what kind of difficulties might they have trying to find the particular book just right for them?

Here indeed is a new arena of opportunity and responsibility—a mini-ministry in assisting our parishioners toward the most edifying use of that modern resource, the Christian bookstore—a resource that needs to be used with great care.
DEVELOPING EUCHARIST AWARENESS

WILLIAM L. PUGH

Conducting periodic surveys of the attitudes of members of the congregation toward aspects of the service of worship is a useful device for gathering information that can help pastors and other leaders make decisions regarding changes to the service.

The practice of worship in the local church is one of the most sensitive areas of church life, especially when the pastor and other liturgical leaders wish to make changes. However, it is often difficult to determine the true feelings of the congregation toward such changes and to what degree the new practice is finding acceptance. Developing a reliable method to determine the degree of acceptance and the perceived benefit or lack of benefit from such changes should be helpful to pastors and leaders of worship as they seek to make those changes that will enrich the worship of the people. Especially now in this age of great renewal of worship in the United Methodist tradition such a method is needed to measure reliably the attitude of the worshiping community toward change. The use of a congregational survey designed to measure the effect of changes in practice over the course of time was used in one local church. The results of that survey indicate that such congregational surveys can be of benefit to leaders as they seek to make the worship of the church more meaningful.

William L. Pugh is pastor of Vinings United Methodist Church in Vinings, Georgia.
Lewis Memorial United Methodist Church is a 200-member church in an area of the North Georgia Conference that was formerly rural but is now rapidly becoming suburban. The profile of this congregation reflects a wide range of ages and a mix of both longtime members and newer members. The average attendance at worship is 110, and the church had a growth in membership of 38 percent in the three-year period of the survey. Formerly, eucharistic services in this church were conducted monthly. At the beginning of the three-year period, this pattern was changed to biweekly celebrations, using a variety of liturgies and methods in these eucharistic services. The attitude of the congregation to this change was assessed by survey, taken after one, two, and three years of this more frequent eucharistic practice. The results of this survey are summarized in the table on the following page.

It is clear from these results that appreciation for a more regular celebration of the Eucharist has been developed, as seen in the increase in desire for frequent celebrations. At present, 84 percent of the communicants desire to receive communion at least every other week with almost one-fourth desiring weekly communion! In addition, an overwhelming proportion of persons (91 percent) feel that more frequent celebration has increased their understanding of the Eucharist, while no one said that this had decreased it. Although the importance of communion to the participants has increased slightly over the years, the importance of preaching has increased even more, indicating that more frequent celebration does not take away from but rather enhances the importance of the preached Word. In fact, since beginning a pattern of frequent celebration, the average attendance has increased by well over 50 percent, with attendance on eucharistic Sundays being 8 percent higher than the attendance on Sundays when the Eucharist is not celebrated.

The importance of these results lies in the fact that the practice of celebrating communion has in itself increased both understanding and appreciation for it as well as participation in the worship of the church. This experiential response carries great significance for United Methodists as we seek to make worship
## RESULTS OF SURVEYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>After 1 year</th>
<th>After 2 Years</th>
<th>After 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you prefer to have communion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>once a month</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every other week</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every week</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How has more frequent communion affected your understanding of it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increased it</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decreased it</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had no effect</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being lowest and 10 highest, how important is communion to you?</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the same scale, how important is preaching to you?</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you prefer to receive the elements while</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kneeling</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standing</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes kneeling, sometimes standing</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you prefer the use of individual cups</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intinction (dipping)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
more meaningful. This developing eucharistic awareness is best illustrated by the theological questions that were asked about what the Eucharist means. When asked, what does communion mean to you?, after two years 71 percent of the congregation replied that “it is a celebration of Christ’s presence,” while after three years 88 percent responded in this way. The response, “It is a re-enactment of what Christ did long ago,” was given by 29 percent after two years and only 12 percent after three years. No one chose to respond by saying that “it is only a remembrance.” This appreciation of the active presence of Christ was also reflected in the congregation’s understanding of what the elements are. While 21 percent after two years and 18 percent after three years said that the bread and wine are “merely a symbol of Christ’s body and blood,” 50 percent after two years and 48 percent after three years said that they are a “symbol that communicates Christ’s presence.” The response that “they are Christ’s Body and Blood” was given by 29 percent after two years and 33 percent after three years. While the meanings of the terms were left intentionally open to the interpretation of the individual, it seems clear that most people see the Eucharist as an event of active presence and not empty ritual or mere recollection. As one parishioner wrote: “The worship services give me a feeling of truly having been in the presence of the Lord.”

CONCLUSIONS

The use of a survey over an extended period of time was important in assessing attitudes toward changes in the pattern of worship in this local church. Through these surveys the attitude and reactions of members of the congregation could be incorporated into the proposed patterns and various liturgies, thus meeting needs more fully. The very act of asking for their responses in the surveys also functioned to establish a level of trust essential in making such changes. This direct request made it clear to members of the congregation that what they thought was important and was being heard by the leaders. This request for participation contributed to greater discussion and involvement in planning for worship and greater freedom in candid
evaluation of it. Annual surveys over the three-year period enabled the leaders to see an emerging pattern of acceptance, reinforcing their confidence in what was being done. Without such surveys the change to more frequent eucharistic celebrations would have certainly been more difficult. But by inviting communication and building confidence and trust as well as providing an accurate measurement of the congregation's ongoing acceptance of the changes, the survey method proved to be an invaluable tool in the process of renewal of worship.
WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO TEACH RELIGION AT STATE UNIVERSITIES

GARY COMSTOCK

We want to separate church and state. We ask our public teachers of religion, then, to adopt a secular purpose and to try not to encourage or discourage students' beliefs. But, though liberal Christians can follow these guidelines, fundamentalist and "radical" Christians find it very difficult, if not impossible, to do so.

Time was when theologians agreed about almost everything. They agreed about whether God existed (God did), what work Jesus accomplished (the salvation of our souls), and what was the final destination for true believers (eternal life). Indeed, these theologians could get bad reputations for arguing about how many angels could sit on a pin just because they never thought to question what language was best for holy argumentation (it was Latin), or what rhetorical form was best suited to sacred investigations (it was the disputation). While their quarrels may often have been trivial, they were nonetheless remarkably intelligible because of the shared presuppositions which bound them into a community of thought, all in agreement about the proper style of religious argument, the basic foundations of Christian thought, and the major goals of theological inquiry.

I would like to thank Dr. Don Hobson and the Campus Minister's Association for inviting me to deliver the 1985 Faculty Banquet Address at Iowa State University. Many of the ideas in this article were first presented in that lecture. Readers of the article should know what the first hearers knew: that I am a Christian who teaches in the religious studies program at a large state university.
In the late twentieth century everything has changed. No one at the American Academy of Religion meeting speaks the same language (much less Latin). Jesuit faces go blank at the word "disputation". Women appear among the brethren, questioning the purposes and motivations of patriarchal theology. Today, religionists agree about nothing. Some think that the academic discussion of religion should dispense with talk about God. Some think we should continue to discuss language about the deity, but should not commit ourselves to its truth or falsity. Those who think that talk about God is not only "meaningful" but is also potentially truthful find themselves in a corner talking to themselves. No longer Christian theologians, these instructors of religious studies have few shared stories or common horizons. Not only are they divided over methodology, i.e., how they ought to approach their subject matter; they are at odds about the field itself: what their subject matter is. The seemingly unresolvable arguments fly back and forth not only between the warring camps, but within them as well. For example, among those who regard Feuerbach as the father of modern religious studies and who think we must use the term God for something other than a transcendent being are anthropologists and sociologists, psychoanalysts and linguists, poets and historians. There are many other languages and approaches, some not as influenced by Feuerbach, but no less eclectic in their positions; they include humanists, ethicists, theologians systematic and dogmatic, philosophers of religion Continental and analytic, literary theorists, artists, critics, and apologists for belief.

Why so few shared assumptions, techniques, and purposes? The answer is probably quite simple; the conversation of secular religionists has only begun. "Religious studies" is a very young discipline, a hundred years old at most. In 1877 the Dutch Universities Act first separated the humanistic study of religion (in the university) from the confessional (seminary) study of Christianity. In the United States the conversation is even more callow; study of religion in the public schools has been accepted for less than twenty-five years. With so little tradition to draw on, it is not surprising that the field lacks a consensus about methodology, presuppositions, and goals.
In this context of extreme disagreement, the next matter will sound odd indeed. Astonishing though it is, I cannot find one religionist who disagrees with this doctrine in state universities: it is permissible to teach about religions but not to teach or advocate any particular one.

The extent to which my otherwise contentious colleagues subscribe to this view is so great that I am tempted to call it a dogma of contemporary religious studies. The language in which I have formulated the view comes from an opinion written by United States Supreme Court Justice Goldberg. In *School District of Abington v. Schempp* (374 U.S. 203, 1963), he ruled that "the Court . . . recognizes the propriety of the teaching about religion as distinguished from the teaching of religion in the public schools." What he seems to have meant is that nonpartisan discussion of religious traditions is to be encouraged as a part of education in the humanities. But advocating Seventh Day Adventism or encouraging transcendental meditation is wrong.

I do not know why so many of my peers have swallowed Goldberg's opinion "whole hog," as my Uncle Harold would put it. But acceptance is so widespread that a person suspected of not adhering to the dogma will either not get into a Ph.D. program, fail to get a teaching job, or fall short of tenure, provided, of course, that he or she has not first been dismissed by colleagues as (gulp) "a Barthian."

Blame it on my Protestant upbringing if you will, but I cannot let the dogma go uncontested. There are at least some Christians teaching religion on the public dole who come dangerously close to breaking Goldberg's rule. I fear that I may be one of them. If I am, then I must either resign myself to continuing my criminal activity, run the risk of losing my job, or commit myself to trying to get the Court to reverse its direction. When it comes to the law, I am a chicken: I do not want to get caught with my hand in the cookie jar. When it comes to politics, I am naive. But even the most uninformed soul would know that the Court is unlikely to change its mind on this one. Even if the current administrative regime were to appoint all nine justices, they could not get away with changing the First Amendment. So, I must bite the bullet and admit that Christians of my sort—in the dogmatic language
of my title—ought not to be allowed to teach religion at the state university. Now, not every Christian is like me (even though I am doing my best to bring them all back to the fold), so I must begin by distinguishing three different types of believers: the fundamentalist, the liberal, and the radical.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
THE CASE OF THE FUNDAMENTALIST

Suppose that you were an intelligent black woman, had a Ph.D. in religion, several publications in outstanding journals, a good teaching record, solid community service, and every other qualification to make a search committee salivate. Would anyone be justified in refusing to allow you to teach religion at Iowa State? Would we have any right to tell you how to conduct your Bible or ethics or theology classes?

On the face of it, no. What reason could we possibly have for looking over your shoulder into your syllabus? Even if you were the most committed Moonie, the most zealous Shi'ite, or the most devout Mormon, we would have no business snooping around in your classes. Your personal religious beliefs are your own and have no bearing on your ability to perform your public duties. Teaching religion is no different from teaching English or computer science. In other academic areas it is perfectly acceptable for instructors to hold strong opinions. We just require them to separate their private views from what they do in class and, if they will do so, they will be accounted competent instructors.

We have both radicals and conservatives, for example, teaching political science and economics. Angela Davis, an outspoken communist, taught political theory at a state university in California. No one complained that she was incompetent to present capitalism in an objective manner. Milton Friedman, the original Reaganomicist, could teach macroeconomics at a tax-supported institution without being attacked as unfit to offer a fair account of socialism.

The fact is, there is no problem in these other curricular areas. And, prima facie, it seems that there should be no similar problem in religious studies. So why should we balk at having a
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Free Will Baptist, a charismatic Catholic, a Free Methodist, a Hasidic Jew, or a Christian Science practitioner, teaching religion?

The answer is that Angela Davis and Milton Friedman teach politics and business. There are no laws regarding how one can or cannot teach those subjects. The only standards are those intrinsic to the field; is the teacher a competent communicator? Is she an intelligent and productive scholar? Is he reasonably open-minded in class?

There are laws regarding how one can and cannot teach religion. Two hundred and fifty years ago, we set out on a grand experiment attempting to separate the spheres of government and faith. We have lived in that experiment ever since, sometimes more easily than at other times. Here is what we have worked out. At institutions that are funded by general taxation, we do not allow instructors to advocate any particular faith or, in the words of Justice Goldberg, to “teach religion.” We do allow them to “teach about religions,” that is, to survey a wide number of religions in an objective fashion. We invite our students to approach the subject and to come up with answers the way we do: out of curiosity, not need.

Notice that this doctrine only applies to state schools. It is perfectly acceptable to try to show students why they should believe Luther’s two-worlds theory if you teach at Luther Northwestern Seminary. It is entirely permissible to encourage your pupils to be baptized in the Spirit if you work at Oral Roberts University. No one is going to squawk if you push bodily levitation while working at Maharishi International University. Those are private institutions, and the state government is not exacting a square out of our thinning hides in order to support them.

But we all know what significance the I.R.S. attaches to April 15. That day the University of Illinois or Georgia or California or Massachusetts or Oregon takes a certain bite out of our checking accounts. We have good reason, then, to object to teachers who are going to try to convince our daughters that they live in two worlds, or can learn a foreign language overnight, or can fly around inside a building if they just put their minds to it; we are paying their salaries! Let them say such things in their own
The problem, in short, is the First Amendment. In truth, that amendment has never been applied to the particular case of religious studies in the state university. We in my profession have done such a good job of policing ourselves that the Supreme Court has never had to rule on the question of whether religion could be “taught,” advocated, at such places. The closest the Court has come is *Schempp*, in which Goldberg and the others affirmed the legitimacy of teaching about religion at tax-supported schools, laying down only three restrictions about how such courses should be taught. Two of those restrictions are relevant here. Each course must be part of a program of study which has a “clear secular purpose” and the “direct and immediate effect” of neither advancing nor inhibiting religion.

