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QUARTERLY REVIEW
A Journal of Scholarly Reflection for Ministry

A publication of The United Methodist Publishing House
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Quarterly Review (ISSN 0270-9287) provides continuing education resources for professional ministers in The United Methodist Church and other churches. Quarterly Review seeks to encourage discussion and debate on matters critical to the practice of ministry. Articles for consideration are welcome from lay and professional ministers, United Methodists, and others, and should be mailed to the Editor, Quarterly Review, Box 871, Nashville, TN 37202. Manuscripts should be in English and typed double-spaced, including notes. Writers are strongly encouraged to enclose a copy of the manuscript on 5.25" 256K diskette, MS/DOS format, ASCII document file. (To follow ASCII format, single-space text, double-space between paragraphs, and remove special text styles.) Quarterly Review is published four times a year, in March, June, September, and December, by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry and The United Methodist Publishing House. Editorial Offices are at 1001 19th Avenue, South, Box 871, Nashville, TN 37202. Second-class postage paid at Nashville, Tennessee.

Quarterly Review is available at a basic subscription price of $15 for one year, $26 for two years, and $33 for three years. Subscriptions may be obtained by sending a money order or check to the Business Manager, Quarterly Review, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to The United Methodist Publishing House, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Subscribers wishing to notify publisher of their change of address should write to the Business Manager, Quarterly Review, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202. An index is printed in the winter issue of each year (number 5 for 1981 only; number 4 thereafter).

Quarterly Review: A Journal of Scholarly Reflection for Ministry
Spring 1989

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Ecumenism, Commitment, and Evangelism

Joanmarie Smith

Setting up the Issues

Everyone involved in the ecumenical movement promotes dialogue. The discussions are almost a hundred years old now. But I get the impression that the last thing anyone running these conversations or contributing to them wants to happen is that a person switch (convert) to another church or communion in mid-conversation. I know that this is the case in inter-religious dialogue.

David Tracy, for example says, "The recognition that no classic tradition should abandon its particular genius in its entry into conversation with others is a central key for enhancing a genuinely ecumenical theology." In other words, I should remain a Roman Catholic because, if I do not, the Roman Catholic viewpoint will be missing in subsequent ecumenical conversations. That has the ring of "We need a fourth for bridge." I need a much more powerful rationale for remaining committed to a tradition that outrages me almost as often as it inspires me.

Let me be even more personal. I teach at a Methodist Seminary in Ohio and I think that the Methodists are saved in the same proportion as Roman Catholics. I admire their history of sensitivity to social issues, their democratic polity, even their sacramental theology. One of the best treatments of the sacraments was published in 1985 by two of my colleagues. Their theologians range from the recently resigned Oral Roberts to

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the process theoretician John Cobb. Why should I not become a Methodist? I think: I could get my divinity degree (probably for free) and be ordained. I could say Mass and distribute the sacraments.

But then I have a gut reaction. "They're not REALLY ordained—not REAL priests." That's a reflexive response, probably a throwback to the days when I did believe that there was only one true Church. Then, as children, we would size up someone in the Roman collar as a "minister" because his suit was not jet black, but had pin stripes or tweed flecks. We would greet the fake priest with a "Good morning, Father," somehow shaming him by treating him as if he were the real thing. Why, he might even run to his fake bishop, renounce his fake ordination and do penance for the rest of his life in a monastery. I don't know if it ever worked!

To reiterate: I don't believe that anymore. So why don't I become a Methodist? Is it simply my personal history, my cultural formation that makes me comfortable in Roman Catholicism and relatively less comfortable in another church? Is it, as Rosemary Radford Ruether describes it in another context, "ecclesial ethnicity"? Just as I am too old to appreciate Mexican food, (I don't have the stomach for it, literally and figuratively), am I too old to get into Methodism? Are religious traditions no more than cultural expressions of one's faith, as Cantwell Smith maintains? Is our religious commitment an accident of history and geography, like our nationality?

The first issue therefore is the need to account for denominational commitment. Can we promote this commitment for any reasons stronger than the commitment to ecumenism itself (which Tracy implies) or out of a vague loyalty to our formation which Cantwell Smith suggests? Or is this only a matter of ethnic inertia I described?

The second issue is related to the first because it was frequently seen as the fruit of the first. The ardently committed Christian of all eras has usually been impelled by that commitment to share the good news, to evangelize, to seek converts. But in these ecumenical times, is the great commission in Matthew to become the great omission? Are missionaries an anachronism, if not an abomination?
ECUMENISM AND COMMITMENT

I believe participants in ecumenical conversations must address because while these inter-religious dialogues are occurring at conventions, symposia and conferences among intellectuals, those of us in the pews are increasingly at a loss to give a reason for the faith that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). In the interim we are inclined to stumble into one of three pitfalls that we find on the ecumenical road. The first is to reject ecumenism. We have the truth. Why do we need to talk about it? The second pitfall is to relativize religion. All religions are equally good or true (or equally no good and untrue). The third pitfall is to siphon off the shaping power of our beliefs, to cool off our faith, to become perfunctorily religious.

In the remainder of the article I will, therefore, offer clues or suggest ways to address the issues of commitment and evangelism, ways which I believe also avoid the pitfalls I have just described.

The Nature of Truth

In one of the reports at the World Council Assembly in 1983 in Vancouver, there occurred a most controversial sentence. It appeared in the presentation on "Our Relation to People of Other Religious Convictions." As originally offered to the plenary session, the sentence read "While affirming the uniqueness of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus to which we bear witness, we recognize God's creative work in the religious experience of people of other faiths." The plenary did not accept the report. Delegates submitted a total of sixty-eight written proposals attempting to redraft the statement. After the Assembly, the Central Committee finally settled on this replacement: "While affirming the uniqueness of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus to which we bear witness, we recognize God's creative work in the seeking for religious truth among people of other faiths."5

On the other hand, in the fall of 1987 the discussions of some of the most prominent Christian theologians in inter-religious dialogue were published under the title, The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. These theologians describe themselves as having moved away from the "superiority or finality of Christ and
Christianity toward a recognition of the independent validity of other ways." And they meant to be interpreted in the most radical sense. Paul Knitter, one of the editors and a former Catholic priest, commented that the participants described the change in their position as "crossing a theological Rubicon." Langdon Gilkey described it as a "monstrous shift indeed. ... a position quite new to the churches, even to liberal churches."^7

I think it is obvious that the nature of truth is (or least has been) central to ecumenical endeavor. Of course there are many theories of truth having various names: coherence, consensuses, disclosure, to name a few. But the most commonly used is the correspondence theory. It is what most of us mean when we speak about the truth. It also seems to be to be the theory of truth that is operating in most ecumenical dialogues --even when it is not explicitly named or described as such.

Technically, truth is a property of a declarative sentence. If I say that it is raining outside and my statement corresponds to the way things are (it is, in fact, raining outside), I am said to have spoken the truth. The correspondence theory of truth seems to be absolutely essential to our daily life. If you ask your spouse if she or he has been faithful, you do not want the spouse answering you in some esoteric truth theory. In that sense the correspondence theory of truth is like Euclidean geometry, which is fine for navigating our immediate environment, but useless in space, where we use a non-Euclidean geometry. The correspondence theory of truth holds up well if we want to know whether it is raining out or if our spouse has been faithful. But when we are talking about God, revelation, creation, incarnation, or salvation, should we be using the correspondence model of truth? I propose that we should not.

The Israelites did not. Emet, the Hebrew word which we translate as truth, means dependable, trustworthy. The true vine is the one that you can depend upon to bring forth fruit in due season. Yahweh is the true, absolutely trustworthy deity. Jesus is the way, the absolutely dependable one and the life (John 14:6).

But truth in this sense is a process. Something or someone becomes true through time--they acquire trustworthiness, much as we acquire a credit rating. We borrow and pay back,
writing a credit history for ourselves, making it more and more believable (creditable) that we can be trusted.

It seems that all significant beliefs whose truthfulness we can question are of this kind. They become true in history. They are literally verified—made true. So the belief God is the creator of heaven and earth, that Jesus Christ is God's son, born of the Virgin Mary and so on, is becoming true. That is, as an interpretation of reality, we believe and hope our creed is becoming more dependable and more trustworthy.

Commitment

Can this notion of truth sustain commitment? I think it can, because it does. Commitment to the beliefs that most significantly shape our lives are made with the Hebrew notion of truth implicit in them. I believe I should attend this school. I believe I should enter this career. I believe I should marry this person. The truth of my belief works itself out in time. My belief is verified or falsified in time. But never with certainty. Sometimes we are most aware of the risk involved in believing when we abandon a belief. Show me a person who is sure he or she should leave a vocation and I will show you an immature person. The same risk, lack of certainty is operating in disengaging a belief as in embracing one.

Constancy versus Fidelity

But commitment experienced as grim duty takes a terrible toll on us. And most of us would prefer not to be the objects of such commitment, although I imagine we are sometimes desperate enough in a situation to be grateful even for such commitments. And perhaps I am projecting, but I would guess that there are many days when all of us are grateful enough to manage our commitment even as grim duty. Gabriel Marcel calls this kind of commitment "constancy" and distinguishes it from fidelity, which he describes as imbued with "presence." He goes on to say that we are likely to be constant for ourselves. "I said I would be here, and here I am. I could not live with myself if I did not show up." But fidelity involves being present for the
other "and more precisely for thou."\(^{10}\)

"Presence" in our commitments is to be cultivated and nourished therefore. Our fidelity must be creative, as Marcel insists in one of his most important works. But creativity, like presence itself, like the spontaneity which makes commitments organic, effortless, like anything worthwhile, is in the end sheer gift, grace. Which is not to say there is nothing we can do. As Corita Kent remarks about celebration, another sheer gift in life, "If you ice a cake, light sparklers and sing, something celebrative may happen."\(^{11}\) In other words, there is an asceticism of commitment; equivalents of "icing a cake, singing and lighting candles."

**The Asceticism of Commitment**

I will sketch briefly what such an asceticism might look like under the headings of remembering, relaxing and relating. I am grateful to the work of Margaret Farley, who describes personal commitments as a "prime case for understanding all kinds of commitments."\(^{12}\)

**Remembering**

Re-membering involves re-calling and putting together. Our most common use of remember alludes to recalling something, an event, a person, a telephone number. But what kind of memory nourishes presence in commitment? Farley calls it the original vision.\(^{13}\) Because we no longer see what first compelled our commitment, does not mean it is no longer there. It is almost a truism to say that we are usually right in affirming what we see, and frequently wrong in claiming non-existence for what we do not see. We may have closed our eyes from exhaustion, "grown weary of wonders," as Chesterton said. Sometimes, as Charles Williams wrote, "beauty ceases in one's own sight to be beauty and the revelation to be revelation."\(^{14}\)

Undoubtedly, what we saw in our initial seeing was there. Re-calling that original vision may energize our capacity to see it again, freshly, enlarged. Amazing Grace. "How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed."
Remembering can also mean putting the parts together. A creative fidelity involves the asceticism of putting our lives together in such a way that space and time is cleared for cultivating and celebrating our original vision and, just as importantly, for making new memories.

Relaxing

Relaxing involves putting play into our commitment and our belief. To commit means to do something. Commitment is work. When we talk about working at a relationship, we usually mean we are working on a commitment. We would like to think that it is work in the sense of an \textit{oeuvre}, but too often it is simply work in the sense of drudgery. Yet we know that straining at our work not only causes all kinds of aches in our body, it can also undermine the work. Farley calls relaxation the center of patience, the patience we need to pace ourselves in our lifetime commitments.\textsuperscript{15}

I am suggesting that there is a relaxation that comes from putting play into our commitments—"play" meaning the give we refer to when we speak of the play in the steering wheel of a car. Tightening our muscles, hardening our hearts, or squinting our eyes can prevent our being present and creative in our fidelity. The stiffening of our body-soul makes us impatient with the celebration of the original vision or the making of new memories.

Perhaps nothing relaxes us more than laughter. Creative fidelity is well served by wit, a word based on the same root from which we get vision and wisdom. It is significant that Arthur Koestler, in his classic work on creativity, begins with a study of humor. Koestler describes the source of humor (and creativity) as bisociative thinking, "perceiving a situation or event in two habitually incompatible associative contexts."\textsuperscript{16} Christianity seems intrinsically humorous. One God who is three, a God who becomes human, a virgin mother, a human Mother of God.

This brings me to another area of commitment requiring play. The beliefs that ground or mediate our commitment must, I think have play in them—a certain looseness so that God
can be God. How many commitments have been subverted by constricted beliefs, personal commitments which turned out to be only a commitment to a cross section of the other person’s history. The object of the commitment was not allowed to grow or surprise us. Lack of play in our beliefs can even forestall commitment. For example, in the Gospel of John, we find some people of Jerusalem on the verge of commitment, "Can this man be the Christ?" they ask themselves. And they answer, "No. We know where this man comes from; and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from" (John 7:26-27).

Relating

Re-lating involves the cultivation of community. Sociologists of knowledge have made us aware that we cannot believe anything alone. We need plausibility structures, "social confirmation for our beliefs about reality." The need for a community to help us sustain commitment to our beliefs has been well documented. What I would like to focus on here then is the need for community (1) to sustain us in commitment and (2) to foster disbelief when it is appropriate.

We need a community to sustain a creative fidelity when as individuals, we seem only capable of constancy. A recent article called my attention to the Rule of St. Basil, which explains the need for a group to do all that Christians are commanded to do: "For example when we visit a sick person, we cannot [at the same time] receive a stranger." When we minister at a distance we must neglect our work at home, and so on. The group enables us to do what we want to do and should do but cannot because of our finitude. In our local communities, brothers and sisters can carry our commitment. When our juices are spent, when we have grown "weary of wonders" and "tired of beholding beauty," others can keep the vigil for us while we sleep. And then they can awaken us. They can inspire us literally by breathing new life into our commitment by example.

We see this occurring on a world-wide basis. The believers in the developing nations are revivifying the commitment of the believers in the unraveling nations. Their original vision is still fresh in their memory and they can refresh our faith grown
stale, if not downright cynical. I think that we in the West and especially in North America are absolutely dependent upon them to awaken us and inspire us.

But we also need communities to foster disbelief when it is appropriate, to chasten our commitment. We know that we need a community to believe; we are not usually as conscious of our need for community in order to disbelieve. In fact, we are more likely to believe too much than too little. Our beliefs are inclined to be too cluttered, too detailed. We include belief about the Messiah’s birthplace in our belief in the Messiah. Basil again reminds that alone we are not likely to readily recognize our defects. We need others to reprove us with kindness and compassion. We need a community who will respond as Jesus did to the overbelief of those people in Jerusalem. “You know me, and you know where I come from?” (John 7:28).

I see liturgy as the preeminent nourishment of commitment. The assembly for worship, particularly in the Eucharist, is characterized by re-membering, relaxing and relating. We make space and time to remember the original vision and make new memories. We cultivate a community that can reawaken us when we fall asleep in the vigil and we hear our beliefs critiqued against the Christian story. Finally, the liturgy promotes relaxation by celebrating our conviction that no matter how tragic our personal circumstances, how prevalent evil seems in the world, we are players in a comedy. Evil and death will not have the last word. Existence has a happy ending. Here it might be noted parenthetically that the word comedy implies a messianic image, coming as it does from the Greek meaning originally a banquet with singing.

Evangelism

That leaves evangelism. "Every person is entitled to hear the Good News," insists the World Council of Church’s Commission on Mission and Evangelism. But I think that you must agree that there is no consensus on what the Good News is. Why else would there be thousands of different embodiments of that message which we know as denominations within Christianity?
Nor, I would argue, has there been a consistent notion of the message through history, even within denominations. Roman Catholic bishops could speak of social justice as constitutive of the Gospel and the Holy Father, in his most recent encyclical, could speak of "the aspiration to freedom from all forms of slavery (as) noble and legitimate" and as the purpose of "liberation and development." This only a hundred and twenty-two years after Rome issued an instruction to the Apostolic Vicar of Ethiopia and Somalia condoning the buying and selling of slaves "as long as they had not been taken from their lawful owner or unjustly kidnapped! Our notions of the Good News change—sometimes quite drastically.

My thesis in this section is that there may be ways of looking at the Good News that promotes both evangelism and ecumenism.

Let me suggest that it may be appropriate in our time to look on the good of the good news the way we look at the good of Genesis. After each creation God looked at it and saw that it was good. And after everything had been created God looked at it and "Behold, it was very good." This good cannot be the good of ethics. There are not good and evil moons or skies or fish. It must be the good that means beauty. Then, "Behold it was very good" could be translated, "And God said, 'Ahh!'"

What I am proposing is the possibility of examining religious traditions from an aesthetic perspective concentrating on beauty, often a terrible beauty, rather than from an epistemological and metaphysical stance which concentrates on truth. I see a number of advantages to this shift of perspective. It makes evangelism unnecessary but inevitable. It makes evangelism non-manipulative but compelling. It takes account of the historic and geographic nature of traditions.

Evangelism as unnecessary, but inevitable

A classic definition of evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. Roman Catholic missionary orders are saying that such a definition is no longer appropriate. Father Jenkinson, a very influential missiologist, has written that "it is no longer sufficient to say that the missionary
brings salvation or grace or God. These are already to be found where the missionary goes. . . "What the missionary brings is a hope embedded in the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus." I might rephrase that, "What the missionary brings is a terrible beauty which is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus." Evangelism is one people telling another people where they have found beauty—a variation on the hymn, "Do you see what I see?" The switch shifts the emphasis from sharing the Good News as unnecessary to sharing the Good News as inevitable.

When was the last time you shared something because it was true? That a story or piece of information was true may have enhanced the compulsion to share or communicate the story but it was the intrinsic interest, irony, bizarre quality or utility of your message that fueled the desire. On the other hand, if you have read a terrific book, seen a magnificent movie, heard an awesomely lovely piece of music, there is a spontaneous desire to have others see what you saw, hear what you heard. You cannot keep it to yourself. But we know from experience that we cannot make or manipulate others to see what we see, hear what we hear.

Evangelism as non-manipulative, but compelling

If you believe what the Council of Florence believed, that no person who is separated from the Church will share in eternal life, "but will perish in the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, if this person fails to join the Catholic Church before death," then it makes a kind of obscene sense to use every ruse—including burning people—with the conviction that even a tortured commitment to the church will save them from eternal fire. If you believe that there is salvation outside the Church, that kind of urgency is not there. But there is another kind of urgency—the urgency of the poet, the artist, the dancer to share a vision. This urgency knows that any conscious manipulation taints the possibility of authentic appreciation. I cannot make you love Brahms' German Requiem, and locking you into a room with that music until you said you loved it is not likely to foster your appreciation.
But aesthetic judgments are not just private decisions reflecting individual tastes, although they certainly include that. My point is that they are not prey to relativism—at least not necessarily so. One person's opinion is not as good as another's. Comparing aesthetic with its opposite, anesthetic, is helpful here. Anesthetic involves the suspension of feeling and reason, whereas aesthetic involves the promotion of feeling reason or reasoned feeling.

Aesthetic judgments are critical. But they incorporate reasons whose force lies not so much in the coherence of their logic but in their power to move us, to compel us to see what the artist saw, hear what the composer heard, or taste what the gourmet prepared. The reasons or criteria offered are validated by their ability to engage the emotions, to "make an electric connection with our nature," as William James put it.25

Of course, dealing with the aesthetic we inevitably bump into the so-called problem of cultural variety or the "ecclesial ethnicity" which is a function of space and time.