Since the Court did not give us specific instructions about how to apply these criteria, I will have to do the best I can. It seems to me that each rule should apply not only to programs of study taken as a whole but to individual instructors and individual courses. I could be wrong about this; it is conceivable that the Court would approve of a department of fifty faculty in which one teacher broke the rules in two or three classes. But what if there were two such instructors with five or six errant courses? Or five instructors? Or ten? Where would we draw the line? This is what inclines me to say that each of the two rules should be applied to every faculty member and every course offering. (It is worth noting that in America there are no departments of the size just mentioned. Most are no larger than the one at my school: four or five faculty. In our very typical case, one instructor breaking the rules would disqualify “the program as a whole” from having a clear secular purpose.)

Consider the two restrictions. The first seems to mean that instructors must clearly intend to teach so as not to privilege any particular religion. (Notice the Court does not tell us which secular purposes we should aim at or which we should abandon. Would they have us draw the inference that any old secular purpose is better than any particular religious one?) The second rule seems to mean that students as a whole should not...
be moved to endorse or reject religion as a result of a class. (Notice, the Court does not tell us why students of religion should stay in one place religiously. Would they have us infer that indifference to religion is better than enthusiasm or suspicion?)

The first rule reminds me of an escape mechanism used by basketball referees. When they cannot decide whether to call a charging or blocking foul, they do nothing at all. A particularly obtuse commentator once glorified this weak-kneed response with the title of the "no call." Teachers of religion are instructed *always* to make no calls. They are to remain mute, with the whistle still in their hands, not directing the flow of play or making judgments about the relative strengths and weaknesses of various faiths. I take it that this is just what it means to pursue a clear secular purpose. The second rule reminds me of Madge's television pitch for a certain dishwashing detergent. "Use this blue stuff because it will soften your skin as it cuts your grease!" Teachers of religion are directed to aim for what we might call the mild Palmolive Liquid effect. We are not to give our students anything they cannot soak in.

Teachers of religion are directed to aim for what we might call the mild Palmolive Liquid effect. We are not to give our students anything they cannot soak in.

Why should the Court tell us to tread so cautiously? We can provide the outline of an answer by performing a thought experiment. Suppose Iowa State were to hire an instructor with impeccable credentials. Mr. Peter Piety arrives from a prestigious Ivy League school having finished his coursework and being well under way on a promising dissertation on Wesleyan church history. He has already published the first chapter as an article in a reputable journal and has in his dossier acceptable letters recommending his potential as a teacher. We are excited to get him to come here. Just four weeks into the term, however, students begin to line up outside the chairperson's door, complaining about Peter's pieties. It turns out that he insists on
starting each class with a prayer, "Dear Lord Jesus, lover of our souls, save those here from the dark depths of their sin, and forgive those who must persecute us . . . ," a prayer that goes on for some five minutes. At the end of every class he holds an altar call, sings three verses of "Just As I Am," and invites students to accept Jesus into their hearts.

Few fundamentalists in Piety's shoes would choose to conduct themselves in this way. But suppose one did. What would we say? At first our good old liberal proclivities for tolerance would lead us to give him the benefit of the doubt. Young scholars are notorious for being overenthusiastic, idealistic, and even a little bit goofy. Who knows? This guy might be an ingenious teacher using a new experiential learning technique to help his students better understand American revivalism. We would not worry at first. But suppose this went on and on, and it eventually became clear that Piety was dead serious. Far from having a new pedagogical method, he was intent on proselytizing his students. In that case we would be well advised to cut our losses, revise our judgment, and agree with the students. Something is wrong in Piety's classroom.

Notice, it would be all right for Peter to champion the American Coalition for Traditional Values, the Moral Majority, and even Ronald Reagan's policies in El Salvador and Nicaragua. He could even do it out loud in his classes. As long as the instructor did not grade students by the way their religious beliefs matched his own, we could live with his conservatism and even his repeated statements that Russia is the anti-Christ. We might even abide his annoying habit of reading publicly from his tiny New Testament with Psalms in our crowded lunchroom every day. He could do all of these things and still be a competent, fair-minded, even provocative teacher.

What he could not do, and what we legally must not allow him to do, are the two things that seem dearest to his heart: attempting to convert his students and inculcating in them his own Christian virtues. He cannot help but do the first because of his eschatological view of the world. He thinks with Yeats that the center is not holding, that Western Christian civilization is running down, and that Satan, Jesus, and "The End" are near. "What would you do," I hear him asking me, "if you discovered
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that Ross Hall was on fire? You would run through the building breathlessly announcing the fact. But if no one moved, you
would not be fulfilling your duty if you did not grab them by the
ear, shake them up, and haul them out! That is what I must be
doing, because my Savior requires it.”

Because he holds this view about the world, he necessarily
polarizes his students. He does not treat them unjustly, nor
grade them unfairly, but he is so convinced of the truth of his
religion that they take to calling him “Monday-Wednesday-Fri-
day Peter-Billy-Sunday.” Three times a week he goes into Ross
115 and delivers fire and brimstone. As we might expect,
students are inevitably forced to line up with or against him. He
has a “belly-button” pedagogy; he turns every one of his
students into an “innie” or an “outie.” This is the second thing
that we must not tolerate. The fictional Peter Piety does not
simply believe his faith. It is not “religion” in the way Jonathan
Z. Smith once informally defined it: what you do when no one is
looking. He is emotionally, rationally, and willfully committed
to his faith. And he “does it” in public because he cannot and
will not separate his private views from his outward actions.

Here is the problem. We want to separate church and state.
We ask our public teachers of religion, then, to adopt a secular
purpose and try not to encourage or discourage students’
beliefs. Unless he were to be unfaithful to himself, however,
Piety could not follow these rules. The conclusion, however
unfortunate, is inescapable; it is our job not to allow a
fundamentalist of this stripe to teach at a land grant university.

NO PROBLEM HERE! THE CASE OF THE LIBERAL

This caricature of the fundamentalist shows us the difficulty.
If we allow people to teach religion in this way, we might as well
have done with our talk about a wall of separation between civil
and religious spheres. “Exactly,” I hear my colleagues ap-
plauding. “You have hit the nail on the head. To protect the
principle of religious liberty, disestablishment is necessary.
Someone like Piety, for all of his admirable intentions and for all
that his students might have learned from him, must be
canned.”

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"However," I imagine them continuing, "fundamentalists are not all of that sort. And there are many other kinds of Christians as well. Most of us have deep reservations about the Moral Majority. We," they now confess, "are much more pluralistic about faith. We approach the subject with an objective, inquiring mind. We are tolerant and neutral. We do not concentrate on just one religion, but talk about many. And we certainly do not try to convince our students that ours is superior to theirs." There is little to say to this argument. It is the answer given by liberal Christians, and it is a cogent (if not wholly persuasive) one. Liberals have no difficulty with the Court's restrictions, so there are no good reasons to object to their joining our staff.

But let us be clear about why this is the case. Liberals belong in the secular university not because they know some special truths about religion. Nor is it because they know some privileged technique for teaching this subject. Nor, again, is it because they have the only right way to pursue rigorous scholarship in this field. The real reason we do not object to their presence is more mundane. It is because their ideology has been sanctioned by the Supreme Court. Liberalism is the prejudice of Liberal Christians belong in the secular university not because they know some special truths about religion. It is because their ideology has been sanctioned by the Supreme Court.

choice for teachers of religion in state universities. It is legal to teach religion if you believe what liberals believe. That is the justification for this class of workers.

Now what is liberalism? At its worst, it is an attitude that can degenerate into a vulgar relativism, blurring important distinctions. My advisor once fondly described a liberal friend of his as the Will Rogers of theology. The friend had never met a religion he did not like. But all religions are not the same, nor do they all ultimately refer to the same experience of "the Sacred." There are important differences between Hindus and Sikhs, Protes-
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tants and Catholics, and their conflicts cannot be wholly explained in terms of political variables. At its best, liberalism helps us to see this, to get clear about the specifically theological quarrels, and to assess each tradition's answers.

At its best, liberalism encourages us to get involved in religions, to interact with them, and to confront their complexities. It constantly reminds us of the real dangers that go along with any attempt to teach religion from the heart instead of the head. It demands of us the rigors of the scholar: objectivity, fairness, and an open mind. But in the end the liberal will choose to err on the side of critical "detachment" in studying religion, shying away from anything that might be construed as active "commitment" to a particular view. For the liberal's active commitment is, understandably, to his own socio-economic class, not to the practitioners who teach and profess religion, but to the leisured class laborers who produce "neutral knowledge" about it.

It is worth making this point explicit. The liberal's attitude is precisely the one demanded by the Court's "no call" rule. Whereas Piety's approach was passionate and preferential, the liberal's approach is dispassionate and uncommitted. But Piety's mode of discourse is ruled out of bounds. Not that of the theological Will Rogers. His way of speaking and acting is pronounced acceptable and legal. Strictly put, the language of liberalism is the only one that our society has given legitimacy for secular religionists. And we can now see why Goldberg's view passes for dogma among these workers. To question it would be to put the class's deepest intellectual and economic foundations at risk.

Liberal Christians have every reason for thinking that they will pass the Court's first test with flying colors. Their classes will almost certainly have the required secular purpose. What about the second test? Does the liberal's way of teaching influence the student's own religiosity? I think not; occasionally one of his courses will attract a business student to, say, Bonhoeffer's religionless Christianity or Suzuki's Zen. Once in a while a zoology major will become a hardened atheist after reading the assigned passages from Russell's Why I Am Not a Christian. But we should not fault the instructor for such random
conversions. We all know that religion is a loaded gun. Sometimes it goes off. With so many dangerous weapons trotted out before the class, and so many youthful hands so eager to try them out, we cannot expect the teacher to take responsibility for every poor soul who gets religion or its opposite. Indeed, in general the liberal’s students are not undergoing mass revival. That is no accident. For while he did not consciously set out to do so, the liberal has become very good at directing young fingers away from the cold trigger and into the soapy water. It is not at all by chance that those fingers come out soft and clean, nary a trace of gunpowder.

Liberal Christians may teach religion at the state university. I believe this to be true and must now, in good liberal fashion, revise the title of my piece. It should no longer be “Why Christians Should Not Be Allowed to Teach Religion at State Universities,” but rather “Why All Christians except Liberals Should Not Be Allowed to Teach Religion at State Universities.”

YES WE HAVE PROBLEMS: THE CASE OF THE RADICAL

What about me? Am I more like the fundamentalist or the liberal? Neither. I am, for want of a less pretentious term, a radical.

Radical Christians are Christians who have committed their lives to serving the liberating God of the prophets, of Mary, of Jesus Christ, of Sister Theresa, and of Martin Luther King, Jr. We are convinced that the ultimate purpose of human life is, in the words of the Scottish Shorter Catechism, “to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever and ever.” We seek in all of our actions to serve the One who created, sustains, and judges the world. Radicals are like fundamentalists in that we cannot view our commitments as detachable parts of our psyche. Our beliefs are not private, personal matters. They are an inextricable part of our identity, and they thoroughly inform everything we do. Thus, you cannot fully describe any one of our actions without reference to the God revealed in Christ Jesus. For my actions would not be recognizable to me as mine were they not finally described in christocentric terms.

On almost every practical matter, radicals seem more like
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liberals than fundamentalists. On the litmus tests dear to the heart of Jerry Falwell, we come out looking pink or red. We believe, for example, that everyone has a right to a job, that we ought not to be fighting a covert war with the Sandinistas, that democratic socialism is a more just social order than free market capitalism, that women are owed procreative choice and homosexuals equal rights. On all of these counts, we stack up as dyed-in-the-wool "secular humanists." But are we liberals?

Radicals prize the good old liberal virtues of scholarship: objectivity, fairness, a healthy dose of skepticism. We believe that the university is a place where "anything that can be thought may be thought," and that we should be free to follow our investigations anywhere they lead. But just as there is a problem with being too narrow, so there is a problem with having too open a mind: your brains may fall out. It is here that radicals part company with liberals. We do not think that we have to be so gentle with our students that we give up our own most important projects. Indeed, we do not think that we can or should separate our inward beliefs from our outward actions. Again unlike liberals, we are players in the game. Since we side with one team over the others, we cannot distance ourselves from the action, teaching "about" religion as if we were spectators in the grandstand. Finally, we do not think that if someone chooses to try to cultivate character in students that she should be required to advocate the liberal virtues of the Enlightenment. Many of us would prefer to instill in our students the dangerous memories and liberating desires of prophetic Christianity. So, in terms of the two rules laid down by the Supreme Court, radicals would rather be found in bed with Mr. Piety than with Mr. Rogers.

Why? There are three reasons.

First, radicals believe that all teaching is ideologically based. There is much to be said for the academic ideal of rational detachment. But what those in the academy need to realize is that this ideal masks their normative conception of human beings while protecting their class interests. Liberals believe that humans are capable of being "commonsensical," "unbiased," "free," and "scientific." Many who are not liberals also believe this. But the liberal also preaches, ever so subtly, that this is the
way humans *ought* to be. Radicals do not object to the message, they object to the way it is packaged. The liberal virtues are presented as traits of rationality itself when in fact they are the traits of a good liberal man. The problem is that liberals have hidden their ideological values in such innocent-sounding rhetoric. The radical, on the other hand, is no less ideologically committed, but she admits and even testifies to her bias, never assuming for an instant that it should be hidden.

Second, radicals do not agree with Piety that personal salvation is the most important thing in life. However, they are just as certain as he that the building is on fire, or to change the metaphor, that it is tottering on a crumbling foundation. We live increasingly in that era Alasdair MacIntyre has apocalyptically described as "after virtue." Our youth are taught to speak the language of morality without learning its practices. Thus, they search for transcendence in increasingly truncated forms: sectarian religion, nihilistic music, casual sex, addictive drugs, suicide. Ours is a culture in which the new generation knows the old forms of ethical discourse but does not know the communal practices necessary for genuine happiness.

Convinced that a revised Christianity can provide the sense of a past and future necessary for sustained political activism and spiritual fulfillment, we do not confine students' attention to this particular story. The best way to convince people that it is a true story—perhaps the best story—is to present the alternatives.

Oddly enough, radicals have discovered that the best way to respond is to adopt some of the liberal's methods. Convinced that a revised Christianity can provide the sense of a past and future necessary for sustained political activism and spiritual fulfillment, we do not confine students' attention to this particular story. The best way to convince people that it is a true story—perhaps the best story—is to present the alternatives. In this way, the religion of the prophets and the name of the unnameable God revealed in Jesus may emerge as a truly
rational choice for students. That shakes them more profoundly than any tweak on the ear will do.

Third, radicals know that you cannot study religions for very long without seeing that they are very different. And you cannot study them in any depth without seeing that they sometimes make conflicting claims. Think only of the Judaic and Christian image of God as a loving shepherd, tenderly caring for his flock in Psalm 23. Compare that with the Hindu image of God as a vengeful destroyer in the Bhagavad-Gita. In chapter 11, Arjuna depicts God not as a single, pastoral father watching his lambs. Rather, the gods are many and each one has jaws agape, swallowing men and crushing their heads. If God is simultaneously one and not one, a force which at the same time upholds and crushes us, then how can we say that the term God has any intelligible meaning at all? Here, the student of religion needs to decide between competing alternatives.

Religions differ not only in terms of their images of God but in their conceptions of who needs the religion. Ethnic religions like Judaism and Hinduism are the self-contained faiths of a particular community. They have no aspiration to be the one religion for all; they are not evangelistic. Universalistic religions like Christianity and Islam, on the other hand, claim to be the best story about God and the world. Thus, their adherents want to save you from the toppling structure. If you believe, as Christian radicals of my sort do, that one of the universalistic religions is true, then you can no longer go on treating all the others as equals.

This radicalism is not the same as that of Harvey Cox in The Secular City (Macmillan, 1965). Unlike his "secular" theology, my view does not make sense without recourse to talk about the specifically Christian God who creates the world as its Parent, sustains it as its Spirit, and redeems it in the person of Jesus Christ. Like Cox and others such as Robert Bellah (Habits of the Heart, Univ. of Calif. Pr., 1985), however, I do believe that one of the most important tasks for Christians is to oppose the utilitarian individualism and capitalistic materialism of contemporary America. As we become better at doing this we are drawn further away from a Will Rogers theology. We find ourselves inevitably drawn to the monotheistic religions, the traditions in
which the prophetic and apocalyptic word of God is clearly heard. We are increasingly attracted to the canon within the canon in which God's liberating activity is most dramatically portrayed. Our holy texts revolve more and more around the narratives of Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ruth, Jesus, Elie Wiesel, Sister Theresa, and Dorothy Day.

As radicals get better at communicating this vision to students, it gets harder to achieve the Palmolive Liquid effect. The students' hands are exposed to harsh chemicals, and the class seems to split, not into insiders who have found the spiritual secret and outsiders who have not, but into those who have begun to respond to the deity's demands for justice and those who have not. Those who have responded have heard the word of God. The specific forms of their response, of course, are diverse; exactly what they are called to do is something that they must work out with the good Lord. But all of them begin, in whatever small way, to make their lives consistent with what the liberation theologians have taught us to call "the preferential option for the poor." We cannot say what this means for a business or biology or economics major. But we can say that the first step on the road to the kingdom of God is the act of responding to—and knowing that one has responded to—the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

Radical Christians ought not to be allowed to teach religion at the state university. First, their classes have a religious purpose. They consciously seek converts who will take up the cause of women, children, the poor and dispossessed, the disenfranchised, the silenced of history. And they want this solidarity with victims, moreover, to be clearly understood as a response to God's liberating word. Would the Court say that such an instructor has a clear secular purpose? Second, these instructors' influence on students is polarizing, separating those who have chosen the option from those who have not. Some students end up with the instructor, some end up against her. Those who are with her are those who have decided to work concretely in the name of Christ for justice and freedom, both physical and
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spiritual. Would Judge Goldberg think that this class has neither advanced nor inhibited religion?

I work in a discipline that allows great diversity of thought. Indeed, being off in a corner by oneself seems to be a requirement for doing religious studies these days. Imagine my concern, then, to discover that the one thing that everybody in this pasture agrees about is that you cannot be in my corner and do what I do.

I was not overjoyed by this discovery. But I am consoled to think that there are other radicals in other fields who live with other sorts of tensions. I do not plan on resigning my position, nor am I now seeking another job. But I am prepared to do so if the natives—my compatriots—get restless and want me out of the country. (I want to be a radical, not a martyr!)

NOTES


2. The third restriction is that the program of religion must "avoid unnecessary entanglement of religion and government." I do not see that this criterion is directly relevant to the question of how to teach religion classes. For a comprehensive discussion of the Schempp decision and the history of its interpretation, see Robert S. Michaelson, "Constitutions, Courts, and the Study of Religion," JAAR 45 (Sept. 1977): 291-308.

3. Postmodern approaches to religion insist on this point, in clear opposition to their modern, liberal ancestors. See, for example, George A. Lindbeck's argument in The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).


5. I have here borrowed another example from Professor O'Flaherty, one of the most insightful historians of religions I know. She is also an engaging lecturer and storyteller. See her article, "The Good Shepherd/Tiger, or Can One Have an Eclectic Religion?" Criterion 24 (Winter 1985): 25. O'Flaherty's reflections on the disparate Hindu and Christian images of God take a very different direction from mine.

In keeping with ancient tradition, Seasons of the Gospel (Abingdon, 1979) describes Advent as "both a time of thanks for the gift of Christ to us and anticipation of his second coming" (p. 30). The suggested prayers proclaim, "As once he came in humility, so now may he come in glory" (p. 51). Although this connection between the first coming of Jesus at his birth and the Second Coming expected by Christians has a firm place in liturgical tradition, that connection seldom finds its way into preaching during Advent. In our preaching we turn first to the prophetic texts that early Christians employed to interpret their experience of Jesus. As soon as possible, however, we take up the narratives of Jesus' birth in Matthew and Luke and employ those as our main biblical witness to Advent.

It is not remarkable that we move quickly to the well-known stories of Jesus' birth, since those stories have gripped us in profound ways. If I needed a reminder of their power, I received it from my son, Matthew. One Advent when he was a toddler,
Matthew listened somewhat grudgingly as my husband and I read a child’s version of the Christmas story. Time and again he showed great curiosity about the various animals depicted but little interest in the story itself. My conclusion was that he was simply not ready, that no impact had been made. Imagine my surprise the following summer, when Matthew overheard me referring to the fact that he had been born in a hospital, and he objected strenuously, “Oh, no, Mommy. I was born in a stable.” Even though he had demonstrated little response, the story had indeed exerted its power.

While acknowledging the power of the narratives in Matthew and Luke, we also must recognize their abuse. Some of our pageants, combining Luke’s angels with Matthew’s wise men, do justice to neither account. We too easily read the Magnificat as a mother’s sentiments, or we see romance and adventure in Joseph and Mary’s flight into Egypt with their infant son. What we lose when we sentimentalize these narratives is precisely the apocalyptic, the revelatory, character of Advent.

The epistolary readings for Advent in Year A (Rom. 13:11-14; Rom. 15:4-13; James 5:7-10; and Rom. 1:1-7) invite the preacher to reconsider the connection between Advent and Parousia. Two of them refer to the time of Jesus’ return, and the other two reflect on the meaning of the gospel, the meaning of his Advent. As we struggle to understand what these texts meant in the first century and to hear them afresh in our century, we will ask again and again how the first Advent and the second are related. How does the first Advent shape our expectation of the Parousia? How does our expectation of the Parousia inform our observance of Advent?

While this set of lections gives us an opportunity to move beyond a sentimentalized use of the Gospel narratives and to reclaim the apocalyptic character of Advent, it also presents two major difficulties. First, these texts arise in contexts greatly separated from our celebration of Advent. They were written for communities in a very early period of the church’s life, well before the establishment of church calendars. More importantly, they contain few direct references to the expectation or significance of Jesus’ birth. We, thus, have to cross not only the normal distance from text (in its context) to sermon (in our
context), but we are forced to move from text (in its context) to sermon (in our context, shaped by a particular set of assumptions about Advent).

The second difficulty arises if we contemplate employing these texts in a series of sermons, since the texts come from both Romans and James, letters that are customarily set against one another rather than being used in tandem. Rightly or wrongly, Romans is understood to represent Paul's theology of justification by faith, and James is understood to argue for the priority of works. This awkwardness is relieved somewhat because the lectionary reading from James is about waiting for the Parousia, not the author's view of Abraham. It also will be helpful to bear in mind that the technical aspects of the tension between Romans and James interest preachers and other exegetes far more than they do those who occupy the pews on Sunday mornings.

In this article, discussions of individual texts will begin with general comments on the context and an exegesis of the text itself. Following the exegesis there will be an exploration of ways in which the text might be heard again in an Advent sermon. This sort of linear, systematic structure is used to facilitate clarity and does not suggest that these steps are distinct and separate. Although I did begin my study of the texts with a view to their historical, literary, and theological contexts, I was always aware that one goal of my exegesis was to enhance the work of preaching. Hence I constantly used a second pad of yellow paper to gather ideas that might speak to today's context. This article may proceed in a linear fashion, but my own work was circular, or better, progressive. I began with the text, moved to reflection on preaching the text, moved back to the text to evaluate my sermon ideas and ask additional questions of the text, moved again to reflection on preaching, and so forth.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Romans 13:11-14

Paul's message calls us to live in the expectancy of the completion of God's revelation in Jesus.

The significance of Romans in the history of Christian thought complicates our task. As we read, we may recall its impact on
Augustine or Wesley, its skillful interpretation by Luther or Calvin, its modern challenge via the pen of Barth. That history tells the greatness of Romans, but it can also become paralyzing to the preacher who undertakes the exposition of one small text.

Although contemporary New Testament scholarship has by no means reached consensus regarding Romans, the issues under discussion may help us to see Romans once again as a genuine letter instead of as a museum piece. Although we do not wish to lose sight of the greatness of Romans, contemporary discussion may help to alleviate our paralysis. The fervent debate of recent years arises from the distinctiveness of Romans among Paul's letters. Despite its letter form, Romans has the character of a sustained theological statement, with scant reference to a local situation, making it different from the rest of Paul's letters.

Among the many scholarly suggestions concerning the purpose of Romans, two broad categories of explanation dominate. One approach regards Romans as Paul's theological “last will and testament,” in which he summarizes his understanding of the gospel in order to introduce himself to the congregation at Rome. Paul says nothing about the Roman church because he knows virtually nothing of its situation. Here the distinctiveness of Romans is stressed.

The second approach concedes that Paul makes little direct reference to the Roman church, but it argues that this letter nevertheless addresses a situation in the Roman church or churches. Either Paul is aware that Jews and Gentiles are in conflict, or he knows from experience elsewhere that such conflict is inevitable. Because he did not establish the church at Rome and has not yet even visited Rome, he cannot address problems there with the directness that characterizes his other letters. Instead, he must move carefully and deliberately, so as to gain a hearing for his argument.

Further study of Greco-Roman rhetorical or epistolary conventions may eventually move us beyond the current impasse between these two positions. In the absence of that additional assistance, the burden of proof lies with those who argue that Romans is a theological summation, abstracted from a concrete situation. Since all of Paul's other letters are clearly
situational, it is logically probable that this one is also. The reasoned, restrained tone of Romans occurs precisely because Paul does not have the experience at Rome that would allow him to address believers there in a more direct fashion. In addition, while the letter does pull together certain issues that appear in the earlier letters, it contains no discussion of some important issues that one would expect to find in a theological summation (most notably baptism and the Eucharist).

That the relationship between Jews and Gentiles provides one motivation for this letter can be seen clearly in Romans 1. After the salutation and thanksgiving, Paul states what is usually regarded as the thesis of the letter:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." (vss. 16-17, emphasis added)

Throughout the letter that follows, two issues dominate: (1) the righteousness of God, and (2) the relation between Jews and Gentiles before God. How is it that both Gentiles and Jews have failed to acknowledge God (1:18-3:20)? How has the event of Jesus Christ radically altered the standing of both Jew and Gentile before God (3:21-4:25)? What implications does this grace have for sin, the law, life in the Spirit (5:1-8:39)? If the gospel is for all, why have the Jews rejected it (9:1-11:36)?

In Rom. 12:1-15:13 Paul explores the ethical implications of his earlier discussion. Following the programmatic exhortation of 12:1-2, he urges humility in the use of spiritual gifts (12:3-8), love and generosity among believers (12:9-13), peace within and outside the community (12:14-21), a respectful attitude toward governing authorities (13:1-7), and fulfillment of the love command (13:8-10).

Abruptly, in 13:11, Paul turns from these exhortations to make what is certainly an eschatological claim: "Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." While the ethical element has not receded from view, what stands out here are the repeated references to time,
especially because of the seemingly timeless character of the ethical instructions that precede (12:3-13:10).

The first reference to time comes in the introductory clause, "you know what hour it is," where the Greek word kairos appears. When we say, "the time is right for a revolt," we do not mean that revolts happen before lunch or in June, but that an intolerable situation has developed over a period of time. Now it must be changed. In the same way, Paul uses kairos to refer to the significance of Jesus' coming and death at the "right" time (3:26; 5:6), or to the nearness of the Parousia, as here in verse 11 (see also I Cor. 4:5; 7:29).

Paul explains exactly what kairos it is: "It is full time now for you to wake from sleep." Behind the word "time" in the RSV stands the Greek word hora, "hour," which has strong eschatological implications in John's Gospel (John 2:4; 17:1). Although Paul does not elsewhere equate the word "hour" with the eschatological time (I Cor. 15:30; II Cor. 7:8; Gal. 2:5; I Thess. 2:17), its presence at this point in Romans underscores the earlier reference to the kairos. Adding to the urgency is the little adverb "now" (nun), which often punctuates Paul's references to significant moments of time (Rom. 3:26; 5:9; 8:18).

These repeated and urgent references to time underscore the need to awaken. To respond to the impending crisis, one must be awake and alert (I Thess. 5:6-8). The allusive quotation that appears in Eph. 5:14 ("Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light") similarly urges vigilance, and the parable of the wise and foolish maidens dramatizes the need to be awake and ready when action is needed (Matt. 25:1-13).

Wakefulness is imperative because "salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." Paul virtually personifies salvation here, not speaking of the time of salvation but of salvation itself as being nearby. This image gives us a glimpse into Paul's powerful convictions concerning the reality of salvation.