Our conversation in the West is still very much shaped by Platonic or Aristotelian notions of reality. There are unchanging essences somewhere in God's mind if you are a Platonist; in things themselves, if you are an Aristotelian. We have not incorporated the insights of Copernicus, never mind Darwin or Einstein. The New York Times still publishes the exact moment that "the sun rises and sets." (Who calls our attention to a beautiful earth-turning?) In other words, we still have a non-historical bias in our attitude towards reality. That is why we can talk about the Good News as if it were some fixed piece of information instead of a developing story with updates at regular intervals. That too is why religious traditions are most often compared to ways, or routes or roads rather than the more dynamic image of the journey itself, which implies a movement through time and space.

The hermeneutical sciences, however, have made us aware of the ideological biases that reflect our history and geography. But they have not concentrated on the bias of our sensibilities which, I would contend, are much more deeply rooted and probably, in fact, spawn and nurture our ideologies.
To return to the personal again. I am sure that what makes it almost inconceivable for me to think of becoming a Methodist is in great part the conventions of my formation, my nurture in the thick, sensual sacramentality of Roman Catholicism in the 40s and 50s in New York City. My arguments during theological discussions, as clever and compelling as they may be, flow as much from a sensibility cultivated in that space and time as from the books I read last week or my education as a philosopher. Some positions are intrinsically attractive because of the sensitivities that have been honed in me. I may think that I embrace Rahner’s Christology because of its overpowering logic, but it probably has as much if not more to do with the processions I marched in as a child. Is this the “scandal of particularity?”

Particularity may have been a scandal to the Greeks (who were into universals), but we should recognize that anything that exists, exists as a particular or the artifact of the particular. And apparently that is good. Very Good. Worthy of God’s ”Ahh!” But if the particular is never universal, it is always communicable. And I am suggesting it is more communicable as beauty than as truth.

**Ecumenism as Constitutive of Evangelism.**

I have concentrated on the “Good” of the Good News. Now I would like to look at the “News” of the Good News. They say that yesterday’s news is only good for wrapping fish. News by definition is not history, though it only makes sense in the light of history. News by definition has an element of novelty in it. In ecclesiastical circles that novelty is coded as the development of doctrine.

If we consider evangelizing as an inevitable aspect of our creative fidelity, the evangelization of the next generation is the most obvious field for mission. We must take as our special burden and delight the traditional “handing over” of the good news as good but also as news. The ecumenical conversations will undoubtedly be the source of that novelty.

Every major reshaping of doctrine grew out of what might facetiously be called “conversations.” The “conversation” with
the Arians shaped the news from Nicea. The "conversations" with Nestorians shaped the news from Ephesus and Chalcedon. Certainly the "conversations" with the reformers shaped the news from Trent. I dare say that the Church's social justice agenda has been drawn up as a result of its conversation with Marxists. But these shapings have resulted from polemical exchanges—polemical, I would suggest, because they have been ruled by the principle of non-contradiction, a central tenet of the correspondence notion of truth. A thing cannot be and not be at the same time. If one position is true, its opposite must be false. But the principle of non-contradiction does not compute in aesthetics. In fact, one could say that the overcoming of that principle is at the very heart of aesthetics.

For the first time in history therefore, I think the news of the Good News that we hand over to the next generation can be shaped by irenic conversations, at least to the extent that the dialogue among Christian communions and between religions lacks certainty and reflects instead the perspective, "Do you see what I see? Help me to see what you see!"

Notes

7. Paul Knitter, Preface to The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Towards a Pluralistic Theology of Religions, John Hick and Paul Knitter, eds. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), viii. It is interesting to note that this conference also included critics of the position taken in
the published papers (John Cobb, Schubert Ogden, David Tracy) who felt that the pluralist move is either "unwarranted, unnecessary or ill-timed." *Ibid.*


The Russians and Americans Are Coming—Together

Gustav Kopka

A wandering European was my father, journeying east and west, south and north. Born in East Prussia, the easternmost area of Hitler’s Germany, he objected to the system of his own country because he believed that the ultimate truth is never a system, no matter how right, righteous, religious or patriotic it claimed to be. He paid a price. His draft exemption was removed and he found himself “defending the fatherland” in Poland and later on the island of Rhodes in the Mediterranean.

It has been almost 44 years since, as an 11 year old, I left with my mother and two brothers and a sister in a horse-drawn wagon for the West. Because of stories told about the invading Russian army in World War I, most German civilians eagerly moved out. At the same time there was among us grateful anticipation of the end of our own country’s Nazi regime. After various delays along the way, mother and children arrived several months later in Hannover. That night, as our train pulled into the station, we observed fire and smoke on the horizon. There had been an Allied air raid.

For many months in 1944 and 1945, we had no word from my father. In the late spring of 1945, shortly after the end of the war, he found us among the refugees in the northern part of West Germany. He made his way from a hospital in the south, having all but recovered from malaria. Changing his identity from German to Polish and back to German again, as well as from military to civilian, he made it through several checkpoints and, by contacting friends who by now knew our

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whereabouts, he found us safe. For nearly seven years he struggled for the future wellbeing of his family, working as a common laborer. Finally in the early 50s came the opportunity to immigrate to the United States of America. A congregation in Minnesota provided sponsorship for resettlement of the six displaced persons of our family. Several of that family still hold membership in that congregation.

My father's dream had been that of Abraham: "Go from your country... into the land that I will show you." And he had the same solid, stubborn faith. There were a number of severe incidents in the memory of my father, experiences at the hands of Nazi Germans and Russians. One of his brothers had died on the Russian front. Other relatives were forcefully resettled in Siberia; some died of exhaustion. His oldest son, my older brother, was forcefully detained as a 12-year-old by the political Nazi youth organization. All of us children refused to salute the flag at school. There were repercussions. But my father never hated and taught us to love those very people who were the Nazis, Russians, Poles... atheists or Jews or Christians... Baptists, Orthodox, Roman Catholics or Lutherans.

In this land of unlimited opportunities for life and health and every good, our family encountered a new language, culture and religious milieu. Even Lutheranism was not the same. We learned to sing and confess:

In Christ there is no east or west,
In him no south or north;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

... All Christly souls are one in him
Throughout the whole wide earth.

My father continued to pray with us and for us, and for all the people of the world, no matter of what religious or political orientation:

This is my song, O God of all the nations,

... Oh, hear my song, thou God of all the nations,
A song of peace for their land and for mine.
Twice my father and mother went back to visit relatives in West Germany. They never made it East again, but their children and grandchildren have traveled back several times. There are now marriages that include Denmark and Finland. But my father took great interest in my repeated travels to the East, especially East Germany and Poland. This past August I spent two weeks in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). He prayed for me and, I know, with me on that journey. I was able to tell him, with great joy, of the faithful believers in Riga (Latvia), Kiev (Ukraine), and Russia's Leningrad, Moscow and Zagorsk. Always during visits with him, at the end of a long conversation at dinner, we all stood and sang a hymn, often:

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms,
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.

On Holy Cross Day 1988 my father died. At his funeral we sang the same hymn.

Now I have come to reaffirm within myself the wandering restlessness of my soul as a faithful expression of the Euro-American rootedness of my being. I long to share the spirit of God's amazing oikoumene. But much of it is so difficult to communicate. For there is so little basic knowledge among us Americans about any other people, their religion, culture and history. As an American church we are all but held hostage by our ignorance of the rest of the world, especially by our ignorance about Eastern Europe and the USSR.

I want to briefly provide some glimpses of the USSR, its people and churches, including several selected ways and means by which to begin the journey East. May they open the doors of our lives to riches of God's wisdom that remain unavailable to us as long as we persist in our fearful ignorance. Our own national leaders repeatedly display their fear of other nations and religions. We must not let them keep us from understanding the geography and history, culture and
The USSR is a country of great diversity. The world's largest nation, it comprises about one-sixth of the total land area. In area (8.65 million square miles) and population the USSR is larger than the United States and Canada combined. It shares borders with twelve nations, half of which have been brought into the communist sphere. About one-fourth of the country is located in Europe, with the remaining three-fourths in Asia. Most of the population of about 280 million lives in Europe. The USSR occupies the territory of the Russian Empire of 1914.

Most of the country is on the same latitudes as Alaska and Canada. Tashkent, one of its most southern cities, lies at about the same latitude as Chicago. Climates are as varied as those of the polar regions of Canada and those of the Arizona desert. The people of the fifteen republics are made up of a large variety of ethnic groups. Over twenty major languages are in use, with Russian being the official language.

It is difficult to generalize about the peoples and the churches of the USSR. A complex history reveals a mosaic of political, cultural and religious traditions intertwined. While some 50 million people—a conservative figure—are members of the Russian Orthodox Church, less than ten percent of the population are members of the communist party. Other Christian denominations include the Armenian Apostolic, Georgia Orthodox, Baptist and other “evangelical” Christians as well as Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Methodists. Some Christian congregations choose not to register their existence. The number of believing Jews is estimated variously. There are more followers of Islam than in Egypt, as well as Buddhists, Hindus, and other religions. The USSR is a religious country.

The official Constitution of the USSR includes these two articles:

Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience,
that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited. (Article 52).

In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the USSR is separated from the state, and the school from the church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens. (Article 124).

A recent statement by the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church on the rights and obligations of religious Soviets in the USSR includes the following information:

A religious society is formed in order to satisfy jointly religious needs and is an association of believing citizens (founding members of the society), who are of age, no less than 20 in number and reside in one district. A religious society may commence its work after it has been registered at the appropriate state bodies. This is necessary for the legality of the religious society to be recognized from the moment of registration. Moreover, the registration signifies that a religious society takes upon itself the obligation of observing the USSR Constitution and Soviet laws. . . .

A religious society may invite officiants of its cult and openly hold religious services and prayer meetings in a house of worship, which may be attended by the believing citizens of any age and perform religious rites. . . . The believing citizens, including children of ten and over, may be voluntary participants in religious rites. In the case of children religious rites are performed with the consent of their parents. Religious rites have no legal force. . .

A religious society has its own monetary funds accumulated from donations and collections made in the house of worship, the sale of objects of cult and the performance of religious rites. These are free of tax. The money is spent on the upkeep of the houses of worship and other property of the cult, on the wages of the servants of the cult and religious centers, as well as of workers and employees.

Possessing monetary funds, religious societies have the right to employ, on a permanent or temporary basis, workers and employees on contracts drawn up with or
without trade union participation. Wages are determined by agreement with the religious societies but they must not be lower than the government rates of corresponding workers in state institutions or enterprises. (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, January 1986).

In more recent years, and especially since the April 1985 election of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, government authorities appear to be more permissive about the free exercise of these constitutional guarantees. However, there continues to be irregularities in the government's application of them. What is noteworthy is that now authorities of the state openly admit such inconsistencies and appear to be committed to correct them. Clearly there is renewed good will toward religion, the churches and believers. Will it last?

Church leaders are hopeful. During my visit, as part of the 1988 Millennium Celebration of Christianity, I was deeply moved by the witness and worship of Christians in the Orthodox as well as other communions. It is now quite common for youth and adults of all ages to seek baptism in the public worship services. Christian rituals and history receive extensive, regular discussion by voices of the church on public television. Representatives of the Office of Religious Affairs plead for the churches to help the entire society with their insights and example regarding peacemaking, education in values, drug and alcohol control, and volunteer service at hospitals. Denominations are encouraged to expand international visitation and dialogue. Church buildings are being reopened as fast as the churches can provide leadership and care for the buildings.

The same church leaders speak with deep reflection of the past decades of difficulties. "Maybe God is trying to teach us something that we otherwise would have missed." I did not discern hatred or anger at past mistreatment by state authorities. In fact, I heard personal witness about protective and appreciative measures by Communist superiors who recognized in believers a sense of vocation and therefore, the highest quality of exemplary work performance. The Word of God was present with great power during all these difficult decades.
With joyful tears we exchanged the peace of God with each other, praying in our hearts that God through their experience and witness might teach us in our country.

IV.

One of the greatest deprivations of our Christian faith in the United States comes from our ignorance of the Orthodox worship and prayer life. Russian Orthodox liturgical and individual spirituality is a profoundly intriguing blend of ancient Byzantine splendor and historic Slavic earthiness of soul. According to the Russian Primary Chronicle, Prince Vladimir of Kiev, the early capital of the people of Rus, received reports from his representatives about the various forms of Christianity they found in other countries. To replace paganism in his people’s hearts and to tie together warring factions of his own people, Vladimir chose Orthodoxy in 988 A.D. and subsequently baptized all his people.

The report of his envoys is recorded in these words: “Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among people, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty.” Awareness of the presence of God in an atmosphere of beauty that involves all the senses has been the ideal of Russian and Ukrainian public worship through 1000 years.

The reading and listening to Holy Scriptures in the Orthodox Service is preceded by the prayer:

Illumine our hearts, O Master who lovest humankind,
with the pure light of thy divine knowledge.
Open the eyes of our mind
to the understanding of thy gospel teachings.
Implant also in us
the fear of thy blessed commandments
that trampling down all carnal desires,
we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, 
both thinking and doing 
such things as are well-pleasing unto thee. 
For thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies, 
O Christ our God, 
and unto thee we ascribe glory, 
together with thy Father, 
who is from everlasting, 
and thine all holy, good and life-creating spirit, 
now and forever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Sermons are also common. But the soul singing by clergy, 
deacons, choir and people, together with the simultaneous total 
encounter with the multitude of icons and candle lights, is what 
gathers up the believers in one heavenly faith experience. 
Their anchoring in tradition not only roots them to the past of 
"Holy Russia" but is their assurance for the future. So it is no 
wonder that the Russians have a great deal to tell us about who 
we are. They are eager to reach out to us and invite us to grow 
in our souls. Our obsession with immediacy and relevance 
appears strange to the quietism of their Christian mind. God’s 
Kingdom, they would remind us, will indeed come--through our 
hearts rather than our hands.

For the Orthodox icons are windows into the kingdom of God. 
Icons are sermons in color, telling the story of God’s love in 
biblical times and through the ages. In prayer icons provide the 
reminders of and connections with the entire communion of 
saints who join us in one great fellowship of love. These pieces 
of wood make present that which they symbolize. God’s spirit 
makes it possible for the eyes of Christians to see the truth.

Both in church and in the privacy of the believer’s home 
icons help focus spirituality. The actual words spoken are basic 
and much more repetitive than in much of American Protes-
tantism. In the traditional Orthodox Morning Prayers we find 
these words, known as the Trisagion Prayers:

In the Name of the Father, 
and of the Son, 
Glory to thee, our God, glory to thee.
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O heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art in all places and fillest all things; Treasury of good things and Giver of life: Come and dwell in us and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: Have mercy on us. Have mercy on us. Have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us.

Lord, cleanse us from our sins.

Master, pardon our iniquities.

Holy God, visit and heal our infirmities for thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, . . .

After Troparia to the Holy Trinity and a prayer, the Creed follows. This final prayer of St. Basil the Great, just before individual or other occasional prayers which conclude Morning Prayers, is a moving experience also for private devotion:

We bless thee, O God most high and Lord of mercies, who ever workest great and mysterious deeds for us, glorious, wonderful, and numberless; who providest us with sleep as a rest from our infirmities and as a repose for our bodies tired from labor.

We thank thee that thou hast not destroyed us in our transgressions, but in thy love toward humankind thou hast raised us up, as we lay in despair, that we may glorify thy Majesty.

We entreat shine infinite goodness, enlighten the eyes of our understanding and raise up our minds from the heavy sleep of indolence; open our mouths and fill them with thy praise,
that we may unceasingly sing and confess thee,
who art glorified in all and by all,
the eternal Father, the Only-Begotten Son,
and the all holy and good
and life-giving Spirit:
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

V.

The first nineteen days of August 1988 I was privileged to be part of a pilgrimage to the Soviet Union. Our group included 144 church leaders, clergy and laity, female and male, from all over the United States, almost exclusively white, ages seventeen to well over seventy. Our mix represented all kinds of mindsets, including “the ugly American.” But we were “one in the Spirit and one in the Lord” in our pilgrimage—with each other and with our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union.

There were several days of preparation in New York. For me much of the content was very familiar ground. I learned much about my fellow pilgrims from their questions and comments. It prepared me for my role as a coleader of one of the six subgroups into which we were divided. Once again I experienced the dominant “Protestant spirituality” of much of American church life. The church is “one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” For much of American Protestantism, including the United Methodist Church, most of the “catholic” and quite a bit of the “holy” and “apostolic” is underappreciated and slighted.

During the pilgrimage I filled the 150 pages of my diary. Here I want to share seven glimpses from that notebook.

1. Towards the close of our several orientation days at Columbia University, a NCC leader reminded us of four items to be included in our mental luggage:
   (a) Broadness of spirit. I thought of St. Paul’s urging of makrothumia, a large, all-inclusive spirit of patience with what is as it is.
   (b) Reflective blend of mind. I had joined this pilgrimage intent upon reflection and a quiet mind, in need of much spiritual healing. And I had earlier written in my diary: “I
believe I will be on a most profound grace journey.”
(c) Gentleness with self and travel companions. I told my subgroup later that I would have a hard time with this.
(d) Tolerance of Ambiguity. Earlier, in my application for the pilgrimage, I had said: “I am an avid reader, traveler, dreamer and schemer who affirms the ambiguity of life. For me every day is a bonus gift of God's grace and every life the presence of God's suffering and redemption.”

2. On our Intourist bus to Zagorsk, the first morning in Moscow, our guide introduced herself: “My name is Svetlana. I am 32 years old, and I have a daughter five years old. She keeps me busy, but I am now at rest with you. I am a graduate of Moscow State University in Physical Sciences. As a hobby I am a tourist guide and this is my first assignment this summer. In my student days I worked during the summer as a brick mason.” Later: “I make you an offer. It will be a good souvenir for you to take back to your country. I will teach you a few words of Russian. . . gracivi (beautiful). . . z’darovie (health). . . karasho (good). . . orchin karasho (very good). . . English is increasingly the international language; it’s easy. But Russian is beautiful, too. . . da? (yes?)” On our way to the cathedral she passed around photos of her little daughter Marina who is taking figure skating lessons. “Who knows the name of one of the famous USSR figure skaters?” There was no answer. Lord, have mercy!

3. We visited Danilow Monastery in Moscow. The iconostasis in the main sanctuary had five rows of icons! I like St. George. He is the patron saint of Moscow—and a favorite of my oldest son Paul, a young pastor-mission developer in Detroit. Presently there are at Danilov 35 monks and five postulants. They hope to have 70 monks in the future, the number traditional in this monastery for over 700 years. As we exited I “smelled” (incense) a liturgy in the undercroft by the stairway. Following my nose I discovered a small icon shop in the back of the little chapel. I bought a hanging lamp, a gift to myself from this pilgrimage—to hang from the Greek Orthodox cross from an earlier visit to Athens. Another building on the monastery grounds houses the External Affairs department of the Russian
Orthodox Church. Archimandrite Theophan hosted us. In 1988, 165 churches were opened; it appears that all that is needed is a request from the church. Clergy now have access to TV and the printed press for addressing not only believers but the entire society. There is discussion about opening additional (now only Leningrad and Moscow) theological seminaries. “But there are problems. Life is too boring without problems, especially in the spiritual life.” What about the future? “Ideal things exist only in heaven.” Both in the US and in the USSR changes are needed, says the Archimandrite. Are there enough Bibles available? He tells of his experience in US hotels where he found Gideon Bibles, often unused. “Our spiritual life needs also other approaches— it’s not just a matter of how many Bibles you have.” Is Gorbachev a believer? “Ask Gorbachev!”

4. The population of Latvia is 2.6 million. There are 56 towns in this republic. We are in Riga, the capital; almost 1 million people. The old city has buildings from the 13th, 15th and 17th centuries. There are some folks over 80, still alive, who remember Lenin. The Rifle Guard was early support of the Revolution in Leningrad, and now an honorary guard of high school students, male and female, in all kinds of footwear, serve as honorary guards at the memorial for the Rifle Guard, one hour at a time. The year 1201 marks founding of the city ruled in turn by a German bishop with Crusaders; a Polish king; kings of Denmark, and Sweden; with the coming of Peter the Great, Latvia became part of Russia. Lutheran and Roman Catholic Church buildings abound, but only some are active. The Russian Orthodox Church is a minority here; it makes for more cordial ecumenical relations with Lutherans, like joint blessing of the waters at Epiphany. The Orthodox cathedral has many “western” features. . . . Old Believers’ Cathedral has the greatest collection of icons anywhere. . . . At a Jewish synagogue, the host Orthodox priest inquired: “All American groups ask for it. Why?” I responded: “We seek to be in dialogue with our older brothers and sisters in the faith.” He appeared to be puzzled. Walking through several narrow streets and backyards, amidst a good deal of reconstruction work, we found the small entry door. A rather large inside. About 50 to 60 gather for weekly worship; on high holy days about 2,000, many stand-
ing outside the building, we are told.

5. Sunday worship at St. Nicolas Cathedral in Leningrad, one of 18 places of active worship in that city, 14 of them Orthodox. A baptismal service was going on, at the street-level worship area, for children of all ages, teens and some adults in their mid-thirties. I rejoiced in utter amazement and tearful thanks! About 30 feet away, at another iconostasis, was the body of a babushka (elderly woman) laid out in a simple casket; loved ones were paying their respects with very natural conversation among them; somber tenderness. New life, death and new life were only 30 feet apart. I went upstairs to the main liturgy; coming back down I observed First Communion of the newly baptized. At still another icon station a priest leads an informal prayer service, with specific petitions presented to him on individual slips of paper. There are candles everywhere. I make my way to a sun-drenched bench in the adjoining park. I am so filled with amazement at the riches of this culture and people. Clouds keep moving across the sun; the sun is clear and golden warm again. God rules! Let the earth rejoice! Then the clouds move again and it is cooler. I make my way to the bus. I want to be home. I will be home. I am home! Right here and now!

6. The final meal in the USSR, and a spoken prayer by some in our group in this public hotel (religion in public is forbidden!), some soft singing: “Alleluia” and “Amen” and “Mind eyes have seen the glory” and other songs. The kitchen crew rushes out to watch and listen with silent amazement. I went up to them, in my clergy dress, and simply said: “Spassibo bolshoi” (Thank you very much!). They looked at me with a longing smile: “Pashalusta!” (You’re welcome) and some other bonding words, I think. It is good to have been here. It is good to be leaving. But I want to come again, soon! Such kindness and friendliness among the people, though generally with a more quiet, somber demeanor.

7. We had a day of debriefing at Stockholm, Sweden. These were some summary notes I entered into my diary, based on everyone’s comments:

(a) One-to-one personal contacts (on the street, outside the churches before and after worship, in apartments) rated very high, though some did not have these experiences.
(b) The Soviets are a quietly friendly, eager to get to know Americans. “We” and “they” are the same people.
(c) Worship in Orthodox, Lutheran and Baptist churches was moving, gripping.
(d) Ours was a three-level experience: religious, societal and individual.
(e) We are woefully aware of the need for balanced reporting back home.
(f) Some of us experienced our own heritage!
(g) Language often was a barrier. But that is our problem! However, we did have competent translator-guides as well as some fellow pilgrims with knowledge of the Russian language.

VI.

So, what about the Russians? Are they, their official government ideology of communism, their military might, going to destroy us? Are we going to be strong enough to defend ourselves? Will we destroy them? Can we trust the Russians? They have the same question: How can we trust those Americans?

In The Courage to Love, William Sloane Coffin has a chapter on The Soviets. For years Soviets and Americans have lived in mutual fear. Coffin says: “Wars always begin in the mind. You have first to think others to death. You cannot kill a brother. You cannot kill a sister, a friend, a fellow human being. But you can kill a Marxist, a capitalist, an imperialist, a leftist guerrilla. More accurately, wars begin in the heart when fear—once again—displaces love.”

As Christians we know we will always make mistakes, have misunderstandings and misguided ambitions. So will “they” because they are as human as we are. In Coffin’s concluding words: “Can we trust the Russians? Can they trust us? Finally have we any choice? Fear can arm us, but fear can never disarm us. Only trust can do that. If our wills are not paralyzed, but freed at last by the eternal dispenser of freedom, the eternal dispenser of life, we will from now on regard every human being as a child of God. In each we will see a sister or a brother—and
a Russian, American, Marxist, or capitalist at a later, more convenient hour. And we will continue to do so because he who came to show us the way will also see us through.”

Henry Nouwen in *Life Signs* reminds us that there are always two types of questions in our minds which are the sign of un-life, of fear. The questions begin with “What if” and with “Yes, but.” Such fear makes us waste our and the entire world’s resources for generations to come and so destroy us in our very being, in our soul, long before some nuclear catastrophe does it. We do not so much need to defend ourselves from the Russians. We do need to defend our souls and our entire creation within and without, as the United Methodist bishops warn and encourage us in their statement.

**VII.**

It has been said that there are more teachers of English in the Soviet Union than students of the Russian language in the United States. It is my opinion that there are more Soviet citizens who know about the history and geography of the United States than there are American citizens with a similar basic knowledge about the Soviet Union. Whatever the statistical evidence, as American Christians we need to repent, change our mind and attitude, too often based on ignorance, toward our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union.

We all have to begin somewhere with our *metanoia*. For some it would be good to avail themselves of a course in basic Russian. Just to become somewhat familiar with the sound, if not the meaning, of the Russian language is a freeing experience. There are some newspapers, like the *Christian Science Monitor*, which feature regularly articles on the culture, history, geography, religion and general current situation of the country. The *National Geographic* features occasional articles. The United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, provides updated, well-annotated issues of an atlas of the Soviet Union and other helpful materials. So does Friendship Press and the Service Center of the General Board of Global Ministries. It would be well to get on the mailing list
There are increasing occasions when citizens of the Soviet Union visit the United States in connection with educational, professional, business, peace and friendship programs. One should be willing to travel miles to simply come in touch with these guests. It is often a conversion experience. The best things, however, is to scrape together dollars by borrowing and/or denying oneself other comforts and possibilities, and travel to the Soviet Union while the world political situation is relatively conducive. One of the best ways to invest in the education of our young people is to send them East for even a few days, preferably several weeks or months. This sort of travel, for us and our children, is one of the best contributions that we can make to the peace of the world, to the peace in our hearts.

From among the dozens of volumes concerning the Soviet Union that have nourished me in more recent times, I recommend the following seven as starting points. Any one of them will lead to increased curiosity, interest in more detailed pursuit of all kinds of aspects of this great, mysterious country, its religion, churches and people.

1. What About the Russians? Brethren Press, 1984; 160 pages. This easily read book features ten authors dealing with a Christian approach to the US/Soviet conflict. It's an unapologetically Christian anthology by writers who for the most part have a rich background of direct contacts with the Soviet people. The questions posed in the chapter titles are those many Americans are asking.

2. Mikhail Gorbachev, Perestroika. Harper, & Row, 1987; 254 pages. In eloquent, forceful, passionate words the Soviet leader presents "new thinking for our country and the world." This is indeed a historic document of major proportions. Says Gorbachev: "It is not easy to change the approaches on which East-West relations have been built for fifty years. But the new is knocking at every door and window."

3. Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church. Penguin Press, 1983
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revised edition; 352 pages. This is a clear, detailed introduction to the history, faith and worship of the Orthodox Church written for non-Orthodox Christians as well as for Orthodox who wish to know more about their own tradition.

4. Nicholas Zernov, *The Russians and their Church*. St. Vladimir, 1978; 192 pages. A knowledge of the part played by the Orthodox Church in the lives of Russians before and after the 1917 Revolution is a key to understanding the history and culture of the entire country. The changeable attitude of the communist state towards the Church is described.

5. George F. Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age*. Pantheon, 1983; 263 pages. Wisdom and learning shine through these various speeches and communications from the life of this statesman and academician. Written over the course of some thirty years (1950-1982), these contributions by one of America's greatest public servants show a grace and elegance coupled with passionate, yet controlled and reasoned humanity. It deals also with the issue of future weapons systems.

6. Trevor Beeson, *Discretion and Valour*. Fortress Press, 1982; 416 pages. This is an amazingly comprehensive volume on the religious conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe. The pattern has not always been the same, but it is always a matter of life and death. Thoroughly updated, this is an authoritative and moving survey. The author has served regularly as European correspondent for the *Christian Century*.

7. Constantin G. Patelos, editor, *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement*. WCC. Geneva, 1978; 360 pages. A collection of documents and statements from the years of 1902-1975. They cover patriarchal encyclicals, Pan-Orthodox conferences and other official and personal statements. This is a solid documentary history of the presence and witness of the Orthodox Church, of which the Russian Orthodox Church is the largest family, at the center of the ecumenical movement.
Search for a Theological Paradigm: An Asian-American Journey

Jung Young Lee

Returning to Roots

According to Lao-tzu, everything has a tendency to return to its origin. My theological thinking is no exception. In my early days my theological training was deeply influenced by prominent European theologians such as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. They had molded my theological orientation. I soon discovered that I was theologically dependent on theologians whose cultural and philosophical roots were quite different from my own. This discovery was the beginning of my search for a theological paradigm that would provide a sense of meaning and autonomy in my theological orientation. My search was spontaneous, for I was motivated to return to my own cultural and ethnic roots, which are Korean in particular and Asian in general.

As far as I can recall, there were a few occasions that prompted me to attempt to free myself from my dependency on Western ways of thinking. First of all, I noticed that my Caucasian friends expected me to think and act differently because of my Oriental background. This external pressure helped me to take my ethnic roots seriously. I began to notice that I was imitating Western ways of thinking and of doing theology. I had never seriously considered the fact that my ethnic difference had anything to do with my theological think-

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ing. This was wrong. My thinking process has something to do with my ethnic background. This was the beginning of my search for a new way of theological thinking which would have to be a part of my life-style.

Secondly, my interest had switched from the study of Western theological works to the study of Eastern religious and cultural traditions. A special area of interest for me evolved around the Chinese Book of Changes or the I Ching. This transition had to do with my desire to discover my roots in the Eastern culture. However, I was seeking more than just my own cultural heritage, for I wanted to know what made me think differently from Western people. In fact, I was seeking a basic orientation in my own cultural heritage which had affected my thoughts and actions. This orientation is distinctively different from Western civilization. This was a very important period for me, because I needed some time to reassess my theological orientation. In other words, this was a time for me to detach myself from theological study in order to orient myself to a new perspective.

Thirdly, I have come to notice that cosmology is more important than anthropology in the Chinese and Korean way of thinking. The reason is that "... human beings are considered to be parts of the cosmos. Understanding the cosmos, therefore, implies the understanding of human nature as well." Moreover the cosmos and the ultimate reality are inseparably related and mutually inclusive in Eastern traditions. My study of the I Ching, the earliest book on Chinese cosmology, has helped me to grasp that the concept of change is the essence of the cosmic process. As I was thinking about the importance of cosmology in my study, I recalled the profound yet impossible suggestion by Rudolf Bultmann to demythologize the three-storied-structure worldview of New Testament times. This cosmological myth has been so deeply imprinted in the unconscious mind of people that it is still impossible to eliminate it from their thought patterns. Likewise, the cosmological principle of change, which has been known from the beginning of human civilization, has been so deeply imprinted in my unconscious thought that I, as a part of Chinese and Korean tradition, cannot separate myself from it. I know that I am a product of that cosmic process and part of the tradition that claims change
itself as the absolute category for understanding all cosmic phenomena.

Finally, I have discovered that what makes me think and act differently from the people in the West is my unconscious acceptance of change as the absolute frame of reference. Because I think and act in terms of change rather than in terms of unchanging being, I have to think and act differently from Western people, whose thoughts and actions have been greatly conditioned by the static ontology of Hellenistic philosophy. Change always operates in the dipolar relationship known as yin-yang. This is clearly illustrated by the diagram of Tai-ch'i, the paradigm of all cosmic processes.

If I am part of the cosmic process operated by the power of change, then the yin-yang symbol should be my basic frame of reference for understanding all things, including myself. Personally, rediscovering the significance of this symbol has been none other than the rediscovery of my own identity as a Korean. I have also come to notice the profound meaning of the Korean national flag which bears the emblem of Tai-ch'i, the yin-yang symbol. The yin-yang symbol, which depicts the process of change, is then deeply imprinted in the collective unconsciousness of the Korean people. I, as a Korean, should share that collective unconsciousness in my life. Discovering the yin-yang symbol is, therefore, none other than the discovery of myself.

The Meaning of the Yin-Yang Symbol

What makes this paradigm different from other paradigms of European theologies of the past is the basic category of reality itself. The yin-yang symbol, as I said, represents the process of change. It is change which takes the absolute category of reality. In fact reality is conceived as change rather than as being. It is not the substance that changes but it is
change that creates substance and being. Change is an a priori category of existence. Being is none other than the manifestation of change. What the yin-yang symbol presupposes, therefore, is not ontology but "changeology." It is change that changes all things, but the change itself is changeless. This paradoxical nature of change is not only the basic frame of reference for the understanding of the cosmos and of human nature but also of divine reality. God himself can be understood in terms of change rather than being, for change takes the category of the absolute. In this way, through the yin-yang symbol, I can understand reality quite differently than I can through the Western ontological approach. When "changeology" becomes the basic frame of reference, my thinking also changes. In fact, according to "changeology," being is none other than the illusion of change. The unchanging being cannot exist in reality, it can exist only in thought and memory. Change has to be real, for everything changes in one way or other. In the yin-yang symbol changeology replaces ontology. This, then, is the reversal of the traditional Western idea of reality.

Because unchanging beings are unreal, change cannot be understood in terms of being. It is best understood in terms of relationship, for yin and yang are relational symbols. Yin is yin because of yang, and yang is yang because of yin. Because they are relational, one cannot exist without the other. They are mutually interdependent because of their mutual inclusiveness. If you look at the symbol of Tai-ch'i or the yin-yang symbol, you can easily notice the mutual inclusiveness. Yin has yang in it and yang has yin in it. They are inclusive of each other. The yin-yang symbol that expresses the process of change can best be understood in terms of inclusive and relative characteristics that complement the opposing forces of the world. Yin and yang are opposite in character, but they are complementary. Thus the yin-yang symbol represents the holistic category that is characteristic of the Eastern way of thinking.

The Both-and Way of Thinking

The yin-yang symbol also presents a distinctively different way of thinking from the traditional Western way of thinking.
Since yin and yang are not only inclusive but relative, they cannot be expressed in terms of an absolute category of an "either/or," which has been closely associated with the Aristotelian logic in the West. In other words, the "either/or," logic is insufficient to explain the process of change as depicted in the yin-yang symbol. It is not only the yin-yang symbol that has pointed out the limitation of an either/or logic but the modern science also questions the validity of this premise:

"Planck’s quantum theory and Einstein’s theory of relativity led to the Aristotelian ‘either/or’ being questioned. The result of the first was that the axiom, *natura non facit saltus* (nature makes no leap), become untenable. As a consequence of the quantum theory, we know today that nature is very capable of making such leaps. . . We know today that matter is not merely a spatial element but also a temporal one. It is corpuscular as well as wave-like, so that both are merely different aspects of the same thing. In ‘this as well as that’ lies the decisive impetus which has led to questioning the Aristotelian ‘either-or.’"

This category of the absolute based on a dualistic world view is not only incapable of expressing the changing process but also creates the limitation of theological thinking in the West. As Wilfred Smith has pointed out, "We in the West presume that an intelligent man must choose; *either* this *or* that." And then he has suggested, "In all ultimate matters, truth lies not in an either-or, but in a both-and." In other words, a theological category, that is, the category of ultimate concerns, needs a category of both-and. The supreme example of this categorical thinking is found in the yin-yang symbol.

Yin and yang cannot be expressed in terms of an either-or category, because yin is in yang and yang is in yin. To speak of yin means to speak of yang, for yin is included in yang, and to speak of yang is also to speak of yin, for yang is included in yin. That is why the yin-yang symbol cannot be expressed in the dualistic category of an either-or. It is a nondualistic symbol, only expressed in terms of both-and, the inclusive way of thinking. The nondualistic expression of yin-yang relationship denies not only absolute dualism but also absolute monism. It also asserts both dualism and monism at the same time. It is
both one and two, for one is expressed in two and two is known in one. Therefore, the both-and way of thinking, which is the yin-yang way of thinking, does not negate the either-or way of thinking. Rather the former is not only inclusive of the latter but also de-absolutizes the latter. In other words, the either-or category not only loses its absolute character but becomes a part of the inclusive category of both-and thinking. To accept the inclusive category of both-and thinking means to relativize an either-or thinking and limit its function to the penultimate matters only. In a way, the either-or frame of reference is workable in the penultimate matters, just as the classical Newtonian law is functional in ordinal mechanics. However, the either-or logic cannot function in the ultimate matters, just as the Newtonian law does not work in quantum physics. What is needed for ultimate matters is the inclusive way of both-and thinking. Since theology deals with the ultimate concern, the yin-yang way of thinking or the both-and way of thinking can best serve as a theological paradigm.

Applications to Asian-Americans

However, my journey cannot stop here. As soon as I thought that I had found the paradigmatic symbol in me, I began to question whether I myself am deeply rooted in the soil where the symbol has been nurtured and supported for many generations. I am no longer living in Asia or in Korea but America. This means that the theological paradigm that I have found has to be relevant to and functional in the context of Asians in America. If a theological paradigm is right for me and has a universal implication, it ought to function in any circumstance. It is especially significant to see whether it is functional with respect to the condition of Asians in America.

What then is the situation for Asians in America? Asians living in the United States find themselves in positions very similar to those of the oppressed people in the Third World. Occupying a minority status in this country, we are a marginalized people because of our racial and cultural background. Because of our marginalized condition, we are a Third World people living in the First World. This context allows us to hold
similar theological positions as other Third World people hold, that is, a theology for the oppressed and a theology of liberation. In fact, we should have a theological orientation similar to the Blacks and women in this country. We seek liberation not only from economic and social injustice but from racial and cultural bias. If we live in Asia as Asians, we are not subject to racism and cultural bias. That is why the situation of Asian Americans is far more complex than that of Asians in Asia. If theology, as a reflection on this situation, is to provide the praxis of liberation, can change as expressed in the yin-yang symbol serve as a theological paradigm? Unless this question is answered, the yin-yang symbol cannot function as a theological paradigm for me and for other Asian Americans.