It is important that we recognize that Paul does not say that believers have drawn near to salvation, as if they had the power or ability to move in the direction of their own salvation. Paul's use of the verb "save" is almost always in the passive voice, since believers "will be saved" (Rom. 5:9; 11:26) or "are being
saved" (I Cor. 1:18; 15:2). Never does he refer to salvation as something for which believers may themselves take the initiative.

In verse 12 it is not salvation that is near, but "the day": "The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Because of the midday heat, early morning and late afternoon offered the best time for great activity. To say that the night has passed and day comes, then, does not suggest a period of relaxed contemplation before the work of the day, as it might for us. Instead, day begins with a rush of labor.

While referring to time, "night" and "day" also allow Paul to move to the explicitly ethical language of "darkness" and "light." The equation of evil with the darkness of night and goodness with the light of day is proverbial. Here Paul uses that conventional language to encourage believers to shun evil and to clothe themselves with "the armor of light."

Paul amplifies his reference to "the armor of light" in verse 13, urging that believers behave "becomingly as in the day." The plea that Christians should live becomingly or decently seems out of character. In the preceding ethical section, Paul has described a life of humility and love that goes well beyond the bounds of merely not doing that which is unseemly. But we need to see what follows. To behave decently is to resist the chaos inherent in reveling, drunkenness, and so forth. Like the vices enumerated in 1:18-32, these are symptoms of human rebellion against God. Christians are to live becomingly, not in order to be socially acceptable, but in order to reflect their submission to God (see 12:1-2).

Verse 14 restates this exhortation in another, more striking way. To "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" recalls baptism, which incorporates the believer into Christ (Gal. 3:27). As the exclusive loyalty of the baptized is to Jesus Christ, so the comprehensive norm of the believer is to be found in Christ (Gal. 6:2). Being clothed with Christ renders all previous norms and categories meaningless.

Such an assertion opens the door for the misunderstandings Paul had encountered in Corinth, where Christians took their baptism to mean that they were free to do whatever they
pleased. Perhaps it is in order to forestall a recurrence of that misunderstanding that Paul warns, “Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Belonging to Christ is not to be construed as license for behaving however one wishes. Instead, it is imperative that believers discipline themselves in the face of the world’s rebellion against God, a rebellion made manifest in chaotic living.

Does this reference to the desires of the flesh imply that Paul views the human body in only negative terms? Many Christians, both ancient and modern, have understood Paul’s references to the flesh in this way, but that conclusion does not do justice to the complex use of the term flesh in Paul. Paul often speaks of flesh (σάρξ) in a neutral way, as when he refers to the birth of Jesus from the Davidic line “according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3), or when he acknowledges the priority of Israel because from their race, “according to the flesh, is the Christ” (Rom. 9:5). In other contexts, admittedly, Paul contrasts those who live “according to the flesh” with those who live “according to the Spirit” (e.g., Rom. 8:1-11). Even here, however, Paul’s polemic is not addressed to the evils of the human body but to the perils of a life that is ruled by a “merely human” way of looking at things. For Paul, it seems, flesh is inherently neutral, yet it is subject to various influences, either for good or for ill (compare Rom. 6:19; 7:5, 18). When Paul refers to fleshly desires in verse 14, having already mentioned the specific vices of drunkenness, licentiousness, and so forth, he refers to flesh as the sphere that is liable to capture by sin (compare Gal. 5:16-24).

Throughout this text Paul not only emphasizes the nearness of the eschaton but draws on that expectation in order to urge believers at Rome toward a high ethical standard. Since he does not explain what the connection is between these two convictions, ethical and eschatological, we are left to puzzle over that. We might conclude that Paul means that a judgment of individual believers will accompany the eschaton, and he wants to encourage Christians at Rome and elsewhere to “be right” before God. Several factors militate against that conclusion, however. To begin with, Rom. 1:18-3:20 indicates that no one is ever accepted by God on the basis of behavior, and therefore it would be odd to turn around here and argue that Christians...
must behave properly in order to be ready for a final judgment. The few texts in which Paul does speak of a future judgment have to do with judging one’s contributions to the Christian community (e.g., I Cor. 4:1-5) rather than with assessing personal moral behavior. Neither in our text nor in the other places where Paul refers to the imminence of the eschaton (I Cor. 15:51-58; I Thess. 4:13-18) does he urge that Christians behave rightly so that they may escape divine condemnation or earn divine approval.

Why, then, is the connection made? In order to answer that question, we must see that for Paul the eschaton is not merely a future point at which Jesus will return and bring human history to an end. Instead, the eschaton brings to completion God’s revelation in Jesus, the revelation that brings the world to confront its own faithlessness and ultimately vindicates the righteousness of God. It is because of that revelation, begun but not completed, that Christians are called upon to live now in accordance with God’s will (Rom. 12:1-2).

My second yellow pad, the one that I set aside for sermon ideas as I studied this text, contains a number of phrases and words jotted down in no particular order. Most of the notations have to do with time and, given the many references to time in the text, that is not surprising. The first Sunday in Advent may prompt us to reflect on the season ahead and how we will spend our time. The month of December has become the most congested period of the year for many of us. By the time Advent begins, we are overcommitted to social events and burdened with the “chore” of selecting, purchasing, and delivering gifts and cards. In our setting, the notion of Advent as a season of waiting has lost its meaning. Few of us have the sense that we are waiting; instead, we have the feeling that time is rushing past us and that we cannot afford to sit still for a moment. Certainly we cannot wait for anything.

The passion Paul displays in Rom. 13:11-14 has to do with time, but his passion for time is different from our own. Paul’s compulsion to proclaim the gospel gives him a perspective on his own age and its values, a vantage point from which to see the futility of a life lived in pursuit of the merely human. Our compulsion about time, by contrast, encloses us in our own small world.
Perhaps this text can challenge us to recover Advent as a time of waiting, of expecting God’s revelation for us. If so, then Paul’s compulsion about time may free us from our own compulsion and call us to a new expectancy.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Romans 15:4-13

God’s radical acceptance of Gentiles, the outsiders, necessitates mutual recognition and respect within the community of faith.

Immediately following Rom. 13:11-14, with its urgent call for order and eschatological wakefulness, Paul addresses the problem of disputes within Christian congregations. If, as suggested above, Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians were in conflict at Rome (and the conflicting groups may well have been more complicated than the terms “Jewish Christian” and “Gentile Christian” indicate, with Jewish groups who were closed to Gentiles, Jewish groups who were open to Gentiles, and so forth), then in 14:1-15:13 Paul has these particular conflicts in view. He urges that practices regarding food and the observance of holy days not be the grounds for quarreling among believers, since the practices in dispute are “in honor of the Lord” (14:6) and should, therefore, be respected.

Although Romans 15 no longer deals with specific quarrels about food, the call for reconciliation and acceptance that dominates 15:1-13 is intimately connected with the preceding chapter. Paul understands that debates about eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols reflect a profound division within the community, a division incompatible with the gospel itself.

The lectionary reading begins with verse 4: “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.” In order to understand this verse, however, we must look at verses 1-3. Rom. 15:1-2 encourages the “strong” (in faith: see 14:1) to bear with those who are weak, to seek to edify them. In verse 3 Paul recalls for them the fact that Christ
did not seek to please himself, and then he quotes Ps. 69:9. Verse 4, while it gives us an insight into Paul's view of Scripture, does not begin a new sense unit but stands as part of the unit that begins in 15:1.

Paul's comment about the purpose of Scripture merits our attention. Given our modern understanding of the development of Scripture, we assume that the Psalmist addressed the fears and hopes and needs of his own community, and we will find odd the notion that the Psalmist wrote in order to educate first-century Christians. But Paul's is not a historical analysis that asks how Scripture came into existence. His claim reflects his own convictions, once again shaped by his eschatology, that everything that has occurred has the new age as its goal. All of God's actions have pointed toward the Advent of Jesus Christ, and it is for that reason that Paul can understand Scripture as intended for the education of believers.

To say that Scripture exists "for our instruction" does not mean "for our knowledge" or "for our information," but Scripture exists "that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." The Greek noun and verb for hope (elpis, elpizein) appear with frequency in Paul's letters. Earlier in Romans, Paul refers to Abraham's confidence in God's promise as hope (4:18) and describes the Christian hope that is based on God's grace (5:1-5). Chapter 8 characterizes the eschatological longings of all creation as hope (18-25). For Paul, then, to hope is not merely to wish for something or to daydream about something. To hope is to have confidence, trust, conviction, and one way in which the Christian gains hope is from the witness of Scripture.

With verses 5-6, Paul leaves aside this comment on the function of Scripture and begins what scholars call a prayer-wish: "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Live in harmony with one another" in the RSV translates the Greek somewhat loosely, since the Greek verb translated as "live" is phronein, usually meaning to think or to consider, to have an opinion or judgment. We might translate instead, "May God grant you to
think the same with one another." That is, there was an urgent need for believers to be able to think, to consider, to have opinions, together. We should notice also that the goal of this unity is not self-preservation or church growth, but “that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (emphasis added).

Verse 7, with its imperative, “Welcome one another,” takes us back to the beginning of chapter 14. There Paul initiates the discussion of the “strong” and the “weak” with the imperative “Welcome those who are weak in faith,” and with the reminder that God has already welcomed both the “weak” and the “strong.” To say that believers are to “welcome one another” summarizes 15:1-5. To bear the shortcomings of others, to please others for the good, is genuinely to welcome them.

As in 15:3, Paul grounds this imperative in the action of Christ. Believers are to welcome one another “as Christ has welcomed them.” While elsewhere Paul does encourage the imitation of Christ (I Cor. 11:1), we should not read these statements as merely presenting Christ as an exemplar for Christian behavior. Instead, believers are to welcome one another because they have themselves already been welcomed by Christ, as verses 8-12 explain.

“For the glory of God,” at the end of 15:7, may refer either to the believers who welcome one another or to Christ who has already welcomed believers. In the Greek as in the RSV the phrase immediately follows “as Christ has welcomed you,” which may incline us to think that the two belong together. Since verse 8 affirms that Christ acted “to show God’s truthfulness,” it may be that verse 7 also refers to the goal of Christ’s action. Elsewhere in Paul’s letters, however, it is human beings who shame the glory of God (Rom. 1:23; 3:23) or who act in a way that confirms God’s glory (I Cor. 10:31; II Cor. 4:15; Phil. 1:11). Nowhere else does Paul describe Christ as glorifying God. Indeed, since verses 6 and 9 of Romans 15 both refer to believers glorifying God, we can conclude that verse 7 states both the reason why believers should receive one another (“Christ has welcomed you”) and the result of that welcome (“for the glory of God”).

The expression, “For I tell you,” at the beginning of verse 8,
draws the reader’s or hearer’s attention to the verses that follow, in which Paul explains how it is that Christ has received both Jews and Gentiles. First, “Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs.” Consistent with Rom. 1:17 and 9:1-5, this statement reflects Paul’s conviction that Christ was sent first for the people of Israel.

That Jesus’ birth as a Jew was not a mere accident of history with no further significance may be concluded from the fact that, when Paul says Christ “became a servant to the circumcised,” he puts the word “became” in the perfect tense. Christ did not enter the scene as a Jew and then become a universal figure without grounding in history, but he came as a Jew and continues to be a member of Israel.

This happened, Paul says, on behalf of God’s truth. Here again we encounter a word, truth, that we use in a superficial sense, but which has profound connotations for Paul. Paul is not saying that God tells the truth in the sense that God’s statements may be regarded as accurate. In fact, God’s truth has as much to do with action as with speech. For Paul, to assert that God is truthful is to assert that God has always acted in a way consistent with God’s speech. Christ is the ultimate proof that God tells the truth and does the truth, because Christ fulfills the promises made to Israel long ago.

With verses 9-12, Paul turns from Christ as servant of Israel and takes up once more Christ’s coming as it relates to Gentiles: “that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.” The biblical quotations that follow in rapid succession all serve to undergird Paul’s assertion: “I will praise thee among the Gentiles”; “Rejoice, O Gentiles”; “Praise the Lord, all Gentiles”; “In him shall the Gentiles hope.” Paul regards each of these quotations as pointing forward to the time when Gentiles would be grafted onto the tree of Israel (Rom. 11:17-24).

A first reading of these verses, with their heaped-up quotations, may cause us to wonder whether Paul has wandered off from his subject, but it is here that he reaches the clearest manifestation of the reconciliation that should exist within the Christian community. Both the call to “bear with the failings of the weak” and the call to “welcome one another” find
their grounding in Christ's reception, not of Israel alone, but even of the Gentiles. God's radical inclusion of Gentiles, the outsiders, necessitates mutual recognition and respect within the community of faith.

Verse 13 terminates the "proof" from Scripture by means of a second prayer-wish: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Appropriately, since Paul has just reminded his audience of God's action on their behalf, he now prays for their faith. The prayer is not simply that they will believe, however, but that they will go on believing and living in their hope.

The appearance of two prayer-wishes in close proximity, one in verse 6 and one in verse 13, prompts us to look carefully at the structure of this unit. In both verses 1-2 and verse 7 we find a statement that functions as an imperative: "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak . . . ; let each of us please his neighbor for the good" and "Welcome one another." (Both "let each please" and "welcome" are imperatives in Greek. "We ought to bear with" is not technically an imperative, although the indicative of this verb [opheilein] has an imperative meaning.) Following each of these imperatives comes an indicative statement that grounds the imperative. It is because Christ did not choose to please himself, because Christ welcomed all, that believers are called upon to receive one another. The final statement in each paragraph is an optative, a wish, that God would grant believers the strength to fulfill the imperatives (vss. 5-6, 13).

Such repetition in structure and even in content may surprise us until we see that the two parts of Rom. 15:1-13 have slightly different roles in their context in Paul's letter. Verses 1-6 do more than conclude the discussion of the "strong" and the "weak." They conclude the section of the letter that begins with 12:1-2. A significant part of the transformation that Paul calls for in 12:2 is concerned with the ability to "please the neighbor unto the good, unto upbuilding." Throughout chapters 12-15, Paul understands the warrant for Christian behavior to be located squarely in what God has done in Christ. And throughout
chapters 12–15, as elsewhere, Paul recognizes that transformation comes only as God grants it.