Let me explain why the yin-yang symbol can serve as a theological paradigm for the liberating praxis of Asians in America. As I have said, this symbol represents the process of change. Everything changes because of change, the absolute power working to transform every thing. Social and economic structures are no exception to this change. Racism and cultural values are also subject to change. Just as yin changes to yang and yang changes to yin, the oppressor can change to the oppressed and the oppressed to the oppressor. Change works steadily and irresistibly in all sectors of life. Liberation then is possible through this change. The patterns of change expressed in the yin-yang symbol is not a revolutionary change that presupposes conflicting dualism, but a gradual transformation of the whole based on a non-dualism and the complementarity of the opposites. Because the yin-yang symbol is not only nondualistic but complementary, theological work based on this approach is not interested in the liberation of Asians or other marginalized groups only but the liberation of those who oppress them as well. The primary task of liberation through the yin-yang paradigm is to liberate the majority of the white middle- and upper-class Americans from their exclusive conceptual framework, so that their liberation is in effect the liberation of Asian Americans from their marginal status. In other words, we are not seeking our own liberation, but we find liberation when we liberate those who oppress us.
This is also the way of Christ, who taught us to love those who hate us. By loving those who oppress and discriminate against us, we can liberate them and also ourselves. Liberation is a mutual process. The liberation of the oppressor is the liberation of the oppressed. This is based on the principle of reciprocity and the law of return which are inherent in the changing process. The use of the yin-yang symbol as a theological paradigm is, therefore, quite different from the use of the Marxist dialectical analysis, which presupposes conflicting dualism, or the use of static ontology, which attempts to retain rather than to transform the context. I believe that this dynamic, inclusive and open-ended paradigm can serve as the best means to reflect on the praxis of total liberation.

Implications for the Universal Church

Why do I look for a theological paradigm? Is this not a traditional approach that has been much criticized by many Third World theologians today? If theology is none other than my own reflection on the praxis of liberation, why do I need a theological paradigm? Isn't this another attempt to ideologize the Christian message? Many Third World theologians may suspect me for my search for a theological paradigm. Let me first point out why I think my approach to theology is different from the approach of liberation theology in general, and then explain why a theological paradigm is needed for a theological task.

My theological approach is different from the approach of liberation theologians because it is not simply from below or from above. My approach to theology is from background to foreground, if I consider Asianness as my background and my life in America as my foreground. Unlike my theological approach, the theology of liberation begins with foreground or context, the context of the oppressed, the poor, and the marginalized. This theology is often known as the "second act" and should serve as a means of liberation. The central thrust of liberation theology, as I understand it, is not a search for the universal truth of Christianity but to find the practical implications of Christian truth for the concrete and particular situa-
tions of oppressed people. In this respect, it is, according to my definition, a theology from foreground. It does not take background seriously. It is an attempt to deal with the social, political, and economic issues of our time. It is then practical and realistic in terms of the actual life situation of many people in the Third World. I do not dismiss or underestimate the importance of this kind of approach to theology. For many years theology has been purely personal and spiritual in nature and has been captive in academic disciplines without practical relevance to the actual life of Christians. However, in spite of its noble and pious intention, liberation theology can be regarded as a one-sided approach to the theological enterprise. Sound theology should be approached from a holistic perspective.

Our reflection on the praxis of liberation is just one of many aspects of theology. Theology should not be provincial, for the church of Christ is universal. One of the most prominent African thinkers in our time, John S. Mbiti, has something to say in this respect. He said, "the Church has become kerygmatically universal, but is still theologically provincial, in spite of the great giants of theology. This is a serious dilemma and if we do not resolve it, it will destroy our foundations as the church in the world." When he spoke about provincial theology, he was thinking of traditional European theology, which did not touch the questions of the churches in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. However, the same question can be addressed to the Third World theologies in our time. Their theologies are provincial as well, because the emphasis is on their own context. They tend to absolutize their own context as the norm for their theological work, and at the same time they have a tendency to relativize the universality of truth. For them the Christian truth is relative to situations, for it does not hold universal validity to all situations. Moreover, if theology addresses only those who are poor and oppressed, it is also provincial. It does not address those who belong to the elite and the upper economic and social class. I am not denying the validity of a contextual theology, but I am simply pointing out the danger of provincialism inherent in contextualization. If John Mbiti’s concern, that is, the danger of provincial theology, is
important for the universal church, I also see the danger of
contextual theologies as well.

A sound theology is then both contextual and universal. In
order to allow for the universality of our faith, I need a theologi­
cal paradigm that has a special significance to a particular
situation and at the same time is open to all other possibilities.
In order words, a theological paradigm has to be both universal
and particular. It has to be both inductive and deductive in its
approach. Without a theological paradigm it is not possible to
hold both dimensions. It is my hope that a theological paradigm
based on the yin-yang symbol can be holistic enough to deal not
only with my background but with my foreground, not only with
my particular situation in this country but also with other
situations unlike my own.

Finally, I want to make clear that I am not suggesting a
theological paradigm for the whole church. If I do, I am as guilty
as the traditional dogmatic theologians who attempt to provide
valid theological thinking for the whole church. Such as never
been my intention. My search for a theological paradigm has
been, as I said before, a spontaneous experience, and it has been
intended for my own theological work. Even if the yin-yang
symbol has a universal implication, it is not my intention to
insist on it as a universal paradigm for the whole church.
Perhaps I can render an important service to the church in
presenting this theological paradigm is to assist other
theologians in finding their own theological paradigms, and in
this way also help others to realize the particularity and the
universality of the Christian faith. I would also like to invite
those who are interested in this open-ended paradigm to be­
come partners in the search for the wholeness of God's truth
and his liberating act in the world. We are joined together in
this venture, as yin and yang are joined together in the process
of change.

Notes

1. As a result of my serious study of this book, I have publish­
ed a couple of books on the I Ching and many articles. See Jung
Young Lee, The Principle of Changes: Understanding the I
Ching (New York: University Books, 1971) and The I Ching and
THEOLOGICAL PARADIGM


2. Technically, yin means the northern slope of a mountain, and yang means the southern slope of a mountain. Yin, therefore, means shadow, yang means light. However, yin and yang express the infinite possibilities of opposite characteristics in the world. Yin means female, dark, cold, receptive, etc., and yang means male, bright, hot, creative, etc. The original symbol of yin and yang in the I Ching has been regarded as the invention of King Fu Hsi, the legendary king of China. Therefore, the origin of the yin-yang symbol goes back to the prehistory of China.


4. This is a classical definition of change itself. Tao Te Ching says, 'Essential nature is everchanging-changless' (chapter 16).


7. Ibid.


10. Gustavo Gutierrez calls theology the "second act," while one's commitment to and solidarity with the struggle of the poor and oppressed is called the "first act." See The Power of the

Theology of Han
(the Abyss of Pain)

A. Sung Park

The paper proposes to explore the Han of the Korean Minjung—the oppressed common people. The rationale for treating the idea of Han is to complement the one-sided doctrine of sin in traditional Christian theology.

Let us begin with definitions. Sin is the wrongdoing of people toward God and their neighbors. Han is the pain experienced by the victimized neighbors. Sin is the unjust action of the oppressors; Han, the passive experience of their victims. Sin is of the oppressor; Han, of the victims.

Recently feminist theologians have identified the importance of this issue. Valerie Saiving, for example, rejects Reinhold Niebuhr's understanding of sin: "For the temptations of woman as woman are not the same as the temptations of man as man, and the specifically feminine forms of sin...have a quality which can never be encompassed by such terms as 'pride' and 'will-to-power'. They are better suggested by such items as triviality, distractibility, and diffuseness; lack of an organizing center or focus." For her, pride is the sin of males, not the sin of females.

Traditional theology has emphasized one-sidedly the sin of all people, while ignoring the pain of the victim. Its doctrine of sin must be complemented by dealing with the suffering of the victim. By investigating the Han of the Minjung and possible ways to heal their wounds, we can explore one way to balance the traditional doctrine of sin.

To examine the reality and the cure of Han, we must look at the identity of Minjung, the origin of Minjung theology, the

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The Minjung are the subjects of Minjung Theology. Let me briefly explain who the Minjung are.

The Minjung are the common people in Korean history. Chi-ha Kim, a well-known Minjung poet, defines the Minjung as the partners of the covenant with God from the beginning and the true subjects of human history. Yong Bock Kim confirms this: "The Minjung is the protagonist in the historical drama. It is the subject; and its socio-political biography is the predicate." A biblical scholar, Byung M. Ahn, equates the Minjung with "am haaretz," a low class of people in the first century B.C. and "ochlos," the people of the alienated class in the gospel of Mark as opposed to "laos," the people of God. Tong Hwan Moon explains the origins of the term Minjung:

During the Yi Dynasty, the common ordinary people were oppressed by the Yangban, the ruling class of the time. The burden of the Minjung grew worse toward the end of the dynasty when the population of the Yangban surpassed four million. At this time anyone who was excluded from the Yangban was a Minjung.

In short, the Minjung are the downtrodden who brood Han. They have been politically oppressed, economically exploited, socially isolated, and/or culturally alienated. Experiencing the pain of dehumanization, they cry out for justice and human dignity. The Minjung have not given in but have defied their oppressors, claiming that as the principle characters of history they are destined to determine the course of their history.

The Origin of Minjung Theology

Minjung history starts as early as the beginning of Korean history. It is believed that step by step, the Minjung have prepared the ground for themselves so that they may become the subjects of Korean history. Modern and contemporary major Minjung movements are: the Tonghak Revolution in 1894, the March First Independence Movement in 1919, the April Nineteenth Student Revolution in 1960, the Kwangju Uprising in 1980, and the June Citizen Uprising in 1987.
The great Minjung movements in history have led to the Minjung theology, born in the 1970s. Under the harsh rule of dictator Park, a few Christian leaders, professors, students, and writers took part in the struggle involved in the movement toward Minjung rights. They experienced the suffering of the Minjung through participation in their cause. Minjung theology is the outcome of the experiences of these Christians, who took part in sit-in strikes and street demonstrations and were forced to reflect upon their Christian discipleship in interrogation rooms, court martial tribunals, and/or prisons. They began to see the true meaning of the Christian gospel in the light of the suffering Minjung. In Minjung theology, the Christian gospel cannot be understood without knowing the pain of the Minjung. Only through the suffering of the Minjung do we understand the suffering of Jesus. Jesus personifies the Minjung in history. To know Jesus Christ in Korea is to know the Minjung of Korea.

The Definition of Han

One of the major themes of Minjung theology is the Han of the Minjung. Han is the individual and collective experience of the Minjung. The Minjung are the Han-laden. Let us find out what Han is.

Nam Dong Suh defines Han as "a deep feeling that rises out of the unjust experience of the people" or "just indignation." For Chi-ha Kim, "Han is the Minjung’s anger, a sad sentiment turned inward, hardened and stuck to their hearts. Han is caused as one’s outgoingness is blocked and pressed for an extended period of time by external oppression and exploitation." For Young-Hak Hyun, "Han is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of acute pain of sorrow."

Han is the boiled-down feeling of pain caused by injustice and oppression. It is the deep-seated lamentation or bitterness of the suffering Minjung.

Han can be compared to a black hole theory in astronomy. When a star of five solar masses gets old, it expands and grows.
to be a red giant. Its inside becomes a single giant atomic nucleus, occupying a much smaller volume than the precursor electrons and iron nuclei. The core implodes violently and a supernova explosion follows. After this fantastic explosion, the star collapses to a black hole. Its gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can get out. Like a black hole, when suffering reaching the point of saturation, it implodes and collapses into a condensed feeling of pain. This collapsed feeling of pain is Han. Sometimes, it explodes and brings forth social reformation or destruction.

Han is the abyss of grief which has been deeply embedded in the collective unconscious history of the Korean Minjung. As a Buddhist poet to Ko Eun states, "We Koreans were born from the womb of Han and brought up in it." For a long period of history, the Minjung have been afflicted by numerous foreign invasions and the iron rule of tyrants. Women, particularly, have experienced the long suffering of dehumanizing patriarchy. Their Han is much deeper than men’s.

The Structure of Han

Han is a complex feeling which cannot be neatly analyzed. Neither can it be bifurcated, but for explaining its depth, I will divide it into four facets. Han has two dimensions: personal and collective. Each dimension has two levels: conscious and unconscious.

At its conscious personal level, Han is expressed in the forms of anger, helplessness, deep sighs, and resentment. At its unconscious personal level, Han is buried in deep anguish, and bitterness. Some traumatic personal or interpersonal events bring about conscious or unconscious personal Han.

At its conscious collective level, Han is demonstrated through collective wrath, rage, street demonstrations and rebellion. At its unconscious collective level, Han is submerged in racial lamentation. Social injustice, political oppression, economic exploitation or foreign invasions which affect the Minjung as a whole raise collective Han. Unconscious collective is transmittable. When the Minjung experience suffering over many generations without release, they develop unconscious
collective Han in their hearts and transmit it to their posterity. In Jungian terms, this is something like "collective unconscious." But, it is different because for Jung, "the Self is not only the center of but the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the center of this totality, just as the ego is the center of consciousness." Collective Han is not only embedded in the substratum of the self, but also in the bottom of racial unconscious history and herstory. Unconscious collective Han is the racial abyss of psycho-somatic and pneumatic suffering experiences which has been deepened over many generations in the history of the Minjung.

**Han Poori (The Resolution of Han)**

The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for Koreans, for it not only absolves the sin of people, but also resolves the Han of people. If the gospel is not concerned with the Han of the Minjung, it will not be good news at all.

To unravel Han, we need to understand its nature. Han is frozen energy that can be unraveled either negatively or positively. When it explodes negatively, the Minjung will kill, seek revenge, or destroy others. When it implodes negatively, the Minjung fall into a fatalism which may develop into mental disorders or suicide. If Han is unraveled positively, it can be converted into the constructive energy needed to change social injustice.

How can we disintegrate Han in a positive way? I propose two steps. The first step is "awakening", the second, "disentanglement." Although I suggest these two steps in dealing with Han, they are insufficient for resolving the depth and complexity of Han in full measure. These steps are no more than limited guidelines for the positive disintegration of Han.

**A. Awakening**

At the outset, the Minjung need to become aware of their surroundings and to find the causes of Han. Although it is impossible to name all the causes of personal Han, they are usually generated by an unexpected death in family, poverty,
family relations, a tragedy, an accident, injustice, etc. In many cases, however, personal Han is interconnected with collective Han.

In terms of collective Han, social discrimination, political oppression, economic exploitation, etc., are its roots. I have selected three major sources of collective Han in Korean history: patriarchy, hierarchy, and foreign invasion.

1. Patriarchy

Patriarchy has generated women's Han greatly in Korean history. Since Confucianism became the state religion of the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), patriarchal oppression has been intolerable. In the Yi Dynasty, husbands could unilaterally abandon their wives for any one of seven reasons: incompatibility with parents-in-law; inability to bear a son; hereditary or irremediable disease; jealousy; adultery; talkativeness; or thievery. Marriage was no less than imprisonment for married women. They had to serve large numbers of in-laws in the extended family system. The wives of the lower class were particularly oppressed among the oppressed. They were at the bottom of the social hierarchical pyramid. Many of them did not even own their names. Their Han was deeper than that of any other group.

Let me recount a legendary story, "Stone Gate," to illustrate women's Han. I had intended to present a true historical story account of women's Han, but I failed to find an appropriate one because women's experiences were hardly recorded in history. Stories, however, reveal poignant examples of women's Han. The following is one of them.

Before a flickering candle light, a bride and groom were preparing for the first night. The groom got up to use the outdoor lavatory. He walked out so fast that his long Korean robe caught on a hinge of the door. Deeming that the bride, losing her propriety, had held his robe out of lust, the groom angrily left home at that very moment. After that, whoever opened the door to see the inside of the room suddenly fell down dead.

Forty years passed in this way. One day the groom, passing by the house on business, stopped by and opened the door. Before his eyes, the perfectly preserved body of the bride in her wed-
ding dress was sitting at the right spot where she sat forty years ago. He also saw his robe lying on the floor caught on a hinge of the door. Deeply remorseful for the wrong he had done to his bride, he entered the room. He repented with a sincere heart and touched her body. At last, her Han-brooded body turned into ashes and immediately departed this Han-ridden world.\textsuperscript{16}

For the bride, the first night, which should be cherished and honorable, turned into a night of shame and nightmare. She did not have any chance to explain. Nothing could heal her broken pride and dream. The bride fostered Han.

Even death did not resolve her Han. To show the reality, her body waited for forty years. After making the truth clear, her Han-ridden soul went to its place. The groom's realization of the fact, however, did not fully resolve her Han. Nothing could compensate for the tragic end of her life. Here lies the unresolvable dimension of Han. It cannot be fully resolved but must be transcended.

In this legend, the Han of the bride is not her Han only. Her Han of forty years duration represents the Han of Korean women over thousands of years. Her death symbolizes the silent suffering of Korean women.

The gospel of patriarchy is not good news but bad news for Korean women. In the gospel, we find the crucifixion of the Son of God. The death of the Son of God means the death of the male god, which is good news for the daughters of God. The Son of God had to die so that Christ could arise. The male image of God was broken at the crucifixion. The risen Christ signifies the end of the patriarchal concept of God. The non-patriarchal Christ for humanity is the healing message for women in Korean and elsewhere.

2. Hierarchy

Korea is a Confucian society. Confucian ethics enforce the hierarchical social order. During the Yi Dynasty, two social classes came into being: the Yangban and the Sangnom. The Yangban, the upper class, manipulated, exploited, and oppressed the Sangnom (the Minjung).

According to Nam Dong Suh, "At a certain point in Korean history, about half of the population was registered as
hereditary slaves, and were treated as property rather than as people of the nation." They have defended the country with their bare bodies against foreign invasions while the rulers fled for their lives. They have produced rice, have built walls, castles, and other buildings, and have created Korean arts. Yet they have been treated as slaves.

The Minjung, the upholders of history, are destined to prompt the direction of history. No power can permanently repress their power. The God of the gospel is the God of the downtrodden. God was incarnated among the biblical Minjung, lived with them, and died as one of them. The incarnation was the beginning of God's ultimate denial of hierarchy, the crucifixion disclosed its climax, and the resurrection signified the its historical consummation. The King of kings abdicated and was executed at the cross for the sake of humankind. This God of non-hierarchy is the hope of history for the Minjung.

3. Foreign Intervention

In 993 A.D., during the Koryo dynasty (936-1392), the Khitan empire basing at Lio-Yang invaded the Koryo border from the northwest with 800,000 troops. For thirty years, they attacked Korea and devastated its land and people. In 1231, the Mongols invaded Korea and its rulers fled to Kanghwa Island. For about thirty years, the Minjung put up with the brutality of the Mongol armies. In 1592, Japan under the rule of Hideyoshi Toyotomi invaded Korea with 150,000 troops and did not succeed, but ruined the peninsula. In 1597, he sent his armies and failed again. In 1627, the Manchus crossed the Yalu River and the rulers fled to Kangwha Island. In 1639, they invaded Korea again. King Injo capitulated and sent princes as hostages.

In 1892, the Tonghak movement—the first modern Minjung movement—evolved into the greatest revolution in Korean history and almost toppled the corrupt Yi Dynasty. King Kojong appealed to China for help in subduing this rebellion. But Japan, without Kojong's invitation, intervened and suppressed this revolution to hold its hegemony in Korea. This action of Japan triggered the Sino-Japanese War in 1894.
Eventually, in 1910, Japan annexed Korea. Surprisingly, our annexation was not executed by Japan alone. According to Dr. Tyler Dennett’s doctoral dissertation, President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to the Emperor of Russia, "Korea must be under the protectorate of Japan." In July 1905, Katsura Taro, the Japanese Prime Minister, and William Howard Taft, the American Secretary of War, secretly met in Tokyo. That meeting produced the Taft-Katsura Agreement, in which the U.S. sanctioned Japan’s interests in Korea in return for a Japanese pledge not to object to American rule in the Philippines. Not knowing this, trusting a treaty of amity with the U.S. in 1905, King Kojong sent an emissary to President Roosevelt to beg for help. Roosevelt refused to see the emissary, however, breaking the treaty of amity which stipulated mutual protection on the basis of friendship.

The U.S. also played a vital role in the division of Korea. Patrick M. Blackett, the 1948 Nobel Prize recipient in physics, has written that the real reason for the dropping of the two atomic bombs was a political one. Toward the end of the war, the U.S. did not need to drop the atomic bombs to win the war against Japan. The all-out air attack on Japan was accomplishing this. But, all of a sudden, the Americans dropped two nuclear bombs on Japan, killing numerous, innocent civilians. This action was due to the fact that the long-demanded Soviet offensive was supposed to take its planned course on August 8, 1945, and the Soviet armies might invade Manchuria and claim Japan. The U.S. wanted to insure that the Japanese government surrendered to American forces alone. Therefore, the U.S. used the atomic bomb on August 6, two days before the Soviet Union declared war on Japan.

After the unconditional surrender of Japan, the U.S. suggested to the Soviet Union the bisection of Korea, drawing the line of the thirty-eighth parallel. The Soviet Union accepted this proposal. Germany lost its war and was divided because it would be a potential threat to future world peace. Japan lost its war but was saved from division. Korea, however, a non-threatening country, that had been unjustly oppressed by Japan for about forty years, was divided against its will.

Even worse was the division called the Korean war, an out-
come of the Cold War between the Soviets and the U.S. It cost thousands of lives.

In addition to this, the division has burdened Korea with heavy military spending. Both North and South Korea spend 30 to 40 percent of their national budgets and six to ten percent of their GNP for national defense. The Minjung in divided Korea have paid the high cost of the division. North Korea has never paid the workers and farmers enough; it has to support 780,000 soldiers in a population of 18 million. South Korea maintains 620,000 soldiers among its 40 million people. In spite of its recent economic growth, it has almost 45 billion dollars of foreign debts, and its annual interest payments amount to five billion dollars. Even worse, the U.S. maintains some 250 different kinds of nuclear weapons and plans to deploy the neutron bomb in South Korea. The division, the root of all kinds of evil, has been the main cause of the present Korean Minjung's Han. The U.S. caused this division. Ever since the treaty of amity in 1882, the U.S., whom Koreans have trusted most, has repeatedly betrayed them. The suppression of the Kwangju Uprising in 1980 exposes the double-dealing of the U.S. against the Minjung.

B. Disentanglement

To awake to one's own surroundings and to discover the causes of Han is the first step toward the resolution of Han. The next step is disentanglement. This step starts from envisioning. A vision is the rudder to transmute Han into positive energy. Without a vision, the Minjung may seek revenge and the destruction of society. With a vision, the Minjung are able to confront the reality of Han-causing elements. Confrontation is the courage to face reality rather than escaping from it. Through confronting the roots of Han, the Minjung come to the stage of disentanglement. Disentangling conscious Han is different from that of unconscious Han.

1. Conscious Han

Confronting Han-causing problems with a vision can resolve
both personal and collective conscious Han. At a personal level, a vision of reconciliation, reunion, or the restoration of broken relationships enables a Han-brooding person to confront Han-causing situations and change them. In the middle of transforming Han-causing circumstances, one will experience the disentanglement of Han, burning Han as transforming fuel. At a collective level, a vision of a new society empowers the Minjung to confront and transform the causes of the Minjung's Han—patriarchy, hierarchy, foreign intervention, etc.

A new society in Korea is a Hanless country. A Hanless society, in concrete terms, can be the country of democracy, independence, reunification, and egalitarianism. A Hanless society is the community in which the Minjung determine their own destiny and cooperate to actualize the potentialities of each other. As the Minjung are involved in transforming the present society to the visualized Hanless society, they are able to experience the resolution of Han.

2. Unconscious Han

While transformation is the key word for resolving personal or collective conscious Han, transcendence is an essential notion for disentangling personal or collective unconscious Han. The unconscious Han of the Minjung cannot be resolved by eliminating the Han-causing elements alone. The damaged spirit of the Minjung needs to be healed in depth. To resolve the unconscious Han of a victim, the recollection of a Han-causing incident is indispensable. For example, in the Han Poori of a drowned victim, the shaman replays the process of drowning step by step, demonstrating to the bereft family the way the victim died. This careful replay helps the involved people confront the reality of the tragedy and seek positive ways to invest the energy of Han. Unraveling the full story of the tragedy, the grieving family begins to recognize their Han (confrontation) and use the painful experience of Han to prevent such a tragic event from occurring again (vision). The process of the recognition of Han and the positive attitude in using Han-energy will lead them to the point of transcendence and the disentanglement of Han.

The point of transcendence can be attained when the griev-
ing people realize their irretrievable situations and embrace their Han. Like the "critical point" in Teihard de Chardin's theory, the people's Han begins to be dissolved at the point of transcendence. 26 The transcendent point is the moment at which one realizes one's own limitations and possibilities at the same time.

If a Han-causing incident is irrevocable, such as the drowning case, unraveling the story of Han leads to the point of transcendence and to the dissolution of Han. If a Han-causing incident is removable, only participation in the transformation of the situation brings forth the point of transcendence and the disintegration of Han. In a case in which the Han of the Minjung has unconsciously accumulated under the oppression of a dictator, it can be dissolved only through getting involved in the struggle of democratization. If democracy is given to the people without their participation, their conscious collective Han can be dissociated, but their unconscious collective Han remains. Only when the Minjung take part in transforming Han-causing elements will they experience the dissolution of their unconscious Han in the process via transcendence.

Conclusion

In the beginning, I defined the Minjung as the Han-brooding downtrodden and Han as the abyss of pain. For deciphering its structure, I introduced the four aspects of Han: personal conscious; personal unconscious; collective conscious; and collective unconscious Han. To dissolve personal or collective conscious Han, I proposed two steps. "Awakening" is needed to discover the concrete causes of Han. I named the three major sources of Han in Korea: patriarchy, hierarchy, and foreign interventions. "Disentanglement" is involved in resolving Han. To dissolve personal or collective conscious Han, I suggested that with a vision of new relationships or the Hanless society, we confront the Han-causing elements and transform them. To unravel personal or collective unconscious Han, I stated that we need to reach the point of transcendence by either recollecting the story of the Minjung's Han or participating in the operation of transforming Han-causing elements.
THEOLOGY OF HAN

Without dealing with the reality of Han, the doctrine of sin will be fragmented. With the understanding of Han of people, we will have a better picture of the Christian understanding of sin and salvation. Jesus came down not only for forgiving sin, but also for resolving Han. Jesus Christ proclaims himself that he has sent to heal the brokenhearted (the Han-laden people), to recover the sight of the blind, to set the downtrodden free from oppressors (Luke 4:18). Christianity was brought out of God's determination to dissolve the Han of the suffering. Thus, the Word of God declares, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). The crucifixion signifies the Han Poori (resolving Han) of God for the suffering people. The cross is God's ultimate negation to the Han of the afflicted. The resurrection of Christ as the negation of the negative connotes God's ultimate affirmation of the Hanless nature of a new heaven and a new earth. There, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying, no pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Revelations 24:4). The final goal of the direction of history is this new heaven and new earth where people's Han will be fully resolved. We are called to this vision of Hanless society on earth. Thus, we pray ceaselessly: "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Notes


6. Nam Dong Suh, "Historical References of Theology of Minjung," pp. 170-173. For the Kwangju Uprising, see note 24. The June citizen
uprising, a series of militant street demonstrations, demanded a direct presidential election. The military regime finally conceded having the direct election on December 10, 1987.


8. Ibid., p. 27.


17. Nam Dong Suh, "Toward a Theology of Han," in Minjung Theology, p. 54.


23. Ibid., p. 35.


25. On May 17, 1980, the government run by General Doo Kwan Chun declared martial law and arrested Kim Dae Jung, the most
prominent opposition leader. Students in Kwangju were demonstrating for the release of Dae Jung Kim and the democratization of Korea. Paratroopers were sent into Kwangju to put down the demonstration. They bayonetted and beat rock-throwing students, other protesters, and even onlookers. The uproar continued, and on May 21, the paratroopers began shooting demonstrators. Against this violent suppression, the students resisted with the arms which they captured from police stations. With the sanction of the U.S., the military troops of the front moved into the city and slaughtered over two thousand citizens. The commander of the U.S. military forces in Korea has commanded all the Korean military forces since 1950. Without his order, the Korean troops of the front could not move. The U.S. has supported the military regimes against the will of the Minjung because of its geopolitical interests in the peninsula.

26. For Teihard, critical points involve a change of state—"the curve doubles back, the surface contracts to a point, the solid disintegrates, the liquid boils, the germ cell divides, intuition suddenly bursts on the piled-up facts." The Phenomenon of Man, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1955), p. 78.
What Makes--and Sustains--an Effective Ministry

Janet F. Fishburn
Neill Q. Hamilton

Who is the ideal United Methodist minister? Everyone has an idea, or at least a set of impressions, of what the perfect pastor should be, do, and proclaim. Usually this takes the form of a favorite individual minister, or a composite of the best aspects of several individual ministers. But left to chance, will enough United Methodists encounter their ideal pastor—or will they look for him or her in other, and perhaps greener denominational pastures?

When the church identifies its future clergy, it identifies its own essence. As the ongoing work of the Commission for the Study of Ministry shows, reflection on the nature of ministry is a complex and time-consuming endeavor. One important aspect of the church-wide effort to understand the nature of ministry is the use of empirical research into the traits and characteristics of the effective minister. We began the research reported here after becoming aware that there is very little research available on this area of church life.

Background Research: Goals, Models, and Definitions

In the spring of 1984, the Northeastern Jurisdiction brought together representatives of cabinets, Boards of Ordained Ministry, theological faculties, and newly ordained pastors to discuss supervision for effective ministry. We were there as

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members of a delegation from the Theological School of Drew University. The Ocean City Consultation produced the following statement:

1) There is a readiness among Cabinets and Boards of Ordained Ministry and theological faculties to develop a stronger partnership in equipping women and men for ministry. We seek nothing less than the renewal of the church through the renewal of clergy. The need is great and the hunger for renewal is present throughout the church.

2) Supervision provides a most promising vehicle for this partnership. Supervision is integral to effectiveness in ministry: a) it is a way to develop leadership, both lay and ordained; b) it is a way to utilize the resources of others for life-long growth in ministry.

3) Though good supervision resets upon certain personal traits--empathy, the ability to speak the truth in love, effective modeling--it is a cultivated and not a natural skill. It is best learned in the interplay of theory and practice.

4) Quality supervision relates to all dimension of ministry: theological understanding, growth in faith, personal matura­tion, pastoral skills, congregational and connectional leadership.

Participants in the consultation were convinced of the potential for church renewal through careful supervision and evaluation of ministry. At the same time they recognized the lack of stated criteria of good ministry to assist the selection of candidates for ordination and the supervision of ordained church leaders. One consultation speaker observed that "we dissipate so many resources and commensurately impoverish our corporate work by going through all these tasks without a consistent agreement as to the nature of the ministry we profess and the methods which we believe are most effective for enabling it." After the consultation we decided to design a research project that would attempt to define effective ministry.

In our initial literature search we found that the Association of Theological Schools had sponsored a major ecumenical research project about the criteria for ministry from 1973-1979. The outcome of that research was published in a volume titled
Ministry in America. Out of these findings the researchers developed "Readiness For Ministry," an interview widely used by seminaries to assess personal characteristics and orientation to ministry of entering seminarians.

The Association of Theological Schools research revealed that United Methodists are distinguished from other denominations by their strong emphasis on an interpersonal leadership style. They look for consistency in the family life and personal style of the pastor. Given a choice, United Methodists want pastors to speak understandably about religious matters rather than with theological correctness. The researchers concluded that for United Methodists ecclesiology functions as theology.

The Ministry in America research indicated that there is a concern among United Methodists with a life-long education for "a learned ministry." This finding is consistent with significant legislation passed by the 1980 General Conference requiring all pastors to participate in continuing education events annually. Yet, the data reported in Ministry in America is descriptive, not normative. It is not concerned with characteristics that a United Methodist pastor might seek to develop to enhance his or her ministry. As such it describes the type of leadership needed to maintain the status quo of United Methodist churches; in this schema supervision of pastors might amount to little more than institutional maintenance.

As we looked for a way to begin research that would describe effective ministry we read about Selection Research Incorporated. Their work led to the development of an instrument used to determine the aptitude of Catholic candidates for priesthood. Like "Readiness for Ministry," the "Priest Perceiver Interview" (PPI) is intended to predict promise for growth in ministry in persons entering seminary. The PPI interview was designed to test for the presence of fourteen "life themes" that were established as typical of a group of twenty outstanding, experienced priests.

The interview, which is now being used by many Catholic seminaries, covers all fourteen themes and contains 175 questions. "The data collected indicates that a significant positive correlation exists between the results of the interview and
first-hand judgments made by persons in leadership positions within the given diocese and by persons who knew the priest well. The PPI helps identify most reliably the qualities always known to be present in the sort of priests that the church and the people of God have always wanted more of."

We decided to follow a procedure similar to that used in developing the PPI. At this point the Northern New Jersey Conference appointed a task force to work with us that included both newly appointed and experienced pastors, a district superintendent, David Follansbee of the Conference Board, and the Rev. Ms. Virginia Samuel, Dean of Students at the Theological School at Drew University.

**Effectiveness in Ministry: Project Design and Scope**

We developed a description of effective ministry intended to reflect proficiency in the four major aspects of ordained ministry stated in the *Book of Discipline*: equipping laity for their ministry, providing ministry to the congregation, providing ministry to the community, and administering property. The definition subsequently used in the research reads as follows:

> An effective pastor is one who is able to communicate the whole-ness of mission so that laity are able to participate in the mission of the church as co-nurturers and co-missioners on all levels of the church from local congregation to global ministry.

We further defined mission to include: 1) evangelism and outreach; 2) charity; and 3) social justice. A task force member worked with us in adapting the Catholic "life-themes" to describe the characteristics of United Methodist ministers we knew to be effective in leading laity into ministry.

During this time we also contacted Richard Yeager with the Board of Higher Education and Ministry. He had independently formulated a series of questions to evaluate the characteristics and qualities of effective ministry based on the 1980 Discipline. Yeager organized 55 characteristics under 12 themes: self-awareness, openness to persons, self-control, openness to growth, loyalty to the call to ministry and mission of the church, organizational skill and intentionality, personal
faith development, sensitivity to human needs, trust in community, integration of professional and personal life, administrative ability and ability to work with groups. His characteristics were similar to those being discussed by the task force. In addition, he had included three themes under "personal faith development" considered important by task force members: 
a) strives to grow in a personal understanding and relationship with God; 
b) reflects theologically on the church’s ministry, mission, and program; and c) communicates an awareness of the presence of God."

After extensive discussion with Yeager and the task force, we agreed upon the following fourteen characteristics. The list reflects a historic United Methodist stance and present policy statements. Members of the task force then added qualities they found in pastors who appeared to be effective at engaging laity in ministry. There is no rank order in the following list.

1) Denominational Loyalty—a pastor with a love for the United Methodist Church as a necessary institutional means of representing the body of Christ in the world so that he or she participates in the various levels of denominational structure without being unduly discouraged by its shortcomings.

2) Evangelical Witness—a pastor who is comfortable talking about the presence of God as a primary source of blessing in ordinary daily life.

3) Mission—a pastor with a conviction that the church as a community, and individuals in their calling, exist(s) as a mission for the world that includes witness, charity and justice.

4) Relational Capacity—pastor who communicates God’s love verbally and by personal example through building positive personal relationships with other people.

5) Enabler of Laity—a pastor who is able to help members of a congregation see that ministry belongs to the whole people of God and to equip laity for ministry as the focus of his or her ministry.

6) Self-affirming—a pastor who has a Spirit-given awareness of acceptance as a child of God that issues in a realistic but
gentle appraisal of self and others.
7) Community Builder—a pastor who is able to facilitate community life so that members of the congregation love each other, live and work together as the body of Christ.
8) Empathic—a pastor with an accepting awareness of what people are thinking and feeling as they interact with the pastor and others in the church.
9) Nurturing—a pastor who enjoys seeing spiritual growth in others, understands the process of spiritual formation and the resources it requires.
10) Theologically Articulate—a pastor who can articulate the vision of God’s intention for creation so that the good news of the gospel clearly relates to the world in which parishioners live.
11) Hopeful—a pastor whose expectation that efforts on the part of the church for witness, charity, and justice will be used by God to serve the present yet ever-coming Kingdom of God conveys faithful optimism about the future to the people of God in spite of evidence that the Kingdom of God is not yet completed.
12) Spiritual Vitality—a pastor who is excited by a strong vision of the wholeness God intends for persons, the church and the world so that his or her willingness to act to live out that vision in spite of ambiguity and contradiction encourages others to accept ambiguity as part of Christian faith and life.
13) Courageous—a pastor who has the courage to call attention to the difference between the world parishioners comfortably inhabit and the Kingdom of God in both private and public discourse.
14) Organizationally Skilled—a pastor who knows how to set objectives, lead and evaluate the extent to which participation in worship and small groups for study, mission, and church administration contributes positively to the spiritual formation and growth of members of the congregation.

The research project was designed to learn about the personal traits, practices, and leadership styles of pastors who are seen as embodying this description of ministry. We composed questionnaires to collect this information, limiting the sample
to a total of 36 pastors who had fifteen or more years experience in parish ministry. We interviewed each pastor, five or six members of the congregation, and the superintendent. One half of the pastors who participated were nominated by their superintendents as being the person in the district who most resembled our definition of effective ministry. The other eighteen pastors' names came from the same districts, but were chosen by a random sample method. The random sample was used to avoid relying solely on superintendents' interpretations of our definition. We also had a suspicion that some very fine pastors might be overlooked by superintendents because of the nature of implicit definitions of "effectiveness" now in use in supervision.

We used the information from the questionnaires to construct a profile of each pastor. The profiles contain detailed information about skills in eight tasks (functions) of ministry -- worship, preaching, teaching, administration, pastoral care, leadership in evangelism, leadership in mission, and acting as a spiritual guide. The profile indicates what the pastor does and does not do, the work of the laity, and how the pastor carries out functions with reference to personal style and relational capacity. We also compiled basic statistics about each congregation.

The questionnaire phase of the research would ultimately identify six pastors in three regions--the Southwest, the Midwest, and the Northeast--who best exemplified our definition of effective ministry. These six pastors participated in a taped in-depth interview developed to test for presence and strength in each of the fourteen characteristics. Interview questions were designed to elicit concrete, identifiable evidence of strength in a characteristic. For instance, one of the questions used to assess strength in "evangelical witness" was: can you tell me about a time when you helped a member of your congregation see God's presence in his or her life in a new way? Pastors who think about ministry in this way can quickly recall multiple examples of situations, ranging from pastoral care to teaching and preaching, when this has happened.

We wanted to know if the characteristics we had named and
defined were indeed present in pastors perceived as "effective." If so, are there identifiable clusters of characteristics that produce different styles of ministry? Are there clusters of characteristics related to particular sizes or types of congregations? Are some of the characteristics more essential to effective ministry than others? What is the minimum number necessary for effective ministry?