Verses 7-13 begin with the same theme as verses 1-6, "Welcome one another." However, the indicative statements of this paragraph are more comprehensive in their description of God's actions. Here Paul summarizes the content of the gospel: Christ has confirmed God's promises, both to Israel and to the Gentiles. Verses 7-13, then, summarize, although in a schematic way, all of Romans. Following this, Paul will comment in personal and moving tones on his vocation and his need for support (15:14-33).

While Paul does not explicitly mention the eschaton in Rom. 15:4-13, his convictions shape this text. It is because he believes that God has, through the Advent of Jesus Christ, initiated the consummation of human history, that Paul can say that Scripture exists for our instruction. Further, he sees in the inclusion of the Gentiles a sign that God is fulfilling the eschatological hopes of Israel. A major piece of Paul's understanding of the gospel is that it signals God's radical inclusion of all people. That radical inclusion demands that believers respond by welcoming one another, as they themselves have been welcomed.

We contemporary Christians are fond of the story of Jesus' birth, but we often understand that birth as an isolated event that occurred long ago. It exists back there and, while it admittedly has significance for the development of the Christian church, we do not often enough contemplate its meaning for us in the present. This particular lection can assist us to see that Advent exists not only as a past event but as a present one as well.

That Jesus welcomes us, without regard for our worthiness or unworthiness, challenges us to make a place for those who are different from ourselves, who may not conform to our expectations of behavior, who may not contribute in ways that are conventional. In short, this text breaks in on our understanding of what is "right" and "proper" at a place where we are most vulnerable, because we trust that our religiosity will reveal to us who is acceptable and who is not. Paul's claim is that
the borders and walls we put into place conflict with the action of Christ himself. Once again, Advent shatters our preconceived notions.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

James 5:7-10

The second Advent of Christ brings with it both judgment and vindication.

After several weeks of reflecting on texts from Romans and their meaning for Advent, moving to the Epistle of James will be unsettling. What strikes us at first, of course, is the conflict between Paul’s emphasis on faith and James’s emphasis on works, but the differences between the two letters are not confined to their soteriological presuppositions. The two texts are also quite different in character and structure. Unlike Romans, with its tightly reasoned argument, James loosely strings together a collection of moral exhortations. Some sections of the text generally cohere (e.g., 2:1-17; 3:1-10; 4:13–5:6), but transitions between sections are not easily identified (e.g., between 2:26 and 3:1, or between 4:12 and 4:13). The text as a whole does not lend itself easily to structural analysis.

The content and structure of James make it difficult, perhaps impossible, to tease out from the text clues about its setting, community, and author. The Jewish character of much of the exhortation prompts most exegetes to conclude that the text comes from a Jewish-Christian community, but even that identification must be qualified, however, since certain issues that we might expect from a Jewish-Christian group do not appear. For example, neither circumcision nor Torah is a topic of discussion. The emphasis on right behavior may arise because the author, a leader or teacher in the community, sees that a crisis of some sort threatens the community.

What are the issues that preoccupy the writer of James? Despite the loose structure of the letter, there are certain issues that emerge again and again. One of these is what we would
term "integrity." James urges believers to behave with integrity of thought and action, and contrasts the lack of integrity in human beings with the utter integrity of God. He characterizes human beings as "double-minded" and "unstable," unable to control their speech (1:7; 3:1-12), but God is faithful and gives only gifts that are good (1:5, 16-18). The need for integrity also manifests itself in human dealings with the rich and poor, when the rich are treated with favor and the poor with contempt (2:1-4), while God has no regard for the splendor of the rich (2:5-7), but hears the cries of those who have been maltreated (5:4). A second issue is concerned with the relationship between believers and the world. James urges believers to keep themselves "unstained from the world" (1:27), since the world's "wisdom" is false (3:15-16) and alien to God (4:4). A third issue that appears with frequency in James is the necessity of steadfastness or patience among believers. The opening lines urge joy in the face of trials, since trials will result in "steadfastness" or patience (1:2-4), and endurance will allow believers to achieve their reward (1:12; 5:7-11). In his discussion of all these issues, consistent with the moralists of his day, James offers examples of right behavior in the lives of prominent figures, in this instance figures from the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 2:21, 25; 5:11, 17).

The lection for the third Sunday in Advent, James 5:7-10, follows one of the discussions of the folly of the rich, who believe that they control their own futures and who have defrauded their laborers. The opening verse of our text harks back to earlier references to the last days or the days of judgment (4:12; 5:3): "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord" (5:7a). Here, for the first time in these lections, we find the word parousia. While parousia can refer to the presence or arrival of anyone (I Cor. 16:17; II Cor. 7:6, 7; Phil. 1:26; 2:12), it had acquired in the Hellenistic world a technical reference to the visitation of a great figure, such as a king or emperor, or the appearance of a previously unknown or hidden god. In early Christian literature, parousia quickly comes to be a technical term for the expected return of Jesus. The Gospel traditions, for example, speak of the "parousia" of the Son of man (Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39), and Paul refers to the coming "parousia" of the Lord.
(I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23) as do other New Testament writers (II Thess. 2:1, 8; II Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; I John 2:28). James often employs the word “Lord” to refer to God rather than Jesus (1:8; 3:9; 5:4, 11), but the use of *parousia* as a technical term in other early Christian texts makes it nearly certain that here in 5:7 the “*parousia*” is the return of Jesus (compare 2:1).

Believers are encouraged to be patient until the Lord’s Parousia. Because certain forms of Christian piety have understood passivity to be a virtue, we might equate this admonition to patience with an admonition to passivity. What the author intends is not clear from the word itself, since James does not use the word (*makrothymain*) apart from this passage. The context, however, offers ample explanation: “Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the late rain.” To be patient, then, is to be like the farmer who waits for the harvest.

In Palestine, as the author knew either from firsthand experience or from familiarity with Scripture, large rainfalls regularly occur in the fall and again in the spring, playing a major role in crop development. The Hebrew Scriptures speak not only about the regularity of these rains, but also about God as the one who gives them. For example, Deut. 11:14 includes in the description of the covenant the following: God “will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil.” Hosea says that the coming of God to the people is as “sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth” (6:3; see also Jer. 5:24; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1). The rains may be relied upon, since they come as the gift of God. For Christians to be patient for the coming of the Lord, then, is to wait for that event, confident that it will occur and certain that it comes at God’s will.

Verse 8 repeats the original admonition to patience and then restates it: “You also be patient. Establish your hearts.” An additional reason is given in the last part of verse 8: “for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (emphasis added). This formulation appears in the Gospels as Jesus’ saying about the kingdom (“The kingdom of God is at hand” [Mark 1:15; compare Matt. 4:17]). In both cases it conveys the impression that the event is imminent. In
James, however, we may rightly wonder whether the claim arises more from a need to emphasize what has already been said than from a conviction that the eschaton is actually at hand. Although James frequently couples his admonitions with warnings about a coming judgment, there is little sense here that the eschaton impinges.

Verse 9 again contains the imagery of immediacy, but introduces a new admonition as the writer urges believers: “Do not grumble, brethren, against one another, that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the doors.” Elsewhere in the New Testament, the Greek word stenazein, here translated “grumble,” is translated with the English words “sigh” or “groan” (compare Mark 7:34; Rom. 8:32; II Cor. 5:2, 4). These instances describe an internal response to crisis, either that precipitated by a healing (Mark 7:34) or that caused by the desire for the eschatological longing for adoption (Rom. 8:32). Groaning or sighing in these texts occurs within the person and is not directed at an outsider as a complaint or grievance. Thus, James 5:9 with its exhortation not to groan against one another is unusual when viewed in light of New Testament usage. In the Septuagint, however, we may find the precursor to the use of this verb in James. There the word appears in contexts where people sigh or groan because of oppression, either their own or that of others (Job 30:25; Isa. 59:11; Lam. 1:21; Ezek. 26:15; I Macc. 1:26; Exod. 2:23; 6:5). James 5:9 refers to groaning in this sense, as a response to someone who has injured or wronged a believer, rather than an internal sighing or grieving.

Believers are urged not to complain or grumble about one another. James’s negative attitude toward the “world” makes him unconcerned about grumbling that is directed toward outsiders. What matters is how Christians behave with one another (compare I Cor. 5:9-13). Those who do complain run the risk of judgment, since the judge is “standing at the doors.”

Verse 10 offers the prophets as exemplars for this injunction, as verse 7b offered the farmer as exemplar for patience regarding the Parousia. The prophets endured suffering and, for their steadfastness, are called “happy” or “blessed” (makarizein). Verse 11 introduces the specific instance of Job, the proverbial figure of steadfastness.
Exeges frequently treat James 5:7-10 as a set of unconnected sayings, linked together only by the references to the nearness of the Parousia and judgment. On this reading, verse 9 stands alone, since grumbling has no intrinsic connection with the Parousia. In addition, the whole section (vss. 7-11, verse 11 being integrally related to verse 10), exists in isolation from the preceding material on the wealthy and their injustices.

The small word, "therefore," in verse 7, speaks against a hasty conclusion that we are dealing with independent sayings that are not logically related to one another. After chastising those who boast of their own plans (4:13-16) and those who defraud the poor (5:1-6), the writer says, "Be patient, therefore, . . ." Believers are to be patient in their situation, even when that situation includes oppression. Again, this patience is not a passive acceptance of injustice but an active confidence in God, who will bring about the Parousia as surely as the rains. Verse 9, then, urges those within the community who experience wrong from other believers to remain patient, confident that God will redeem the situation.

For the writer of this text, the second Advent of Christ brings with it accountability. The "last days" (5:3) will mean judgment for those who have abused their wealth. Those who complain against their fellow believers because of injustices done them also must recall that judgment is imminent (5:9). James's words here are reminiscent of the Hebrew prophets who interpreted the "day of the Lord" as a day of darkness rather than light (Amos 5:18-20; Joel 2:1-2). James urges believers to live in accordance with the faith they profess because they are and will be accountable for their actions.

James does not merely threaten and frighten his audience, however, since the second Advent also promises the vindication of those who have been faithful. Like the farmer who waits upon God, those who wait for "the coming of the Lord" with patience will receive it (5:7-8). Like the prophets who are looked upon with admiration will be those who endure faithfully the inequalities of the present (5:7-11). The opening of the letter establishes this same point, when it encourages believers to "count it all joy," since steadfastness in the face of adversity will produce maturity (1:2-4) and eventually will secure "the crown
of life" (1:12). The promise of Christ's second Advent is that God does not abandon the faithful. God is able to bring hope to even the most hopeless time.

This second issue, God's power and faithfulness, appears to lend itself more readily to preaching during Advent than does the first point concerning accountability and judgment. Since we proclaim that the birth of Jesus fulfills God's promise to Israel, we can easily connect that first promise with the promise of a second Advent. We need to be honest, however, about our ability to hear and assimilate promises of hope. The multiple crises that confront us may make it difficult for people to hear any word of assurance as genuine. Can we proclaim confidence in God in such a way that it can be heard and accepted today?

Here it may be helpful to remind our congregations and ourselves that we are not the first generation to view the world with dismay and even despair. Apocalyptic literature of all kinds comes to birth because people look to their own times without hope and yet affirm that somehow, in some way, God will not let evil have the last word. James stands with numerous other biblical writers who knew full well the bleakness of their own context and who nevertheless affirmed hope in God. We must take care not to employ that history as a club for beating ourselves and others into submission; rather, we can derive from it the comfort of knowing that we are not alone in history. Advent reminds us that God has kept the promises made to Israel, and Advent allows us to continue to affirm that we do not and cannot live outside of God's power.

Because we are accustomed to Advent as a season of expectancy, of hope, proclamation of judgment does not come easily. Yet this reading from James insists that the second Advent brings with it accountability, and a rereading of the prologue to John's Gospel will remind us that the first Advent also distinguishes those who love the light from those who love the darkness (John 1:9-13). Even as we await each year the light of the first Advent we must recall that that light calls us to live in light, to maintain lives of integrity and justice. It is the first Advent that calls and enables us to live within the light. James rightly reminds us that we are responsible not only for our words but for our actions.
The one we expect at Advent is the one who comes from the line of David and whose Resurrection confirms him as Son of God in the realm of God's power. This one still calls us to obedience.

Since our earlier lections from Romans reflected Paul's combination of eschatological and ethical expectations, and the reading from James similarly saw the Parousia as a basis for ethical admonitions, it will be interesting now to turn back to the opening of Romans. In these first verses Paul conforms to the epistolary conventions of his day, according to which salutations identify the sender and the addressee, and then contain some word of greeting. While Paul often expands these greetings, he must regard the initial lines of Romans as particularly important since he had not been to Rome and, hence, could not rely on his previous relationship with Roman Christians as a source of authority (compare I Thess. 1:2-10; Gal. 4:12-20).

Verse 1 identifies Paul himself in three separate phrases: "a servant of Jesus Christ," "called to be an apostle," "set apart for the gospel of God." The Greek word δουλος, which the RSV translates "servant" here, is elsewhere translated "slave" (see I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 4:1, 7) as it should be. A δουλος was a person owned by another, not a free individual who sold his time as our English "servant" implies, and to translate δουλος as "servant" here is to miss the point of the claim Paul makes. He has become enslaved to Christ (compare Phil. 3:12). For Paul, all persons are slaves of something, as Rom. 6:16-18 indicates. While it is true that believers have been freed from their slavery to sin, their freedom exists because Christ has purchased them; hence, they are slaves of Christ (I Cor. 6:20; 7:22-24).

In the second phrase Paul identifies himself as one who is "called to be an apostle." It is clear that Paul has a strong and well-articulated notion of his own calling, but we should not
overlook the fact that he regarded all believers as having been called (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2). What distinguishes Paul is his calling as an apostle, but others are called to other tasks (1 Cor. 3:5-9; 12:27-31).

At the end of verse 1, Paul writes that he is "set apart for the gospel of God." Gal. 1:15 says that God "had set me apart before I was born," drawing on the prophetic imagery of God choosing even before birth (compare Isa. 49:1; Jer. 1:5). That understanding of being set apart may be at work here. Paul is not only Christ's slave, one who has a particular function, but one whose role was determined prior to any volition of his own.