The interviews revealed that the fourteen characteristics hypothesized as relevant to United Methodist ministry were in fact present in the pastors interviewed. Each pastor interviewed had strength in seven or more characteristics. The strongest characteristic held in common was "enabler of laity." This was reassuring in that it demonstrated that the selection process could accurately identify pastors who make this their intentional goal. Almost as much strength was present in the categories named "empathic," "mission," and "self-affirming." The weakest characteristics were "theologically articulate" and "hopeful."

Statistical analysis revealed that the characteristics clustered into three groupings. An analysis of the clusters leads to the conclusion that they are related to three aspects of ministry—preaching and teaching, mission and administration.11 Another distinction also appeared in the statistical breakdown. Although each pastor is different, the profile of four pastors who serve town and suburban congregations are more like each other than they are like the two pastors who serve urban congregations.

Profiles in Effective Ministry

The two urban pastors have led their respective congregations into significant ministry to their local communities. One is the senior pastor of a 525-member congregation with a five-member staff. He has a reputation for being able to delegate authority to lay leaders and staff members. The interview confirmed that he excels at helping laity identify their gifts for ministry. He had the courage to undertake the establishment of a city-wide Peace Center in the church despite the resistance it elicited from some members of the congregation.
Through worship and preaching that lay leaders say is "unequalled," he leads and shapes the congregation's commitment to its own ministry.

A lay leader described this pastor's ministry as follows: "He encourages members of a diverse congregation to work together—not to become more like each other, but rather to live closer to the example of Jesus." This pastor has strength in only seven characteristics; but he, and members of his congregation, are aware of his gifts and his limits. They say that he has a reserved personality and is not comfortable in counseling situations. He chooses to work with staff members and lay leaders who have skills in areas in which he is less gifted, thus fostering effective ministry in the congregation. Predictably, he is a strongly self-affirming person. He demonstrates strength in organizational skills, and he is theologically articulate.

The second urban pastor is quite different from the first. He is now serving his last appointment before retirement, an 83-member, dying church saddled with a church building far larger than the congregation can use. He has been able to lead a small, discouraged congregation into community mission that includes opening a health clinic in the church and making the building available to a newly formed Hispanic congregation. The health clinic is an ecumenical ministry. It is "the Christian walk," the capacity for evangelical witness and the spiritual vitality of the pastor that has inspired members of his congregation to follow his example and participate in community ministry.

A board member reported that "through his leadership our church has grown in courage to assist and encourage a Spanish-speaking church service...yes, as a church we were near capitulation and in need of a Christian pastor who was concerned." This pastor is the only person interviewed who did not attend seminary. His interview revealed that his effectiveness as a pastor has never been recognized. He has repeatedly received new appointments with no salary increment, not even to match the rate of inflation. Yet his only criticism of the denomination, and his only disappointment with ministry as a calling, is the extent to which his family has suffered economic deprivation because of his work.
This man, with strength in ten characteristics, emerged from the random sample. Although his superintendent did note how well he has adapted to ministry in an urban church, the superintendent did not nominate him as a person who matched our description of effective ministry. Like his more recognized urban counterpart, he is aware of his own limits—especially in the area of theological education. He habitually locates educational events where he can learn whatever he needs to know at a particular time in his ministry.

The profiles of the other four pastors are similar to each other but differ in terms of leadership style. Three of these pastors are between 39 and 43 years old. Three of them currently serve in middle-class suburban or small town congregations. Active membership in the congregations varies from 125 to 283. All are single-staff, all white congregations. According to the data, a typical effective pastor in the suburbs is less likely than urban peers to be leading laity into substantial social justice ministry. Most of these congregations are involved with mission as charity, such as operating soup kitchens or food pantries, or providing shelter for destitute families. Most are involved with mission as evangelism and outreach, primarily through calling by the pastor. These pastors arrange some nurture and pastoral care by laity through shepherding programs. But none of the suburban congregations, including one blue-collar congregation, is even minimally involved in any social justice ministry.

A superintendent said of one of these pastors, "He is not without social consciousness but this church setting and mindset almost rules out social concerns and outreach." A composite effective pastor profile for this type of congregation suggests that they excel at community building and ministry within the congregation. All are good at building positive morale in the congregation although they do it in different ways. Two lead their congregations primarily through personal calling and conversation. The other two have established well-defined and accountable internal networks of communication among all organizations in the congregation. "His enthusiasm is like a shot in the arm." All are liked and appreciated by their congregations. Of each, laity say that he is the best pastor the
congregation has ever had.

Few persons called to lead the church will have all of the most desirable characteristics for effective ministry. From a composite profile of all six pastors we learned that each has strength in empathy or relational capacity, strength in community building or organizational skill, strength in evangelical witness or is theologically articulate. This suggests that there is an ideal cluster of characteristics necessary for effective pastoral leadership. According to the composite profile, effective pastors are fundamentally persons who are self-affirming, who can speak about the presence of God in life, and who can organize a congregation so that laity can be co-nurturers and co-missioners.

The Basic Profile Of An Effective Pastor

Based on information gathered from the questionnaires and interviews, we propose four generalizations about why some pastors are more effective than their peers. First, the six pastors interviewed in-depth showed more intentional focus on the laity compared to the other thirty pastors in the sample. In all cases their congregations are better informed, they help in planning processes, and they work with the pastor to achieve their common objectives. These pastors communicate more clearly, articulate a vision for the congregation, and lead in such a way that laity can participate in the stated mission of the congregation.

These pastors are not threatened by lay leadership, nor unduly conflicted by resistance to their leadership. They want to see laity grow as Christians through their participation in ministry. They are good at helping laity identify their gifts, at finding suitable preparation for the task and a place to exercise their gifts.

Second, there is evidence that when pastors have an intentional focus in their ministry, they are engaged in more of the eight tasks of ministry listed above. They participate in teaching and nurturing of church members more often than other pastors questioned. If special training is needed to form shepherding groups they find a training event to prepare them-
selves. For example, if adults need introductory Bible study they learn how to lead adult-level Bible study. A woman said of one such pastor, "Our adult study programs are stronger and more effective than I have ever seen in my forty years as a United Methodist Christian... this is directly attributable to (our pastor's) leadership in training adults to teach adults."

Third, pastors are more effective when there is a good fit between the characteristics and personal style of the pastor and the personality of the congregation. One of the six most effective pastors reported that his prior appointment had been "a disaster." This pastor, who thinks of himself as a "church builder" was appointed to a congregation he was unable to lead. His skills are better suited to new church development than to already established congregations. His present appointment makes better use of his skills in ministry.

Fourth, more effective pastors find help in areas of ministry that require additional skill or knowledge. In this particular sample, skills in teaching and nurture, leadership in evangelism and mission are limited. The pastor best equipped to engage in teaching and spiritual formation recently completed a Doctor of Ministry degree in which this was the subject of his final project. Three of the six pastors interviewed had recently completed Doctor of Ministry degrees in which they had worked at some of the skills that currently contribute to their effectiveness in ministry.

Personal Characteristics and Learned Skills

What kind of person makes the most effective pastor? Our research indicates that effective pastors are strongly committed persons—they have a capacity for evangelical witness, the intelligence to become theologically articulate and enough self-confidence to be able to lead a congregation. Furthermore the evidence indicates that if those personal characteristics are present to some degree, then ministry skills such as preaching, teaching, nurture, administration, pastoral care and leadership skills can be learned or improved at any point in a pastoral career.

On the other hand, the characteristics seemingly least sub-
ject to educational processes is "self-affirmation." While self-affirmation can change, grow and deepen through the means of grace and participation in ministry, there is a need for some basic level of awareness of "acceptance as a child of God that issues in a realistic but gentle appraisal of self and others." This definition of self-affirmation is not a psychological one, nor is self-fulfillment its goal. If it were, Martin Luther and John Wesley would not be considered for ordination! A self-affirming Christian is rather a person with spiritual sensitivity, someone for whom God's presence is very real and vital to life itself. This means that they have a capacity to grow spiritually, to become more sensitive to others and realistic about themselves.

The research indicates that self-affirmation is also the key to the other characteristics that can be regarded at least partially as personal traits—empathy and relational capacity. Put another way, "self-affirmation" remains constant whereas "relational capacity" and "empathy" are variables in the profiles of the pastors we interviewed. We defined self-affirming as a "Spirit-given awareness" because although this characteristic is somewhat mysterious, the relation of the self to God is fundamental to self-acceptance and good personal relationships. By using this language we are trying to connote the way in which the research indicates that self-awareness is related to sensitivity to others and to God.

When asked how they help individuals see God's presence in their lives the most strongly self-affirming pastors invariably said, "by letting them know that I love them." There are different ways to do this, but these pastors have a natural love of people that is tolerant with human inadequacy and compassionate with human suffering. The corollary of this seemingly spontaneous love for people is the ability to give of themselves without undue self-protectiveness.

A composite portrait of an "ideal" pastor drawn from our interviews suggests that the best pastors speak easily about the presence of God in ordinary life. This too is directly related to spiritual sensitivity to God, self, and others. For some, the capacity for theological reflection is developed. For others, the ability to conceptualize and articulate God's presence is related
to skill in planning and leading worship. Pastors known for good preaching know how to connect the good news of the gospel to the lives of persons in the congregation. Their capacity to establish good personal relationships allows them to know others deeply. Or, they identify with other people because they are intuitively empathic.

These pastors are people who feel compelled to preach the good news because God's love is real to them. The pastor who has a passion for God, the church, and God's world is enthusiastic about ministry. Several of the pastors interviewed told us that they love their work: "...I can hardly wait to get up every morning."

In recent years there has been an emphasis on the "helper personality" as an asset in ministry. Information gathered through interviews indicates that effective pastors have a kind of self-awareness that goes considerably beyond what is usually meant by "helper personality." While leadership styles vary, these pastors have the ability to reach out to other persons—not just to offer their help, but to ask for help. They are not afraid to risk a refusal when they recruit laity for ministry. They are not afraid to refuse to perform a service, such as a baptism or a wedding, that will compromise their own integrity in ministry.

Conclusion

Our research confirms that ministry as defined by United Methodist polity is possible in the church today. Pastors and congregations can work together to evoke and complement the gifts, knowledge and skills for ministry found in all Christians. Few persons called to lead the church through ordination to Word, Order, and Sacrament will have all of the more desirable characteristics for effective ministry, and that is why a good match between pastor and congregation is so crucial to the ministry of all Christians. After all, it is only in the relationship between the pastor and a given congregation that the pastor's gifts and graces for ministry are called out and tested.

Our hope for the use of this research is that the definition and characteristics of effective ministry will provide a starting
point for continuing discussions about the selection, supervision, and education of pastors. This kind of research tests and organizes salient features of good ministry already known intuitively by thoughtful laity and good pastors. But it also serves as a challenge to the church in a time when the kind of pastor we have described does not represent the norm among United Methodist pastors. In this sense, we concur with the statement of the Ocean City Consultation. "We seek nothing less than the renewal of the church through the renewal of the clergy. The need is great and the hunger for renewal is present throughout the church."

Notes

1. Theological Education and Pastoral Ministry: Major Learnings of the Ocean City Consultation.

2. "The Role of Supervision in Equipping Men and Women for Ministry," presented at the Ocean City Consultation.


5. These observations are from "United Methodist Ministry," by F. Thomas Trotter in Schuller et al., Ministry in America pp. 445-456.


9. The Conferences represented in the research were chosen so that pastors interviewed might include ethnic minority or women pastors. That was an unrealistic expectation given the relatively small size of the sample. We are now interviewing women pastors and pastors from the black tradition.

10. Some of the questions in the interview are being used by superintendents in the Northeastern Jurisdiction for supervision purposes. Copies of the full report include the questionnaires, the interview, and profiles of each pastor. "Effectiveness in Ministry Research Report" is available on request to Janet F. Fishburn, The Theological School, Drew University, Madison, N.J.

11. The statistical analysis of the data was done by Dr. Peter Fishburn of Bell Labs at Murray Hill. Mike Nickerson, sociological researcher for the Board of Higher Education and Ministry, concurs that the statistical analysis is valid. Both the questionnaire and the interview data could be subjected to other kinds of analyses.
Claiming the World of the Risen Jesus: Easter Lections from the Gospel of John

Gail R. O'Day

If we were to evaluate the texts in the lectionary according to frequency of appearance, then we might easily conclude that the church's three year lectionary cycle does not attach much importance to the Gospel of John. Each of the other three gospels has its own year--Matthew (A), Mark (B), Luke (C), yet there is no year from John. The liturgical cycle seems arranged to reinforce the view that John is different, that John does not quite "fit." When the preacher encounters texts from the synoptic gospels in each recurring cycle, she or he at least has the sense of reestablishing contact with a familiar voice, of having "been here before." The preaching task is ever new, but at least the territory seems clearly marked. John, however, always seems to remain a strange voice, from a strange land. Preachers thus tend to shy away from fully engaging John, finding support for their reticence in the lectionary's infrequent use of John.

If, however, we look at when the Gospel of John appears in the lectionary instead of how often, we arrive at a very different picture of the place and power of John in the lectionary cycles. This alternative way of looking at John in the lectionary reveals that when the church has something exceptionally important to say, it chooses to say it with John's voice.

In each of the three lectionary cycles, the celebrations of Christmas, Lent, and Easter are marked by texts from John. Every year the wonder of Christmas Day is communicated through the poetry of the Prologue to John (1:1-18). Lenten preparation and discipline, in keeping with a pattern established in the early church, are shaped by texts from John, particularly in Years A and B. Finally, the Easter season is always celebrated in the words of John. The voice of John's gospel has the

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privileged position of inviting the church into the new world called into being by the resurrection.

When the church's story is at its height, the church turns to John. When words are needed to ponder the birth of Jesus, to prepare us for his death, and to marvel in joy at his resurrection, the church turns to John. We may not meet John often in the liturgical cycles of the church, but when we do—take note! Something world-shattering is at hand. The preacher therefore should not shy away from John when it appears in the lectionary, nor take infrequency of appearance as a value judgment. Instead we should attend carefully to these texts that voice the great mysteries of our faith.

The gospel lessons for the seven Sundays in Easter, Year C, provide the preacher with a fresh opportunity to explore the depth and power of the Johannine voice and vision. The lessons for the first three Sundays (John 20:1-18, 20:19-31, 21:1-19) are stories of the appearances of the risen Jesus. The lessons for the last four Sundays (John 10:22-30, 13:31-35, 14:23-29, 17:20-26) are words of Jesus which reflects on the meaning of his death and resurrection.

Note carefully the sequence of these texts as we move through the Easter season: three stories followed by four texts of interpretation. This sequence reflects the dynamics of our faith: story precedes interpretation. The primary language of faith is that of storytelling, song, prayer, and praise, and so it is no accident that the first texts of Easter are the stories of our faith. After the stories have been told and found a home in the community, then we proceed to the language of reflection and interpretation. What do these stories mean? Into what new world and new life do they summon us?

The Johannine Easter lessons thus embody the dynamic interaction between story and interpretation that lies at the heart of proclamation. The stories of the risen Jesus from John 20 and 21 invite the reader to be present as the first disciples leave behind a world shaped by death and embrace a world determined by the risen Jesus. The lessons from Jesus' teachings invite the reader to rethink what it means to celebrate the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The rich and distinctive texts of the Fourth Gospel place before the reader a world in which new life is indeed possible. As we read through the seven Easter lessons, we are invited to claim the world of the risen Jesus as our own. As we proclaim the seven Easter lessons, we offer that world to others.

John 20:1-18

The lesson for Easter Sunday consists of an introduction (vv. 1-2) and two subsequent scenes at the empty tomb (vv. 3-10, 11-18).
When Mary arrives at Jesus’ tomb, the scene is not what she expected. The tomb has been tampered with, the stone rolled away (v. 1). Mary runs to share the news of what she has seen with Peter and the beloved disciple, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they laid him" (v. 2).

Mary can only see the events at the tomb through eyes governed by the world’s categories of logic and causality: If the tomb is empty, then someone must have taken the body. There can be no other logically plausible explanation. Nothing in Mary’s experience could have prepared her in advance for the real reason the tomb is empty. The world’s categories do not readily include “resurrection.” The world that Mary knows is called into question at this tomb before her very eyes, and she does not know what to make of it.

Peter and the beloved disciple run to the tomb in response to Mary’s words. Peter enters the tomb first and sees the linen burial cloths lying in the tomb (vv. 6-7). Mary was right—the body is gone. But what graverobber would unwrap the body from its burial cloths? Peter’s response to what he sees is not reported, however. His presence at the tomb simply provides corroboration of Mary’s report, nothing more.

By contrast, the response of the beloved disciple who enters the tomb next is reported: "and he saw and believed" (v. 8). The text is silent on what he believed, however. One could guess that perhaps he, too, merely believed what Mary had said, but that conclusion renders v. 8 trivial and absurd. The terse statement of belief in v. 8 must be taken as the first announcement of Easter faith in this gospel. When the beloved disciple saw the empty tomb and the burial cloths, he believed that death was not the victor and Jesus was not death’s victim. He believed that Jesus had overcome death and the world (cf. 16:33).

Why did the beloved disciple not share his faith, announce it to Mary, Peter, and the others? Why did he simply go back home (v. 10)? Verse 9 may provide the reason for his silence. The disciple did not speak because he did not yet know what words to speak. He did not yet know the scriptures about the resurrection, he had not yet seen the risen Lord. He did not know what form this conquest of death had taken, simply that it had indeed occurred. He did not know how and could not speak about it, but the burial cloths told him that Jesus had defeated death.

This story of the beloved disciple is the bare bones of Easter faith. As we read through the rest of this lesson and the other resurrection stories in John, we will see that Easter faith comes in many different shapes. All the subsequent stories, however, begin here: with the belief that Jesus has conquered death.
The focus returns to Mary in vv. 11-18. She does not go home with the other two, but remains at the tomb to grieve. She does not yet know that Jesus has conquered death. She knows only her pain, and so she weeps. Two angels appear to Mary and ask her why she is weeping (v. 13a). There is one important difference between the two announcements, however. In v. 2 Mary spoke in the first person plural; now she speaks in the first person singular. Mary is no mere reporter of news. Her own world is directly affected by what has taken place.

Someone else then appears to Mary, a man she takes to be the gardener. The reader, however, is told that the man is Jesus (vv. 14-15). The reader knows more than Mary does, and this increases the richness of the scene and the level of reader participation. We are drawn into the drama, eagerly anticipating the moment when Mary will realize the true identity of her conversation partner. We wait to discover when and how Mary will join us in recognizing Jesus.

The moment of recognition is simply yet powerfully narrated. Jesus calls Mary by name (v. 16), and in that moment she knows Jesus for who he is. Mary knows the voice of the good shepherd (10:1-6, 27), and the fear, distress, and grief with which she contemplated the empty tomb disappear. The empty tomb had been nothing more for Mary at first than a sign that the world had struck one more blow against Jesus. Now, with the risen Jesus standing before her, she knows instead that it is Jesus who has struck the blow. Jesus has triumphed and all Mary's limited categories of logical possibility and causality are redefined.

Mary turns to Jesus in joy and wants to hold him, but Jesus greets her with the first lesson of Easter faith, "Do not hold me" (v. 17). In the immediate context of this lesson, to hold Jesus would interfere with his ascension and with the creation of a new family of God (cf., "my Father and your Father"). To hold Jesus would limit his gifts. The word against holding moves beyond the immediate context of this lesson, however. One of the most serious challenges to a vibrant and vital faith is our propensity to try to hold Jesus. We want to grasp on to Jesus, to define him according to our categories and hold him to who we think he should be. The Jesus of the Fourth Gospel warns us against such tendencies. To hold Jesus is to lose him, not to keep him. Jesus moves beyond all our careful categories, and we must not restrict his freedom, because in this moving beyond, in redefining what is possible and impossible, Jesus offers us new life.

Mary does not hold Jesus, but instead announces the good news to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" (v. 18). Mary has traveled far from her initial announcement of v. 2 to her announcement of v. 18! Mary has moved from confusion to joyous proclamation. In telling this story,
John invites each one of us to travel with Mary. In preaching this Easter text, we can offer the same invitation to our congregations.

John 20:19-31

This lesson is usually identified as the story of "doubting Thomas." The preacher of this text should be wary of being too readily guided by such quick labels, however. Thomas is one of the central characters of this lesson, but he is not the primary focus. John 20:19-31 narrates the good news of Easter; the story of Thomas, all "doubting" labels to the contrary, is a piece of that good news.

The lesson is structured around two appearances of the risen Jesus to the gathered disciples: vv. 19-23 and vv. 26-29. The setting of both scenes is identical (the disciples are within, the doors are shut). Jesus' appearance and initial words are narrated in precisely the same manner in both (vv. 19 and 26). Each of the two appearances is followed by a postscript: the interlude with Thomas and the disciples (vv. 24-25) and the concluding commentary (vv. 30-31). We shall move through the lesson scene by scene.

In v. 19 the disciples have hidden themselves in fear. Their behavior should not surprise us; Jesus himself anticipated just this behavior by the disciples (e.g., 16:20, 22, 32). The disciples' world has been turned upside down. They had depended on Jesus, but now he has left them alone. They do not know which direction to turn or who to trust, and so they seek security behind closed doors.

Jesus enters into their hiding place, breaking open their sequestered lives. He speaks a word that can bring them comfort and release from their despair and fear, "Peace be to you" (v. 19). Jesus had promised his disciples the gift of his peace (14:25) and now he makes good on that promise. Jesus is faithful to his word. He has not abandoned his disciples, but comes to them in their present need. The disciples, however, do not immediately respond to Jesus' words. Only after Jesus shows them his hands and side and they see that it is Jesus, do they rejoice.

After the disciples recognize Jesus, he repeats his offer of peace. The second offer of peace is then followed by a commissioning and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit, like the gift of peace, is again the fulfillment of an earlier promise (cf. 16:7). The disciples are transformed from a community of sorrow and fear to one of joy (cf. 16:20). They are given new life in the Spirit and a commission to enact that new life. The forgiveness of sins embodies the newness of life that is now a reality because of the resurrection.
Thomas's entrance into the story in v. 24 marks the beginning of a new scene. The disciples' announcement to Thomas in v. 25 contains the same words Mary spoke to them in v. 18, "we have seen the Lord." These words are the heart of the Easter proclamation, yet even after Mary's announcement, the disciples still hid in fear (v. 19). The sight of the risen Jesus, not Mary's words, led the disciples to joyous faith. What, then, should we expect from Thomas?

As is well known, Thomas does not credit the disciples' words. In his response to the disciples, he makes explicit his conditions for faith: unless I see and touch, . . . I will not believe. Thomas's precondition demands no more than what the other disciples have already experienced. They saw Jesus' hand and side; Thomas wants to do the same. Thomas ups the ante somewhat in that he includes the desire to touch, but the basic issue is the same with both the disciples and Thomas—the relationship between empirical evidence and faith.

The response to Thomas comes eight days later, on the next Sabbath. As noted earlier, this second appearance of the risen Jesus is modeled precisely on the first. The narrative symmetry of the two accounts communicate that Thomas will now experience exactly what the other disciples experienced on the first Sabbath. The other disciples are therefore superfluous to the action, and Jesus devotes himself exclusively to Thomas. Jesus' words to Thomas form three commands (v. 28):

1. Put your finger here and see my hands
2. Put out your hand and place it in my side
3. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.

It is wrong to interpret Jesus' words to Thomas as a rebuke. Jesus does not rebuke Thomas when he comes and offers himself to him here; rather he meets Thomas's needs. Thomas thought he needed to see and touch to believe, and so Jesus comes to offer Thomas that chance. Note carefully that Jesus' first two commands to Thomas (to touch and see) are ignored by Thomas, but not the third. Thomas does indeed move from unbelief to belief. Thomas's initial insistence on touching is rendered irrelevant by Jesus' free offer of himself. Thomas's categories of empiricism and faith are redefined in the face of Jesus. Thomas responds to Jesus with the strongest christological confession anywhere in the Gospel, "My Lord and my God" (v. 28). Thomas's confession is evoked by the overwhelming graciousness of Jesus in Thomas's time of need.

Jesus' appearance to Thomas is thus an enactment of grace. In 20:14-18 Jesus came to Mary and gave her what she needed—a name and a voice. In this lesson Jesus comes to the disciples and Thomas and gives them what they need—a tangible sign and the fulfillment of a
promise. In v. 29 Jesus gives other future disciples what they (we) need—the possibility of faith without having been there. Jesus' words in v. 29 make clear that his empowering presence is available even to those who have not seen him. His words open the life of faith to all.

The conclusion in vv. 30-31 provides a capstone to these stories of faith and need. Regardless of how many other signs may have taken place "in the presence of the disciples," our faith does not depend on having been present at the time. The gospel text was written so that those of us who were not there may nonetheless have access to Jesus and his grace. "You," vv. 30-31 say to the reader, "may believe without seeing and touching. You may believe by reading this gospel that is written for you, and by allowing its world to become yours." This unending offer of Jesus' presence is indeed the good news of the Easter proclamation.

**John 21:1-19**

The relation of John 21 to the rest of the gospel is an important question in Fourth Gospel scholarship. The scholarly consensus is that 20:30-31 is the original conclusion to the gospel, and that ch. 21 is an appendix added by a later redactor, or editor. A minority view, however, maintains that chapter 21 is the gospel's intended conclusion (see Minear). It is not germane to our study to debate the question in detail here; a full discussion of the critical issue can be found in the standard commentaries on John (see bibliography).

The critical question of conclusion can, however, helpfully illumine our preaching of chapter 21 if asked from a slightly different angle. Instead of asking exclusively redactional questions about chapter 21, we may want to ask theological questions about the chapter's shape and function. For example, what is the significance of continuing to tell the gospel story after the seeming conclusion of 20:30-31? The continuation into chapter 21 suggests that there can be no definitive ending to this story. The last verse of the gospel, 21:25, suggests the same thing. Jesus' presence is unending. Where Jesus' disciples are, Jesus will be present. When there is need, Jesus will appear. If we read chapter 21 freshly, we may discover that the double ending of the gospel tells us more about the risen Jesus than about the Johannine redactor.

John 21:1-18 divides into two parts: vv. 2-14, Jesus' appearance to the disciples, and vv. 15-19, Jesus' subsequent conversation with Peter. Verse 1 functions as a formal introduction to both parts of the lesson. It makes explicit for the reader what is to follow; we know from the outset that this is an Easter story.
Peter's desire to go fishing sets the story in motion. The group of disciples with him decides to accompany him (v. 3ab). It was a common practice to fish at night, so that the fish would be fresh for the morning market. On this outing, however, the disciples labor all night in vain.

Why does Peter want to go fishing when they have all just seen the risen Jesus (20:19-29)? He and his companions should be enacting their Easter faith and mission, not fishing. Do they not understand what a difference the resurrection makes in their lives? The resurrection does make a difference, but such newness is rarely absorbed all at once. So many other voices tell the disciples that nothing has changed, and that it is impossible for death to be vanquished. The disciples are people like us, who have to get go of their old world in order to enter fully the new world of Easter, and that relinquishing requires profound trust. Even with a risen Lord, one can still labor long in the night with little to show for it.

As the sun rises, the disciples see a figure on the beach. The reader knows it is Jesus, but the disciples do not recognize him (v. 4, cf. 20:14, 20). The early morning light and distance from shore given narrative credibility to the lack of recognition. The figure addresses the disciples tenderly (v. 5). When Jesus learns that the disciples have caught nothing, he commands them to cast their nets differently. The disciples obey this stranger's words (v. 6).

Two aspects of this exchange between Jesus and his disciples deserve mention. First, Jesus gives the disciples an example of how they are to act (cf. 13:15). They are in need; he offers help. Jesus' act embodies faithful giving and service. Second, the disciples' response is equally important. They do not balk at the stranger's command, but respond to his tender concern and the confident assurance of his offer of help. The disciples demonstrate that they know how to receive in faith, and such receiving is a pivotal mark of discipleship. Discipleship is not only giving to those in need. It is also trustingly receiving what is given.

The stranger's command meets with remarkable success. The disciples catch an abundance of fish, and their situation is transformed from scarcity to plenty, from barrenness to fullness. The beloved disciples now recognizes Jesus, and announce to Peter, "It is the Lord" (v. 7a, cf. 20:18, 25). Peter's response to this announcement is classically Petrine. We have come to expect excessive and somewhat muddled enthusiasm from Peter, and this scene is no exception. The exegetical details of v. 7 are somewhat confused (e.g., why does Peter dress to jump into the water?), but the confusion of the narrative perfectly captures and conveys Peter's response. The same man who wanted Jesus to wash his whole body, not simply his feet (13:9), now makes sure he is
respectfully dressed and thrashes through the water toward Jesus! Peter's exuberance seems to know no bounds.

The more sedate reaction of the other disciples in v. 8 adds a note of realism to counterbalance Peter's buffoonish enthusiasm. The catch of fish, the result of their obedient labor, cannot be abandoned or discarded, and so the others row the short distance to shore. When the disciples reach the shore, they discover that Jesus has already prepared a breakfast of fish and bread for them. Jesus asks them to contribute some of their own fish to the food he has already supplied (vv. 9-10). The disciples are to give as well as receive. Peter returns to the boat to haul the fishnet ashore (v. 11). His exuberant plunge into the sea has not spared him from the demands of daily living.

The detailed count of fish in the net (one hundred and fifty-three) has intrigued interpreters for centuries. The number is often mined for potential symbolism, but we ought not to press too hard. We might suppose that the superabundance of fish is a gift beyond reckoning, but the number one hundred and fifty-three informs us that its abundance notwithstanding, this gift can be reckoned. Jesus' gifts are not known in vague generalities like "many" or "alot," but come to us with the concreteness of one hundred and fifty-three denumerable fish.

A comparison between the meal of vv. 12-13 and the feeding of the five thousand in 6:1-14 is unavoidable. The same food is distributed in the same manner (bread followed by fish, v. 13, cf. 6:11). At both meals Jesus is the host and also the source of the abundance of food that is available. Like that earlier meal (cf. also Luke 24:30-31), this is a meal of presence, and to that extent it can be linked with the sacrament of the Eucharist. Jesus' action in the meal offers the disciples a visible sign of his grace. The disciples' tongue-tied response to Jesus (v. 12) indicates that they sense that something more than food is on the table. They know the host of the meal is Jesus, so they cannot ask, Who are you?, yet conversational conventions escape them. The presence of the risen Lord renders their former understanding of hospitality obsolete. They have never been at a meal like this before or served by such a gracious host.

At the conclusion of the meal, Jesus pulls Peter aside. Verses 15-17 are rightly recognized as Peter's "rehabilitation." Jesus' three-fold questioning surely is designed to recall and offset the three-fold questioning that led to Peter's denial (18:15-18, 25-27). Jesus' persistent questioning and exhortation in these verses seek to remind Peter of the intrinsic relationship between his words and his actions, something he was unable to comprehend at the time of Jesus' death. After Easter, however, all things are now possible.
Although frequent attempts are made to attach significance to the variation in Greek words for "love" in these verses (agapao, vv. 15a, 16a; phileo, vv. 15b, 16b, 17), such attempts are vain. The variation in verb use is a matter of style (as are the different Greek words for "feed," "tend," and "sheep" in these verses), not a theological distinction. To base a sermon on the different verbs for love is hazardous, because it ignores the Fourth Gospel's propensity for synonyms and verbal repetition.

The lesson concludes with Jesus' prediction of Peter's martyrdom (vv. 18-19). These verses bring to completion the story of Peter in the Fourth Gospel. Peter's denial and desertion in chapters 18 and 19 showed him to be one enslaved to the fear of death. His ardent confession of love for Jesus and his vocation, even to martyrdom, show him to be one now transformed to new life. He is free to love because he is no longer captive to his fears.

The Easter stories of chapter 21, then, continue the themes of the resurrection stories in chapter 20. The risen Jesus comes to minister to human need and to transform lives from sorrow to joy. In 21:2-14 Jesus recognizes the disciples' need and transforms their situation from scarcity to abundance. In 21:15-19 Peter's need is for mercy and forgiveness, and that need is met with Jesus' reassuring word of commissioning. These stories embody Jesus's promise of peace, his offer of grace, and his summons to mission.

The lessons for the remainder of the Easter season differ in two significant ways from the lessons we have studied thus far. First, these lessons are from the narrative of Jesus' life and ministry in John, not from the resurrection narrative. As such they are not self-evidently Easter texts. When read within the liturgical context of the Easter season, however, they provide powerful commentary on the resurrection and our lives as followers of the risen Jesus.

Second, these lessons are units of discourse, not stories. Discursive texts are by and large more difficult to preach than narrative texts, and the sheer quantity of discourse in the gospel lessons for the last four weeks of Easter could rapidly discourage any preacher. One need not give into that discouragement, however, but may instead attend to the possibilities in preaching discursive material. These texts invite the preacher to resay the words of the discourse in a fresh context and thus make possible an intersection between the world of the gospel and the world of the congregation. These lessons invite the preacher to recreate in the sermon the narrative and theological worlds in which the discourses were spoken, so that the congregation is enabled to hear Jesus' words for themselves.
John 10:22-30

This lesson explicitly addresses the question of Jesus' identity. This question is as important for the post-Easter community as it was for those who encountered Jesus during his ministry.

The physical and temporal setting of the lesson is significant for its interpretation: Jesus is in the temple in Jerusalem on a Jewish holiday. This lesson brings to a close a series of conversations and controversies between Jesus and his opponents that began in chapter 7, all of which have taken place in Jerusalem. Jesus' person, words, and actions have been a challenge to the way the religious establishment construes power, authority, and truth. The tension between Jesus and establishment religion continues in this lesson.

Jesus' opponents initiate the conversation here. They encircle him in the temple and ask him directly about his identity. Jesus' identity has been a theme throughout the Gospel of John, but no one has yet put the question to Jesus. The time for that directness has finally arrived.

The demand to know if Jesus is the Christ is reminiscent of the questions asked of Jesus at his trial in the synoptic gospels (Matthew 26:63, Mark 14:61, Luke 22:57), and thus suggests testing and trial. The examiners' request is not simple curiosity or an authentic quest for knowledge. They need to know once and for all just who this man is in order to accurately assess his threat. If he does indeed claim to be the Messiah, God's anointed one, then serious action will be required.

The remainder of the lesson is Jesus' response to his examiners' inquiry. Jesus makes three rhetorical moves in his response. In the first move (vv. 25-26) Jesus turns the examiners' question back on themselves. He contrasts what he has already revealed about himself with his examiners' response to that revelation. The verbs in these verses are instructive. Jesus has spoken and done works, but twice we hear that the examiners "do not believe." Jesus has already said and done things that bear witness to his identity (cf. 5:30-47) but his examiners have not accepted that witness. This section concludes with a straightforward, descriptive phrase, "You are not of my sheep." His examiners do not stand with Jesus. By turning their question back on them, Jesus reveals his examiners' identity as non-believers.

Jesus develops the sheep imagery in the second move of his response (vv. 27-28). These verses draw on images from 10:1-18 and thus tie all of chapter 10 together. The verbs are again instructive. Whereas the verbs in vv. 25-26 pointed to an abortive, unfruitful relationship between Jesus and his examiners, the verbs in vv. 27-28 indicate a productive and fruitful relationship between Jesus and his sheep. The verbs of vv. 27-28 are fully interactive and relational: they hear me, I
know them, they follow me, I give them, I hold them. To be one of Jesus’ sheep is to know who Jesus is and to live safely and cared for in that knowledge. Jesus’ identity shapes the identity of his believers and followers.

God enters the discourse in Jesus’ third move (vv. 29-30). God has given Jesus the sheep, and God (in God’s greatness) is the guarantor of the sheep’s safety and security. These verses are often read as a kind of exclusionary predestination. That is, God has ordained Jesus’ opponents not to be sheep and therefore they cannot know who he is. That knowledge is closed to them. Such a reading, however, distorts the Johannine perspective. God is indeed the primary initiator of all relationships with God. Jesus comes from God and those who come to Jesus come to him through God’s grace. The offer of eternal life begins and rests with God. No one is excluded from God’s gift of grace, but one can exclude oneself by the nature of one’s response to God’s gift. Jesus’ examiners are not of his sheep because they are not open to hearing the shepherd’s voice. Instead they demand explanations and answers on their own terms. They will not yield, but want to control the relationship with Jesus and God. The fourth Gospel moves in a delicate balance between God’s sovereign, initiating grace and human willingness to respond. Both are crucial to the full life of faith.

Verse 28 says that no one will snatch the sheep from Jesus’ hand. Verse 29 says precisely the same thing about God. The juxtaposition of these two verses shows that the Father and the Son work as one in tending the flock. Jesus cares for the flock with the fullness of God’s love. Verse 30 moves away from the figurative language about shepherding and states this unity explicitly: Jesus and the Father are one. Jesus’ examiners began the conversation by demanding that Jesus speak plainly (v. 24), and in v. 30 he speaks more plainly than they ever could have anticipated. To ask if Jesus is the Messiah only provides a limited vision of Jesus’ identity. The “plain” answer is that Jesus works as one with God.

The use of 10:22-30 as an Easter lesson reminds us that the resurrection does not provide a facile answer to the question, “Who is Jesus?” Rather, the resurrection reopens all questions of Jesus’ identity with new urgency and poignancy. The Easter life of the church rests in hearing the shepherd’s voice and in recognizing the unified work of God and Jesus.

The three remaining Easter lessons come from the section of the Fourth Gospel known as the Farewell Discourse. This section (13:31-17:26) consists of Jesus’ words to his disciples on the eve of his Passion. Jesus’ words center around two general themes: the significance of his impending death and the community’s life in Jesus’ absence. The
Farewell Discourse is an astonishing moment of theological and pastoral creativity in which Jesus anticipates and addresses his disciples' needs in the times to come without him. Jesus' words therefore have particular meaning for contemporary Christians who must also trust Jesus' presence even in his absence.

**John 13:31-35**

This lesson is the opening section of the Farewell Discourse. It presents in miniature the central themes of the discourse as a whole, and thus functions like an overture to the larger work that is to follow.

The lesson begins with words about Jesus' glorification (vv. 31-32). "Glorification" is the Fourth Gospel's way of speaking of Jesus' passion (e.g., 7:39, 12:16). The entire gospel narrative has been building to this moment of glorification (cf. 13:1-2). To speak of Jesus' death as his glorification means that in his death the fullness of his sovereignty and presence is revealed (cf. 1:14). Like all of Jesus' acts during his ministry, however, even his death points toward God and is a reciprocal action with God. In Jesus' death God is also glorified. What is revealed of Jesus also reveals God's sovereignty and presence. Jesus' death is a moment fully revelatory of both Jesus and God. Jesus' death is a moment of glory, because we see that what the world counts as defeat is really victory with God.