What dominates all three of these phrases is Paul's conviction that God has acted upon and through him. Each phrase identifies Paul as the recipient of God's or Christ's action. He was set apart, he was called, he was a slave, not by his own choice but because Jesus Christ enslaved him (see 1 Cor. 9:16; Phil. 3:12). This sense of God's power runs throughout Romans, as Paul describes God's sovereign wrath and grace, but Paul's personal sense of that power displays itself even here.

Following the reference to "the gospel of God" at the end of verse 1, Paul characterizes this gospel with a relative clause that begins with verse 2 and continues through verse 6. In this lengthy description, Paul first comments on the promise behind the gospel (vs. 2), then comments on the substance of the gospel, Jesus Christ (vss. 3-4), and finally on its results (vss. 5-6). We should not move too quickly past the first description of the gospel as the gospel "of God." Since gospel ("good news") was in Paul's day an ordinary term used to refer to a political event or military victory, among other things, the statement that the gospel is God's already distinguishes it from competing views of what makes for "good news."

According to verse 2, the gospel was promised "through his prophets in the holy scriptures." Elsewhere Paul indicates that the gospel was part of God's plan (1 Cor. 2:7-9), but the language he employs here is unusual. Paul normally employs the noun prophet and the verb prophesy to refer to prophetic manifestations within his own Christian communities, although he once uses the expression "the law and the prophets" (Rom. 3:21) to refer to Scripture. In addition, this is the only place in the New
TESTAMENT where the expression “holy scriptures” appears. What must be heard here, however, is that the gospel has a connection with God’s earlier actions in history. God does not decide to enter human history only with Christ, but with Christ God fulfills a promise. What is said about Jesus in verse 3 only underscores this connection.

This gospel is about “his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh” (vs. 3). The conviction that God would protect and deliver Israel by means of the offspring of David appears in a number of texts (II Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3-4; Ezek. 37:24-25), and Christians quickly claimed that Jesus’ descent from David verified his messiahship (Acts 2:29-32; John 7:42; II Tim. 2:8). That Christ came from David’s line “according to the flesh” also means that the messiah appeared as a human being. When verse 4 describes him as designated “son of God” by virtue of the Resurrection, he is not thereby cut off from the line of David, as if verse 3 referred to the earthly life of Jesus and verse 4 to the continued existence of the risen Lord. The two descriptions stand in parallel, each continuing into the present, as the risen Lord remains “son of David.”

Verse 4 introduces the notion that Jesus was “designated” son of God. Although Paul does not employ this verb (horizein) elsewhere, Luke uses it to refer to Jesus as one whom God appointed (Acts 10:42; 17:31), or to refer to the plan God determined in connection with Jesus (Luke 2:22; Acts 2:23). What is unclear in our context is whether Jesus is designated in power or whether he is Son of God in power, since the phrase “in power” may modify either the verb or the following noun. Because Paul most often speaks of power as the power of God (Rom. 1:20; I Cor. 2:3; 6:14; II Cor. 4:7; 6:7; 13:4) or the power of the Spirit (Rom. 14:5,13, 19), our first inclination may be to regard the designation of Christ as Son of God as accomplished in or by means of God’s power, but the passive verb “designated” already makes clear that God is the actor here. Instead, “in power” refers to the realm or sphere in which Jesus is designated Son of God. That is, he is designated as God’s son in the realm of power, in the presence of God (compare I Cor. 15:43; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3).
This designation of Jesus occurs “according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.” The first phrase parallels “according to the flesh” in verse 3, except for the addition of the intensifying modifier “of holiness.” The second phrase, “by his resurrection from the dead” stands in parallel with “descended from David,” although the English translations obscure the parallel (literally, “from seed of David” and “from resurrection of dead”). Despite numerous attempts by commentators to subdue it, this phrase can only mean that the Resurrection in some sense marks the designation of Jesus as Son of God. Perhaps what is intended is that Jesus becomes Son of God by virtue of his Resurrection. An alternate reading is that the Resurrection makes his sonship manifest in the realm of power. In either case, however, the implication that the Resurrection effects a change in Jesus’ status stands.

Most exegetes agree that verses 3-4 contain some traditional Christian expressions that were not written by Paul but are employed by him here, although the extent of these traditions and the extent of Pauline additions are the subject of scholarly debate. The general hypothesis that these verses are not Pauline in origin, however, helps explain the reference to the Resurrection as somehow conferring on Jesus the status of “son of God.” Paul does not elsewhere imply that the Resurrection marks the beginning of Jesus’ sonship; indeed, he characterizes his own preaching as preaching of the cross (I Cor. 2:1-2; Gal. 3:1). The presence of the notion that the Resurrection initiates Christ’s sonship may derive from the fact that Paul is quoting an earlier formula. Similarly, Paul does not elsewhere refer to David except in quotations from Scripture (Rom. 4:6; 11:9), nor does he use the verb “designate” or the expression “spirit of holiness.” All of these peculiarities contribute to the suggestion that he is employing an earlier formula.

Of course, Paul introduces this material for a reason, and it is most often suggested that the reason lies in the formula itself. Verse 3, with its insistence on the relationship of Jesus to the people of Israel, may come from a community of Jewish Christians. Verse 4, on the other hand, which emphasizes the Resurrection and the title “son of God,” may derive from a predominantly Gentile Christian community. Here, as Paul
undertakes to state the meaning of the gospel for both Jews and Gentiles, he brings together their respective understandings of Jesus Christ.

Much attention has been given to the adoptionistic character of this formula. Since it claims that Jesus is designated Son of God by virtue of his Resurrection, it must be understood as supposing that Jesus became Son of God then and not earlier. The fact that Acts contains similar statements should make us wary of supposing that this is a kind of exception within early Christian christology (2:30-32; 3:13). On the other hand, even the use of the term "adoptionistic" introduces later christological categories, and we should not suppose that Paul or others were involved in such developed speculation about the nature of Christ. The fact that Paul can here employ a statement that reflects a "low" christology and elsewhere employ statements with a "high" christology (Phil. 2:5-11) indicates that he has not yet addressed the kinds of questions that later plagued the church's theology.

Verses 5-6 continue the description of the gospel that began in verse 1, but here attention turns away from the Advent itself to its result: "through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ." Although it is God who calls, as verse 1 has made clear, Paul and his fellow workers are called through Jesus. Through Jesus they receive not only their apostolic task, but also grace. They receive the free gift of God's radical acceptance, for it is only by means of that acceptance that they are able to fulfill the apostolic work.

The goal of the grace and apostleship that has been granted them is "the obedience of faith." Later in Romans Paul will describe the obedience of Jesus, whose obedience offers righteousness for many (5:18-19). As noted earlier in the discussion of the term "slave," Paul regards all persons as subject to someone or something. Hence, in 6:15-19, he contrasts the former obedience to sin with present obedience to Christ. Here he has reference to obedience that belongs to faith, obedience that stems from faith. Because believers have received the gospel, they are obligated to it (compare 6:22), and
hence are obedient to it. This obedience itself proclaims the faith of Roman Christians (16:19) and is the goal of Paul's apostleship (15:18).

Obedience that has its origin in faith is to be sought among "all the nations." Here already Paul sounds the note of God's radical inclusion of all persons. While the gospel is for the Jews first, its claim extends to all persons, and its demand similarly includes all persons. That the gospel has already been proclaimed in Rome is evident in verse 6, since Paul specifies that the phrase "the nations" includes believers at Rome, who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Having identified himself as the sender of the letter with this lengthy introduction (vss. 1-6), Paul turns in verse 7 to a brief identification of the recipients of the letter: "To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints." This standard description of the addressees repeats the earlier claim that believers in Rome have been called by God. The address then concludes with the customary grace (vs. 7b).

Although these first verses of Romans technically stand outside the body of the letter, our study of them demonstrates that they are by no means external to Paul's message to Christians at Rome. Whatever his reason for writing to Rome, this address closely ties together Paul's apostleship (vss. 1, 5), the gospel he proclaims (vss. 1-6), and the Lord who stands at the center of that gospel (vss. 3-4). Paul is not content, perhaps not even able, to identify himself apart from his work as apostle of the gospel. Nor is he able to omit an identification of the people toward whom his apostleship is directed, even when, as here, he has not yet worked directly among them.

As we turn from this careful reading of the text itself to contemplate preaching on the fourth Sunday of Advent, the overwhelming significance of the gospel we proclaim once again impresses itself upon us. Those of us whose work constantly involves us in preaching and studying Scripture must from time to time recognize and confess that we have handled these tasks lightly, that we have protected ourselves from their importance by treating them casually. Our close reading of the introduction to Paul's letter to Roman Christians reminds us that we deal with no small thing, but with the good news of the fulfillment of
God’s promises. The gospel we proclaim has to do with one who was and is son of David, who was and is Son of God.

How to convey that in a sermon? The answer to that question will depend on the preacher’s context, as always, but whatever the context, there are several features that may be instructive: (1) The way in which Paul identifies himself with the gospel poses a challenge to our tendency to understand faith as only a facet of our lives. When we compartmentalize Advent, setting it apart as the time in which we prepare for the gospel, we demonstrate our unwillingness to allow the gospel to have its rightful place at the center. (2) Although we rightly think of the gospel as that which is new, Paul reminds us that it is also the case that the gospel fulfills God’s earlier plan and promise. God has acted in a way consistent with God’s promises. (3) At the center of the gospel is the Son of God, who comes from the line of David, the people of Israel. At the same time, the Son is one whose Resurrection confirms him as Son of God in the realm of God’s powers. This paradoxical description of Jesus Christ, whether created by Paul or employed from some other source, belongs at the center of our celebration of Advent. The one we expect at Advent is this one, who still comes to us from the people of Israel and still exists in the realm of power. That one still calls us to obedience.

CONCLUSION

Advent is the season in the church year when we wait for Jesus to come to us anew. As we celebrate Advent with the children of our families and our communities, we want to see it with their eyes. We know by observing, and also by remembering, how children identify with the story of the first Advent. We see them internalize the story and its mystery.

These lections from Romans and James do not detract from that aspect of Advent, but they do remind us that Advent has another side as well. In Advent we not only await the renewal of Jesus’ birth among us, but we also remember the promise of the second Advent. That connection empowers us to proclaim that the second Advent fulfills the first, that God’s promise may be
trusted. Both first and second Advents witness to the power of God to shatter all human boundaries, to call us to account, and to sustain us even in our most profound crises. It is this aspect of Advent that Charles Wesley captured in his hymn, “Lo, He Comes”:

Lo! he comes, with clouds descending,
Once for our salvation slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia, alleluia!
Christ the Lord returns to reign.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Romans


Donfried, Karl P., ed. *The Romans Debate*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977. This small volume contains some of the most important attempts to explain the unique character of Romans among Paul's letters.


James

translation of a standard German reference commentary.


Perdue, Leo. "Paraenesis and the Epistle of James." *Zeitschrift für die neuestamentliche Wissenschaft* 72 (1982): 241-56. It is unfortunate that this article is not widely available to pastors, since it locates the moral teaching of James within that of other moralists of his day in a useful and instructive way.
EXPOSITORY NOTES
ON SELECTED LECTIONS

JOSEPH DAVID STINSON

Since the homiletical resources for this issue are distant from the date of publication, the following short notes will provide information and stimulation for preachers on three Sundays during the fall.

The Editor

FRIENDS OF MAMMON


A friend of mammon is a person who treats money as something to be used when it suits him or her, but who never is vassal to mammon's power.

In every Bible I have ever owned, Luke 16:9 is underlined with a question mark in the column. What on earth does the advice mean, "'Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon'? And how can the expositor of this text make any sense at all of the advice in the succeeding verses, about not being a servant of two masters?

These verses are found in Luke in the context of our Lord's parable about the dishonest steward. Confusion is heightened

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These expository notes are based on the Common Lectionary: The Lections Proposed by the Consultation on Common Texts (New York: Church Hymnal Corp., 1983).

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by the fact that the master in the parable commends the shrewdness, the dishonesty, of the steward! In the story when it appears that the master will dismiss his steward, the steward calls in the past due accounts. He juggles the books of his master so that when he is jobless his master’s creditors will owe him a favor. This dishonest bookkeeping is commended by the master, and then presumably by the teller of this tale, saying: "'And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations' " (vs. 9). The next verse seems then to advise the opposite, to be honest and faithful in all matters. Well, are we to use these creative bookkeeping methods which are dishonest? Or are we supposed to be truthful at all costs?

Any interpretation of these seemingly conflicting words in Luke needs hinge upon a correct understanding of the word "friend" in the phrase, "make friends . . . of unrighteous mammon." Notice the way Luke uses "friend" in 11:5-8. In that passage a friend is a person who can give you what you ask him. Friendship is a reciprocal relationship based on affection, of course, but also on equality of social rank and wealth. The friend is a neighbor or cohort who is your equal. Note that in Luke 14:12, the friend repays his friend who invites him to dinner. You invite a friend; he is able financially to return the invitation. Such a relationship depends upon social equality. In 14:10-11, the friend insists that you sit at his social level at the party table. If you sit lower, he insists you take a higher seat, equal to his seat. In other words, you cannot go lower than your friend and still be a friend in the world. For friendship depends on equality. This is the fact of friendship in the world and society of the New Testament.

Now in verse 13 we are told that one cannot be a servant of two masters, that one cannot be a servant of God and mammon at the same time. So what is the difference between a servant of mammon (vs. 13) and a friend of mammon (vs. 9)? Let us take note of the role of servant in Luke’s Gospel. A servant, like a friend, is someone who can help. But the servant helps because he has to help his master. The friend helps because he is an equal and able to help, but the friend has a choice. Note again 11:5-8,
about the man who goes to his friend at night for help. The friend has the option not to help. The servant would have no option, because he is bound to serve the master. The servant-master relationship is completely different from the relationship between friends. Friends are equals. Servants are beneath masters and are not socially equal. A friend may be asked for help, but you cannot dominate a friend because friendship is a relationship of equals. The servant-master relationship presumes inequality, domination, and authority. Thus, to make friends with mammon does not mean the same as to become mammon’s servant. A servant must serve money’s demands and be in its power. A friend of mammon is a person who treats money as something to be used when it suits him or her but who never is vassal to mammon’s power.

A question remains, however. Concerning the shrewd steward, are we to be dishonest (“shrewd”) with money to get into heaven (vs. 9)? No, I think not, because this interpretation of verse 9 would be a direct contradiction of verse 10; “’He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.’” The sons and daughters of the light are expected to be completely honest in every matter, finances included. And they are to be completely “free” in their dealings with money. By “free” I mean that they are not to be under compulsion to perform, do, or act because of a lust for money. Such a compulsion would constitute servanthood to mammon. The thrust of the parable is not that the children of light are mere stewards of the master’s possessions who one day will be called to account for their stewardship. That is a point of the story, but it is not the main point. Nor is the parable finally a story commending honesty versus embezzlement in bookkeeping. The major point of the parable is the commendation of the shrewdness and the zeal with which the steward looks out for his own best interest. It is to the steward’s advantage to look out for his financial and spiritual future. As any person looks to his or her own financial affairs with care, enthusiasm, even zest, so should the sons and daughters of light approach their stewardship for God. Here the parable reminds me of the parable of hidden treasure (Matt. 13:44). It is with the same eagerness, care, and attention that the
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children of light should make present preparations for their future with God.

The passage continues. A person can be a friend of many, but no one can serve two masters. As a child of the light, a person has one master, one Lord, one God. If a person tries to serve two, the result is the slighting of one master. And since it is the Lord of all who will call all to account one day, then this Master is the one to whom a child of the light must give loyalty, now and then.

PRAYER AS PESTERING

Luke 18:1-8

When the Son of man comes, will he find this much faith among his followers, that they are able to keep praying, even when the lack of hope for a positive outcome makes prayer seem pointless?

There is no problem when prayers are miraculously and quickly answered. More troublesome to clerical confidence are those long-term problems where no possibility of hopeful outcome exists and where both faith and doubt dangle awkwardly.

Each of the lections for this Sunday after Pentecost is concerned with the need for patience, perseverance, and steadfast, unwearied faith (see Hab. 1:1-3; 2:1-4; Ps. 119:137-144; II Tim. 3:14-4:5; and Luke 18:1-8). With a measure of irony and with that concluding question that so undoes the superficiality of our praying and our believing, it is the parable in Luke that most clearly forces the reader into the realization of this need.

The first verse of the pericope tells us that the parable addresses faith and persistent prayer: “And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” The tale that follows is the story of a widow who kept pester ing a crooked magistrate for vindication of her plight. (See the similar language of petition in Rev. 6:10.) This magistrate apparently decided most of his cases by bribery and partiality. But the poor widow had no such resources by which to persuade
him. Indeed, under the legal system in that society, a widow was completely without anyone to speak for her in court. The only weapon she had was this nagging persistence. And with that she made a nuisance of herself to the judge. Said he, "Even if I can't get a bribe from her, I must answer her suit. Otherwise she will be the death of me with her constant complaining!" And so he intervened for her and granted her request.

Jesus said in verses 6 and 7 that if the unrighteous magistrate was finally worn down by the widow's nagging, how much more quickly will God answer the prayers of the elect who are equally persevering. (The parallel with language in Ecclesiasticus 35:12-19 should be noted.) This is not the only place in his Gospel where Luke presses the theme of prayer as pestering. In the story of the two friends in 11:5-13, a friend went late at night to awaken his neighbor. He had had an unexpected guest and needed to borrow provisions. He banged and banged at the sleeping neighbor's door. Moffatt translates it: "Tell you, though he will not get up and give you anything because you are a friend of his, he will at least rise and give you whatever you want because you persist." (11:8). And, as in the other parable in Luke 18 Jesus then admonished the Christian reader to ask, to knock, and to pray continually until God the loving Parent opens the door (11:9-13).

Initially the comparison or contrast in Luke 18 between God and the unrighteous magistrate seems odd and certainly a bit rough on the Almighty. Yet from the perspective of a desperate person whose prayers are unanswered, God must appear to be no different from the magistrate. For anyone pleading and waiting, the time schedule always seems more protracted than expected. The widow believed the magistrate had the power to vindicate her, but she had no assurance that he would do so. The test of her belief in both the rightness of her cause and in the power of the magistrate was her continued harassment of the man! Jesus said the same of the Christian's faith and prayer to God: the willingness to keep praying indicates true faith. Calvin commented, "The only legitimate proof of trust is when anyone who is disappointed of his desire does not lose heart." (A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 2:125). And is not this the meaning of the last
verse in the pericope? When the Son of man comes will he find this much faith among his followers, that they are able to keep praying even when the lack of hope for a positive outcome makes prayer seem pointless?

The preacher has several points that can be made in a sermon on Luke 18:1-8. He or she could press the distinction between optimism or self-confidence and the Christian faith. That is to say, faith as trust in God only begins when all the reasons for confidence in self are uncertain. Another point is that perseverance in unanswered prayer is the test of such faith. Still another point from the parable is a discussion of the origin and growth of faith in the person who finds himself or herself confronted with the crisis of a silent deity.

THE FAITHFUL GOD

II Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

God alone will bring the kingdom. And the preacher's task is not to debate it or date it, but to announce its necessity, its certainty, its imminence.

Lections for this Sunday are a varied lot, but one verse in the Thessalonian reading appears to have much promise for the pastoral task. I refer to 3:3: “But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from evil.” The verse is the answer to a sermon in search of a text! After consideration it might be distilled simply and sentimentally to, “If you have troubles, look to God. God will stand by you and come to your aid.” Ho-hum. On second thought, a real sleeper.

Study reveals, however, that although this may be at first glance a point for a modern “pastoral” sermon, it is decidedly not Paul’s point. “God (or, the Lord) is faithful” is a formulaic expression used by the apostle in connection with trust that God will fulfill promises about the future day of the Lord. Note Paul’s admonitions in I Thessalonians to the same church: “May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it” (5:23-24). Paul’s concern with God’s
faithfulness is even clearer in I Cor. 1:7b-9a: “You wait for for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful.”

Furthermore, the entire Second Letter to the Thessalonians is not about coping with a Christian’s emotional problems. Instead it is concerned almost exclusively with questions concerning the delay of the Second Coming. Apparently in confusion over this issue some of the Thessalonian Christians thought that the day was already here. Not so, said Paul (2:2-3). The apostle encouraged them to continue to make preparations (personal and ecclesiastical) for the Second Advent. That disputation and false religious prophets arise, said Paul (2:3-12), is a necessary antecedent of Jesus’ return. Here one refers to Dan. 9:26-27 and 11:31-32 and the apocalyptic chapters in the Gospels. Dear me!

The problem with this turn of exegesis is that most of us are fearful of such preaching. (Wait until you see the readings for the Advent season!) We steer clear of such adventism because we foresee furrowed brows of parishioners and whispered musings identifying us with those TV evangelists. And perhaps many of us preachers associate the Second Coming, Daniel, and “the day of the Lord” with the lunatic fringe of Christianity. Nonetheless, what is the preacher who desires to be true to the text to say about this passage in II Thessalonians?

May I suggest a rhetorical question that will help bring the doctrines we have dropped on the fringe back into orthodox perspective? Place before the congregation the world as it is—malnourished hordes, warring nations, dissatisfied reformers, midlife-crisis-beset men and women, corrupt politicians, and, of course, the occasional good deed or two. Given this state of the world, what can be said about God’s relationship to it? There are two possibilities: (1) either God is not yet finished with the work of creation or recreation, or (2) God doesn’t exist—or at least does not care about our world. Now I trust that most of us and our churches will vote for number one. The incompletion of God’s work calls out for finishing. Two thousand years of the church’s tinkering with the world through social activism and spiritual quietism has not succeeded in triggering the establishment of God’s kingdom. Indeed, that
NOTES ON SELECTED LESSONS

humility thinks it can manipulate the coming of the Lord has been its perpetual presumption and blasphemy. (See Wolfhart Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], p. 52.) God alone will bring the kingdom. And the preacher's task is not to debate or date it, but to announce its necessity, its certainty, its imminence.

When Christian people are confronted with the world as it is and with God's Word as it is, they do not have trouble seeing the necessity for more work in the world by God and God's agents. That they may not have seen the Second Coming as part of God's finishing touches is not the fault of the New Testament. For in II Thessalonians and elsewhere the day of the Lord's return is clearly part of God's plan to complete the work of redemption that in the present is only barely begun. Paul did not apply the doctrine of this future event pastorally to the Thessalonians' contemporary problems by dwelling on personal histories, introspection, and self-acceptance (that is to say, "psychologically"). Nor did he tell the people piously to ignore the societal and personal negatives in their lives or to believe that God would take care of everything. Paul insisted that they see the suffering, the doubts, the crosses in the context of God's plan. Indeed, such is God's paradigm for the forward movement of salvation history. Precisely when things become their worst, that is the day when God will establish divine rule. Paul encouraged Christians to ready themselves by moral purification and to remain steadfast, confident that God's promises will be fulfilled. Paul reaffirmed that no matter what the present situation, God will pull the world (and us!) out of its drift toward meaninglessness, destruction, and sin.

Paul announced in II Thess. 2:13-3:5 our future Christian hope and the faithfulness of God. Those preachers who drop the future element and contemporize the text by psychology or pietism, who make it into a sugar pill to help anxious congregations cope with (not change) "present day life," who say God is with you and will take care of all your troubles, will have missed the point entirely.
BOOK REVIEW
Harper’s Bible Dictionary

PAUL S. MINEAR


No customer, on walking through a supermarket, buys something from every shelf; and no reader, not even a reviewer, reads a dictionary from “ciwer to civver.” Buyers and readers take only what is sufficient for the day. The analogy is apt, for a dictionary is a supermarket of packaged information on every sort of subject. Both customers and readers may do two things: they may compare the attractiveness and adequacy of one supermarket with others; or they may study that market as a mirror reflecting the current state of the economy and the culture. The comments that follow here will embody that double objective: first, to appraise this volume as a sample of dictionary art, and then to use it as a reflection of the current state of biblical studies.

The term *dictionary* denotes a specific literary genre, the production of which requires a complex fusion of planning, soliciting, writing, editing, and publishing. The one art involves the correlation of many arts, and no one reviewer is competent to evaluate them all. For example, these pages include essays on every name that appears in the Bible three or more times, and

those names cover a very wide range indeed, wide enough to
please every player of Trivial Pursuit. The biblical saga extends
over a very wide swath of time; the editors have, accordingly,
devoted the endpapers to helpful chronological charts. So, too,
the wide horizons of space require an expert use of maps.
Accordingly, readers will find every important site mentioned in
the Bible indexed on one or more maps—sixteen pages of them
in full color and in sharp detail. In addition to this complete
atlas, maps and charts in black and white are scattered on
appropriate pages throughout the volume. Thus readers are
enabled to peg important events at the more probable sites.
Anyone who wishes to measure the great advances in
cartography during the past thirty years should compare this
volume with previous editions.

The primary function of dictionaries is to package information
in words; yet reliance on words alone is certain to produce
eyestrain or to induce boredom. Editors must therefore rely on
an abundance of visual images to illustrate the several essays.
This dictionary excels in this respect. Few pages lack line
drawings or photographs in black and white to adorn the text:
figurines, coins, archaeological artifacts, pictures of geographi­
cal sites, map insets, paintings of dramatic events. These
illustrations are well-chosen and well-presented. The choicest
photographs appear in color in two separate sections of eight
pages each (following pp. 362 and 778). Here the reader’s glance
moves from spectacular aerial photographs to famous museum
exhibits and to striking objects turned up by the archaeologist’s
spade. It must be noted, however, that these pages are not
numbered; this lack makes cross-referencing to relevant essays
quite impossible. Such an editorial lapse is hard to explain.

An important test of any dictionary is the quality of
typography, a test which this volume passes with very high
marks. This is not easy when more than 3700 entries are
presented within 1168 pages. Two sizes of type are used, a
smaller in essays printed in two columns to the page and a larger
in essays of a single column. Even the smaller type is sharp and
clear, the legibility enhanced by a high grade of paper. Should
eyes become strained, the one-column format provides relief
and even enjoyment in reading. Other dictionaries will find it hard to match this typographical excellence.

The chief test, of course, is the caliber of the contributing scholars and the reliability of the contents. In the previous editions of Harper's Bible Dictionary, two editors, Madeleine and Lane Miller, were assisted by a dozen or so major contributors. For this wholly new edition, the publishers established a cooperative relationship with the professional organization in the field, the Society of Biblical Literature. Five editors (Paul J. Achtemeier and four associates) and 179 essay writers were drawn from the membership of that society, and the copyright is held by the society. Such an arrangement does not, in itself, guarantee the quality of the product. Many able scholars do not accept invitations to contribute, and those who do are often so frustrated by the word limit allotted to topics of central importance that their work becomes perfunctory. Overall, however, this cooperation between press and pundits has produced a high level of competence in both style and substance.

Although I give a high rating to the volume's scholarly reliability, I hesitate to yield total agreement to several claims made in the preface. There it is asserted that, because the intended audience is made up of nonspecialists, "technical language has been avoided wherever possible" (xix). The more highly developed a scientific field, the less possible becomes the achievement of such a goal. Most scientists find that the greater their facility in research the less facile they become in using their one-time vernacular. But the effort to achieve nontechnical verbiage is worth making, and the editors have succeeded in substantial measure. Do they also reach the stated goal of presenting "a consensus of current scholarly opinion" (xx)? Yes and no. On many matters such a consensus does not exist. It is usually true that the more important the matter, the less firm the consensus. Readers need to reckon with that fact. Finally, the editors pride themselves on two qualities reflected by their very large faculty. For one thing, the authors "span the spectrum of religious thought within the Judeo-Christian heritage"; for another, they do not "write from any confessional perspective" (xix). Here a skeptic may raise an impertinent question: what
value is so broad a spectrum if confessional perspectives are excluded? Perhaps the confessional perspectives do not intrude because essays on controversial topics are so limited in length as not to allow different perspectives to emerge. Or perhaps the one confession on which the contributors agree is trust in the objectivity of historical knowledge. Such matters aside, it must be said that this volume is an excellent example of the art of dictionary construction.

I should like now to take aim at my second target, to appraise this book as a mirror of the current state of biblical studies. Judging by these essays, a reader must conclude that, during this century, it is archaeology that has made the greatest contribution to knowledge of biblical history. Both the length and the quality of the entries lend support to this inference. Some eighteen essays are printed in large type, a single column to the page; of these, at least half deal with the results of recent discoveries in the field. Extensive coverage is given to recent developments in methodology, to the ways of using pottery and coins, and to such recent excavations as those at Nag Hammadi and Ebla. Certain cities are singled out for special coverage, presumably because of successful digs: Corinth, Ephesus, Jerusalem, Lachish, Megiddo. These essays are lavishly illustrated. A comparison with the previous editions of the dictionary makes this conclusion obvious.

There are, of course, certain negative results of such absorption. For example, more space is given to the essay on Hazor than to the entry, "heart," in spite of the fact that the author of the latter essay rightly calls heart "the most important anthropological term in the Hebrew scriptures." Again, more space is devoted to Ephesus, including some superb maps and photographs, than to the Epistle to the Ephesians. An excellent essay on Lachish devours six times the column-inches that are allotted to "light." Geography dwarfs literature as fact dwarfs symbolism. To some degree these proportions reflect the requirements of a dictionary, but, more than this, they indicate shifts of interest in the academic field from the unique language of faith to the kind of history that leaves visible artifacts.

This dictionary is also notable for the attention given to the arts. Consider the two essays on the visual arts. One deals with
art within the biblical period, although perhaps only one-sixth of it examines Israelite art, and there is virtually no mention of the New Testament period. The second essay deals with the Bible in Western art, although alphabetical considerations force an unnatural separation of these twins. In this latter essay early Christianity is much more amply represented. These two essays on art are both fascinating and enriching. So, too, are three essays, again separated for alphabetical reasons: "The Bible in Western Literature" and "Literature, the New Testament As," and "Literature, the Old Testament As." These essays reflect substantial improvement in interdisciplinary work in literary and biblical criticism. To shift to another of the arts, music, one finds only one essay, "Music in the Bible." This is one of the best short treatments of the topic known to me, even though only two sentences deal with the New Testament. Regrettably, however, is the absence of any essay on the Bible in Western music to match the corresponding essays on art and literature. Even with these minor deficiencies, the dictionary marks great progress in bridging earlier chasms between biblical science and the fine arts.

In speaking of interdisciplinary developments, I must take note of the emergence of two important topics that appear for the first time in the Harper's series. Here the allotments of space are significant. Eight columns in smaller type are devoted to "Economics in New Testament Times" and five columns to "Economics in Old Testament Times." Similarly, there are fifteen columns for "Sociology of the New Testament" and ten columns for "Sociology of the Old Testament." This disproportion of space suggests, rightly, that New Testament scholars are more involved in these areas than their colleagues specializing in the Hebrew Scriptures. The newness of this development may explain the rather dubious use of the terms economics and sociology in these titles. Properly used, these two terms denote academic disciplines that were unknown in biblical times. It is more nearly correct to speak of ancient economies or of social institutions in biblical times. It is characteristic of these essays, however, that they concentrate more on describing the shape of the modern academic science (e.g., the essay "Sociology of the New Testament") than on historical reconstruction of ancient
social institutions. It seems not to have occurred to the authors that it might be instructive to ask how biblical authors viewed economic activities or social formations of their own day. Had the authors done that, we might have found essays as illuminating as the comparable studies on art and music in the Bible. Here again, dictionary space reflects disciplinary emphasis. It is surely symptomatic of something that almost five times as much space is devoted to "Sociology of the New Testament" as to "Theology of the New Testament." Even the latter essay focuses attention not on the thought patterns among early Christian thinkers but on the recent history of the academic discipline; within that latter area, in turn, the spotlight focuses on the work of Rudolf Bultmann and his successors. The perspectives within the New Testament itself suffer from almost total neglect. Again it must be said that the dictionary accurately mirrors the current state of the science.

There is one area in which the mirror image is quite inaccurate. Recent decades have been marked by great advances in the field of biblical hermeneutics and in the cross-disciplinary contacts with comparative linguistics, semantics, semiotics, and symbolics. One result has been greater adeptness in the analysis of literary and symbolic forms. The dictionary does not do justice to these advances. One finds, to be sure, an essay on hermeneutics that is entirely accurate but all too brief for the importance of the subject (no essay on this topic appeared in the previous edition). So, too, one finds excellent entries on poetry and parable, but their brevity makes it impossible to do justice to the richness of recent literature. The same is true of the entries "epistle" and "letter," subjects on which much productive labor has been spent. The essays "word" and "sign" suffer from ridiculous limitations of space. All too indicative is the fact that loan receives more attention than logos. In short, readers who wish to study the vast implications of current explorations of biblical language will have to go elsewhere, and that is a great pity.

Editors of such works know well how difficult it is to counteract the growing specialization of academic fields—in this case, the increasing distance between scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures and of the New Testament. The entries dealing with
many of the topics must cover both parts of the Bible; they are too short to merit essays by two scholars, and few scholars expert in one of the two divisions feel competent to speak about the other. For example, it is right that the work on Moses should be assigned to a specialist in the Hebrew Bible, but it is not surprising that after eight columns on Moses in the Hebrew Bible he should dispose of the New Testament role of Moses in three or four sentences. The disproportion appears in reverse when New Testament experts are asked to write on a topic like inspiration. For similar reasons the essay on the Passover is weighted twenty to one for the Hebrew Bible, while the essay on temptation is weighted five to one for the New Testament. Many of the essays suffer from this arbitrary separation of academic departments.

Looking into this mirror, one is bound to infer that interest in biography is at a low ebb. Only three biblical persons merit single-column treatment: David, Jesus, and Paul. Even those essays are overshadowed by the importance accorded to “the Temple” and “temples” (12 pages) and to “coins” (5 pages). Megiddo receives more attention than does Abraham, whose presence in the New Testament is recognized by three sentences. Interest in the conventional type of literary introductions to the several biblical books is also minimal. To be sure, each book of the Bible rates a separate treatment. And the quality of the essays is high, for competent scholars have done their best to boil down their understanding of complex and subtle problems to the scope of a column or two. But often the excitement and vitality of the primary document (e.g., Philippians) has evaporated in the boiling process. One detects almost no evidence in this dictionary that concern for theological issues has revived from its long period of dormancy. One column is enough for “liberty;” two to cover the term God, while for the Gospel of Thomas a bit more space is needed. On the other hand, it would seem that the editors have not followed current fashions in response to the claim of feminism or the sexual revolution. A comparison between the essay on women in the previous edition and the one in the current edition is very instructive in showing how the atmosphere has changed during the past two or three decades. It is also very obvious that the
number of women contributors (one in eight) has vastly increased, much to the benefit of both dictionary and discipline. Yet a dictionary is not the best place to calculate the wind velocity of the feminist demands for equal opportunity. The same can probably also be said of the sexual revolution. To be sure, the editors have given more space to the entry on homosexuality than to "sanctification" or to "fellowship." But that is quite atypical of the dictionary as a whole.

To sum up, I give this volume high marks as a barometer of the weather in the area of biblical studies. The scope of its coverage and the diversity of its approaches accurately reflect the current breadth and depth of biblical studies. Those studies have registered great achievements, even while they have shared limitations endemic in the culture of our times. The dictionary is an impressive cross section of the results of a generation of scholarly work. The publishers and the contributors should be gratified by its excellence as an example of dictionary art and its reliability in relaying a vast amount of information and erudition.

I close with a word addressed not so much to the editors of this work as to the editors of similar volumes already on the drawing boards, scheduled for publication during the next decade. Everyone recognizes that decisive importance inheres in the choice of authors for the several essays. Not everyone recognizes the similar importance of the word limits assigned to those essays. Many of the imbalances I have noted in this dictionary could have been avoided with a more judicious choice of those limits. In such a choice editors should carefully consider the emphases of the authors of the primary books of the Bible. To what matters did those authors give the greatest weight? What information is most helpful in enabling readers to enter into their world of thought and experience?

Any dictionary that accurately deals with the primary concerns of the biblical writers would surely give more space to such matters as baptism, heaven, and holiness, for examples, than is true of most modern dictionaries. Of course, editors may suppose, with many laypersons, that such terms are so easily understood that no detailed treatment is justified. But that supposition is quite deceptive. A term like sin has multiple and
wide-ranging meanings that call for great discrimination and thorough analysis. The contributor to this dictionary calls it “the most pervasive motif permeating the pages of the Bible” (956). To allot only two columns to that motif is implicitly to deny the truth of that statement. It is probable that, if the editors had allowed writers more space in exploring the meanings of those crucial ideas, the confessional position of scholars would have emerged more sharply and the imagined consensus would have evaporated.
BE GENEROUS,  
BE INCLUSIVE

HOLLY C. RUDOLF

The God of Scripture would be served more  
faithfully if we made it our goal to use generous,  
rather than inclusive, language.

From the standpoint of biblical theology, the phrase “inclusive  
language” is a misnomer. The feminist movement has urged the  
use of nonsexist language in order to reflect the reality of equality  
of the sexes and to help change the reality of prejudice. Naturally,  
there has been resistance from women and men to this linguistic  
change. At least some of the resistance can be attributed, I think,  
to the label “inclusive.” But even if there were no resistance, we  
need a different term that more thoughtfully grows from our faith.  
The term I suggest is generous.

The theological perspective of generosity is related to the  
biblical mode of life of welcoming the stranger. What the two  
have in common is respect for other persons and the desire to  
offer them the goodness which God has given. Also, in neither is  
there any sense of coerciveness or wanting to absorb others into  
yourself.

Thus, being generous to the stranger is a goal that helps us  
stand in criticism of more than our language. Take, for example,  
our activities in the church: if we were to carry out generous  
evangelism, for instance, instead of inclusive evangelism, our

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Indiana.
work would be characterized by meeting people where they are, more than by inviting them in to join a club. Again, if we thought of generous mission work, in contrast to inclusive mission work, we would be forced to confront the question, who benefits from this—really? Or consider the ways in which our programs for church growth and education, even our hymnody, would change if we were to adopt a generous approach. If we had generous peacemaking instead of inclusive, how different would be the tenor of the words exchanged!

The God of Scripture would be served more faithfully, women and men would more readily render God's justice in their dealings with each other, and doubters would likely be less put off if we made it our goal to use generous, rather than inclusive, language.

One reason for suggesting that we quit saying “inclusive” and start saying “generous” has to do with what God is like. In the Bible, God is portrayed as one who gives. God creates all that is by giving a word. God gives people names and hope and freedom. God redeems the world in giving God's own Son. We are not saved because we are included in God's separate sphere (if there were one), but because God entered and enters wholly and completely into ours. God is generous most of all with God's self.

To say that God is generous is to say that one of the fundamental energies of the universe is the movement outward from self. True, the possibility of human freedom seems to depend on God's pulling back sufficiently to allow humans to move out; however, we have sorely neglected, overlooked, and shunned the flow of God's energy outward.

Generous language reflects that movement of God's energy and asks us to move in the same direction. And here is the reason we should be generous rather than inclusive: To believe in the truth of the Genesis account of the creation of humanity in the image of God, and to believe that God is generous, and then to try to be inclusive in life and language is to be involved in a contradiction. Trying to be inclusive negates the image. It even may be worshiping a false God. To state the point positively: Acting generously is a way of being in the image of God.

There is something else about the nature of God as presented
in the Bible that supports using the word generous rather than inclusive. We read that all creation comes from one and only one source: God. And it is in that unity of God that we humans find our existence and identity. Notice what happens, though, when we try to be inclusive. By definition we also become exclusive. Being inclusive requires that we see reality in terms of dualism instead of unity. On the other hand, life and language that strive to be generous are trying to be faithful to God’s unity in which there really is no “in and out.” In reality, there is only one Source of living and giving. Changing a word we use does not create that unity, but how important in reflecting it!

Let us now consider how thinking about the nature of God challenges our thinking about the nature of humankind. How easy it is for us to think of ourselves as the insiders—the ones on the side to which everyone else should switch. Such is the view of persons who would include the excluded. This egocentricity apparent in inclusiveness is certainly opposed to the God-centeredness of generosity pointed to above. From the perspective of generosity, persons see themselves as channels of the love of God. In practice, one would say “chairperson,” for instance, instead of “chairman” not because one loves her or him (for that might not be true), but rather because God does—and that is precisely what is affirmed.

These reflections help us see more clearly how to address the resistance some people have to nonsexist language. If people believe that there is only so much of something available (in this case, God’s love), of course there will be competitive pushing in and shoving out to get it. We use sexist language to protect what is already “included” and reject what is already “excluded.” Being inclusive has the awful tendency to make people who are the “strangers” feel excluded. That is not the intention, but it definitely is the feeling. Asking people to speak generously conveys a sense of: There is enough. As, indeed, there is.

People also resist nonsexist language because of an unconscious belief that we own the language, just as we own a car or a house or a wristwatch. It is hard to let go of that idea. It is hard to let go of the idea that we own anything. It is hard to let go of believing that we are, or can be, in charge of our own lives. At root, being generous is the practice of the spirituality of
Jesus, who let go of all that he was. Nothing had to be preserved as it was—not religious tradition, not taboos, not relationships between women and men, not language, not prayer, not life itself.

To express ourselves, all we have is our language, which for us is "the king's English." Given the truth that no words and no language can adequately express what we think, and that even what we think is partial and incomplete, we would still benefit from being as careful as we can with what tools we have. Clearly, the feminist movement recognizes this when it asks that we take care not to use words that exclude the other sex—and, indeed, the other races.

God is generously giving us this time to treasure our fundamental unity and identity in God, to listen to our own speech, and to let go of a term that pre-empts the truth for which we witness.
Since the inception of Quarterly Review, the editor has depended on a coterie of readers who have been willing to support the journal in various ways. Some have read manuscripts and helped to evaluate them. Others have written publishable comments and other material. Still others have simply given advice and suggested writers and readers. This Advisory Council carries with it no stipend and a rather open-ended commitment to serve. Those who have been willing to labor in this unheralded way have done much to ensure that the journal belongs to the readers and not to the publishers. We hereby thank them and acknowledge their contribution to this enterprise.

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