The verb tenses in vv. 31-32 must be carefully noted. The first three references to the glorification of Jesus and God are in the past tense, as if Jesus' death has already occurred. The final two references are in the future tense, however, as if Jesus' death is still to come. The fluidity with which the Johannine Jesus moves from present (note the opening "now") to past to future tense is a hallmark of the Farewell Discourse. By shifting temporal categories, the Fourth Evangelist is able to use the discourse to address the needs of Jesus' immediate audience and the audience of disciples after Jesus' time, even including our own times and crises. It is simultaneously a pre-resurrection and post-resurrection discourse.

In v. 33 Jesus prepares his disciples for the confusion and sense of abandonment they will feel when he leaves them. He addresses them with a term of endearment ("little children," cf. 1 John 2:1, 12, 18; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), his very words communicating his loving care for them. The message that follows this endearing address is stern, however. Those closest to Jesus will share with his opponents an inability to find Jesus after he has left or to go where he has gone. These must have been exceedingly painful words for the disciples to hear. Their love for Jesus,
so it probably seemed to them, should have made it possible for them to go with him and thus be spared the pain of separation. Jesus is clear, however, that his departure cannot be shared by them.

In v. 34-35 Jesus presents to the disciples a vision of their life that can counterbalance their sense of loss, confusion, and despair. Even if their love for Jesus cannot keep them with him or keep him from going away, his love for them can keep them all together. In that way, Jesus will always be present. The vision of their life is contained in the "new commandment" that they love one another. The newness of the commandment is not in its subject, for the command to love others is at the heart of the Hebrew covenant. The newness of the commandment is its source in Jesus’ love for them and its function as a way of making Jesus present (Kysar, 217).

The Fourth Gospel’s love commandment (see also 15:12) is often criticized as being “softer” than the commandment to love one’s enemies, and thus somehow less challenging and ethically valuable to the church. This commandment is not an easy commandment, however, simply because the focus stays within the community of disciples. Even the most cursory glance around any given local congregation or the broader ecumenical picture reveals the serious challenge of this commandment. Until the church is able to love itself, each of its parts loving every other part, we will not be the community Jesus envisions with this commandment. We cannot take steps to love the world if we do not even know how to love one another. If each member of the Christian community loved every other member with Christ’s love, the church would have limitless strength and energy for its mission. This commandment is an essential beginning point of the church’s life.

**John 14:23-29**

The early community of disciples had to learn to live in the assurance of Jesus’ presence even after he was absent from them. They had to learn to trust that even though Jesus was not with them, he had not left them alone. Contemporary Christians live in the same tension between presence and absence. This Easter lesson is an effort to help the community live and indeed thrive in Jesus’ absence.

Verses 23-24 stress the importance of heeding Jesus’ words as a way of life. As in 13:31-35, love and obedience are linked together through attending to the commandment. To keep Jesus’ word is an act of love, and that act of love evokes increasing acts of love by Jesus and God. Those who act obediently in love will never be alone, because God and Jesus will come and make their home with them. The image of
homemaking recalls the prologue of the Gospel, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14). From the beginning to the end of the Fourth Gospel, God's love is manifested in the end of homelessness and the creation of a new home (cf. also 14:2-3). The community does not need to fear abandonment because when they act in love, they dwell secure in the faithful presence of God and Jesus.

Jesus ministers to the community's fear of abandonment in another way in vv. 25-26. He promises them the gift of the Comforter (the Paraclete) (see also 14:15-17, 16:7-11, 16:12-15). The Paraclete (used synonymously with Holy Spirit in v. 25) will come from God to continue Jesus' teaching. The Holy Spirit is the everpresent guarantor of Jesus' presence after Jesus' departure. The gift of the Spirit that follows Jesus' departure is a sign that God is now available to the community in a new way.

These verses describe two functions of the Paraclete. First, the Paraclete is to teach the community. The things that need to be taught after Jesus leaves will be administered by the Spirit (cf. 16:12-13). Jesus' teaching will continue as a living word that can meet fresh situations because of the presence of the Paraclete. The second function is closely related to the first. The Paraclete will "bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (v. 26). Remembrance is the act whereby the past is brought forward to the present and opened to the future. The Spirit opens the eyes and ears of the community. With open eyes and ears, the Spirit blessed community is then able to remember and recognize the power of God in Jesus still at work in its midst.

At the conclusion of the lesson (vv. 27-29), Jesus gives the community a gift of his own to assuage their fears and anxieties. He gives them his peace. Peace (shalom) is the end of chaos and disorder and the possibility of fullness of life. This gift is unlike any others the community has known, because it comes from Jesus. As Jesus' resurrection appearances indicate (20:19, 26), the fullness of Jesus' peace comes only after his death and resurrection, hence its incomparability as a gift.

Jesus' words that follow the offer of his peace are themselves an enactment of peace. He speaks words of good cheer and encouragement reminiscent of the 'Fear not' words spoken to exiles by II Isaiah (v. 27; cf. Isaiah 41:8-13, 43:1-5). Jesus knows that the events that are soon to come will change his disciples' world forever, and he wants to prepare them as much as possible for that impending change (v. 29). Jesus knows that his disciples do not yet understand (e.g., they misperceive joy as sorrow, v. 28), so he provides them with words and a vision of the world to which they can turn when the crisis comes. On the eve of his own Passion, Jesus cares about his disciples' fears and pain and attends to them.
These verses show forth Jesus' love for his followers. Jesus offers his peace and his ongoing presence (through the Spirit) to sustain his followers in the frightening places of life that are sure to come. The key to preaching this lesson is to enable the congregation to hear Jesus' offer of peace and words of love as spoken for us, not simply for the disciples in the story. We all have troubled hearts (v. 27), but this lesson calls us to remember that none of us is alone. As a member of this community, each one of us lives in Jesus' peace, surrounded by God, Jesus, and the Spirit. To remember the words of this text (cf. v. 25) and to bring them to remembrance through our preaching is to remember that our lives are held secure in divine embrace. This is good news for the Easter season.

John 17:20-26

The Farewell Discourse concludes in John 17, when Jesus turns from conversation with his disciples and speaks to God in prayer. The prayer has three parts: Jesus prays for himself (vv. 1-5), his present disciples (vv. 6-19), and future disciples (vv. 20-26). The lesson for the last Sunday in Easter is the concluding section of the prayer. These are Jesus' words spoken about disciples who are yet to come, disciples who will believe in him through the word of others (v. 25). We are those very disciples, and this lesson, then, is Jesus' prayer for us.

Jesus' words in this prayer cluster around several motifs.  
1. The predominant image of this lesson is that of oneness (vv. 21-23). Jesus' prayer that all those who believe in him should be one is not a wish that we should, willy nilly, be one with another. That is, oneness or unity is not something we choose for ourselves and impose on one another as if at our own volition. Rather, Jesus prays for a oneness that is possible only because of the prior oneness of God and Jesus (vv. 21-23). As God and Jesus have acted and loved together, so is the future community to act and love together. The oneness of those who believe in Jesus derives from the initiating character of God and Jesus. The unity of believers, then, is not simply another agenda for the church, but is inherent in the church's relationship to God and Christ.

2. The oneness envisioned in the prayer, moreover, is not an inward-facing act. The oneness is an act of witness to the world (vv. 22-23). The unity of believers shows the world that God sent Jesus and that God loves the community just as God loves Jesus. Verses 20-23 are a series of purpose clauses (indicated by the words "that" or "so that"). The syntax of the verses thus reflects the theological reality of which they speak:
the oneness of the community has a purpose. That purpose is to make manifest God and Jesus.

3. Interwoven with the motif of oneness is the theme of love. This prayer speaks of God's love for Jesus (vv. 23, 24), and the sharing of God's love for Jesus with the community (vv. 23, 26). The interrelationship of God, Jesus, and the community is portrayed in intensely intimate language. The language communicates that the relationship is not about power or rights. It is instead an embodiment of love.

4. Verse 26 concludes the prayer with a reaffirmation that this prayer is for and about the future. What Jesus has done, make God's name known for the sake of love, Jesus will continue to do. Jesus' words in this prayer intentionally and caringly look to the future. This prayer makes clear that believers in the future, like those present for Jesus' ministry, will also know God's name and be held in the intimacy of God's love.

As important as the content of this lesson is, however, the form of the lesson is even more important for our preaching. It is critical that we honor the fact that this lesson is Jesus' prayer. Our task, therefore, is not simply to exposit or illustrate the text, but instead to provide a fresh hearing for this prayer among the very people about whom it speaks. The good news of this lesson is that Jesus prayed this prayer for us, and our preaching task is to enable the congregation to enter into this prayer and experience the reality of Jesus' hopes for themselves.

John 17:20-26 is an appropriate text with which to end the Easter season, because it brings us face to face with Jesus' deepest and dearest yearning for us. In this prayer, Jesus entrusted his hopes for us to God. For our sake he reminds God of God's love for us and God's relationship with us. For the sake of our future, he holds God to who God is and what God has promised. Jesus places our lives in God's care. As we listen to this prayer anew, we remember and experience the love that makes it possible for us to begin new lives as children of the resurrection.

Selected Bibliography

Book Reviews


It is unusual to find that a books epilogue is its best part, but such is the case with Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism. Stanley Hauerwas succinctly pleads for Christian pacifism in a violent and unchristian world. He skewers the United Methodist Bishops for wanting to be "a little bit pacifist"--a charge which might be leveled against many of us. "But," he argues, "it is no easier to be a little bit pacifist than it is to be a little bit pregnant" (p. 156). The Bishops' desire to be halfway pacifist, he speculates, comes from their ambivalence toward liberation movements, which they wish to put on a different moral plane from standing armies used for nationalistic expansion. Hauerwas quickly points out, however, that such movements, "often look very much like standing armies" (p. 158). Hauerwas also offers a powerful theological critique of the notion that the danger of nuclear war can be the basis for a just peace.

The late Paul Ramsey meant to use just-war principles to demonstrate the inadequacy of the Bishops' pastoral letter. There are some penetrating criticisms here, but this is hardly his finest work. Ramsey did read In Defense of Creation more closely than most of us did. He points out that the Bishops are wrong in asserting that pacifism and just-war theory share a rejection of violence:

Pacifism's presumption is in favor of peace (or else peace and justice are believed never to be in conflict). Just war's presumption favors the defense of an ordered justice (which sometimes may not consist of peace) (p. 54).

Ramsey likewise noticed misinterpretation of the Bible in the pastoral letter, which claims, for example, that Revelation speaks of "all nations and peoples" coming together peaceably. Ramsey looked it up, finding instead, "a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne..."

The analysis here, though, is seriously marred. Both the introduction and his final comments wander far afield, fulminating against abortion and homosexuality with little reference to the topic at hand. And while
Ramsey may have been able to describe the principles of just-war theory with great clarity, his knowledge of the arms race is quite imprecise. This book, for example, condemns our strategic planners for aiming our nuclear weapons primarily at population centers (p. 59); they have not done so for many years. He discusses the morality of deterrence as if our strategy was one of nuclear retaliation--when, in fact, our military has always contemplated our first use of nuclear weapons. A few pages later one finds his defense of this "first-use option"--in which Ramsey fails to acknowledge how this option requires the capacity for a preemp­tive first-strike. Ramsey simply dismisses first-strike capacity as so clearly contrary to just-war norms that "no comment is needed on them" (pp. 59-60). Instead, he advocates "counterforce" targeting of military forces (rather than aiming our nuclear weapons at population centers) as being consistent with the principle of proportional response to ag­gression, ignoring the facts that (a) we already have a counterforce strategy, (b) this strategy presumes first-use, not retaliation for a Soviet nuclear attack, and (c) no matter where we aim nuclear weapons, millions of civilians would die.

In this respect, Speak Out shares the fundamental flaw of the United Methodist and the Roman Catholic pastoral letters and most denomina­tional resolutions on the arms race: they debate the morality of Mutually Assured Destruction when this has never truly been our goal; they argue whether or not nuclear retaliation could be moral without seeming to notice that we possess not a retaliatory force but one poised for a first strike; they argue over whether or not the Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars") might defend us from a Soviet attack without realizing that its only purpose could be to prevent a Soviet response to our preemptive strike.

No one has asked why the US has felt compelled to build weapons such as the M-X, which would be used only in a first-strike, or why the Soviets have felt compelled to establish huge conventional forces in Central Europe. And the policies of the superpowers are both less irrational and more immoral than anyone has yet acknowledged. Ramsey seems to have grasped momentarily that we rely on the threat of a first strike with nuclear weapons to defend Europe from conventional attack but then he allows this insight to slip through his fingers. The use of just-war principles suggests to both Ramsey and the Roman Catholic bishops, for example, that it is moral to aim our nuclear weapons at armed forces but not at cities without realizing how dangerous the world is if the Soviets fear that in a crisis we are prepared to launch a preemptive strike which would destroy their ability to retaliate.
Ramsey's fifth chapter ("Speaking on Particulars") suggests avenues for strengthening our conventional defenses and moving away from first use of nuclear weapons, but he (like the Roman Catholic and United Methodist bishops) never advocated the logical response to America's first-strike capability and the Soviet's conventional superiority in Europe: an arms control agreement which would trade away our first-strike weapons for reductions in the USSR's conventional forces. Despite their flaws, the pastoral letters contributed to debate in the church about the nuclear arms race. This book mostly confuses the issues.

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This is a rather short book with a simple thesis, and yet its implications are enormous and the theological problems it addresses complex. Juel's daunting but fascinating task is to reconstruct the developmental logic within the earliest Christian reflection on Jesus. To put it in more theological terms, Juel tackles the perennial puzzle of the origins of Christology. What provided the point of departure for Christian tradition about Jesus? And how and why did initial ruminations on Jesus develop into more complex understandings of him within a few short decades of his death?

The answers Juel provides to these crucial questions at first seem mundane, even trite: The focal point of early Christian reflection was Jesus as crucified and risen Messiah; the mode and impetus of this and subsequent reflections was interpretation of Israel's Scriptures. But Juel's argument becomes increasingly engaging and compelling as he defines his terms and contrasts his approach with others. First, on the basis of overwhelming evidence from Jewish sources of the time, he correctly insists that the term Messiah be narrowly defined as referring to a king, the expected heir of the line of David. The Messiah could indeed play a variety of roles, but all of these were appropriate to kingship. Most modern reconstructions tend to blur the distinction between Messiah and other types of redeemer figures such as Son of Man or eschatological-prophet-like Moses.
Second, the ascription to Jesus of the title Messiah is a historical fact, not simply a product of the "history of ideas" or of reconstructions of Jesus' "self-consciousness." Building on the work of Nils Dahl, Juel locates the earliest identification of Jesus as Messiah not in his exaltation or Second Coming or psyche, but rather in the historical bedrock of the passion, in his crucifixion as King of the Jews. The confession of Jesus as Messiah-King is based on an actual event and stands at the very beginning of Christian thought rather than, as most would have it, at a later stage of development.

Third, Juel stringently adheres to the principle that the exegetical reflection of the early Christians was both constrained and enabled by contemporary Jewish interpretive traditions. The task facing those who believed in Jesus' messiahship, of course, was to forge a link between the common conception of messiahship and the fact that Jesus suffered and died in a scandalous manner. Juel correctly rejects arguments to the effect that Christians simply adopted an already existing Jewish tradition of a suffering Messiah. Rather, they began with the belief that the Messiah had suffered and then they utilized conventional Jewish interpretive strategies to realize and undergird this novel understanding of the Messiah within the Scriptures. Although the task was creative and ultimately led to a variety of new meanings, it followed definite interpretive guidelines already in place. "Christians did not search the whole of the Scriptures for passages that struck them as parallels to Jesus' career or as possible foreshadowings. There was more logic and order in their movement through the Bible!" Much of Juel's book is devoted to reconstructing the traditional exegetical strategies of pre-Christian Judaism and demonstrating how they guided the early Christians' approach to Scriptures. His discussions of various Jewish interpretive techniques, especially those of midrash, are highly insightful and relevant.

Having chosen his starting point and carefully developed his method, Juel sets about putting together the overall puzzle. We can only sketch his reconstruction here. Two messianic texts provided the keys to the Scriptures for the early Christians. 2 Samuel 7:10-14, Nathan's oracle concerning the everlasting covenant between God and David, was especially fruitful in that it applied the terms "son" and "seed" to the coming heir. In typical midrashic style, these words make possible links to other (traditionally non-messianic) passages like Genesis 22 (Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac) and various Psalms in which the same words appeared but which also broached the themes of death, suffering and rejection. Psalm 89, the second seminal passage identified by Juel, also concerns the unconditional David covenant, and contains terms such as "servant" and "seed," as well as the concepts of suffering,
rejection, and vindication that led to other texts like Psalms 22, 31, 69 and the servant songs of Isaiah. Contrary to several recent studies, Juel asserts that Daniel 7 and the Son of Man terminology represent a secondary stage of development based on prior reflection on the imagery of Psalm 110. Once these foundational links were established, they became part of the tradition and provided bases for further reflection and scriptural connections.

Juel presents a clearly written and carefully argued case for his thesis that the crucified Messiah stands at the beginning of Christian thought and faith. Perhaps the greatest weaknesses in his argument have to do with the facts that there are few traces of 2 Samuel 7:10-14 in the NT, and that in the passion narrative Psalm 89 does not appear in either direct quotation or allusion. This does not disqualify these passages from being considered the seminal Christian texts, but it does leave some room for doubt.

Although *Messianic Exegesis* would be profitable reading for anyone involved in the field of Christian theology or ministry, its significance will be most appreciated by those who are familiar with recent work in Christology. It is hard to imagine courses on Christology being taught without reference to it, for it provides a distinctive and highly attractive alternative to works that locate the "critical moment" in Jesus' teaching or healing ministry, self-consciousness, resurrection, or Second Coming. If Juel is right, and if we are to honor the tradition, the moment of disclosure must be the cross, and our reflections on Jesus must move forward and backward from that point. For the earliest believers, for Paul, and for modern Christians, the gospel of Christ begins with the scandal of the cross, a historical event through which, paradoxically, God's grace is made manifest.

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This most intriguing book by Roberta Bondi, associate professor of Church History at the Candler School of Theology, is a contribution toward our appreciation of a frequently misunderstood aspect of the early church: monasticism and the ascetic movement. Using a thematic approach, Bondi paints a colorful, detailed, and at times compelling picture of the early brothers and sisters who, in Thomas Merton's
words, "rejected the false, formal self, fabricated under social compulsion 'in the world'" to pursue their true selves in Christ. While the book claims only to be "conversations" with the early church, the dialogue, from both sides, is rich and informed, and we are rewarded with a deeper empathy for the variety of Christian experience. The only lack is a placing of these movements, or rather these individual expressions of what only occasionally formed into a movement, into a larger social, political and theological context.

Bondi opens the book by suggesting that it has always been a problematic issue in the Church for Christians to be at one time both good citizens and good Christians. Especially today are we likely to see Christianity almost identified with social and political values not clearly stemming from its own radical logic of love. To address this question--and it is finally a question of human freedom from a Christian perspective--is to raise the possibility that the radical way of love and humility practiced by the subjects of this book and documented there, might disarm, literally and figuratively, a world gripped by the values that control it. So, Bondi proposes a dialogue with the past, particularly with men and women from the fourth to the sixth centuries, mostly from Egypt, some from Palestine and Syria; and, most distinctively, none from Rome, Africa or the "West." The conversation is not designed to produce dogmatic answers, but only provoke our thoughts about their "insights into Christian life."

This approach does, quite agreeably, give Bondi a larger brush with which to paint, but the larger strokes tend to obscure some of the internal controversies and external scandals of those who pursued this way of faith and devotion. For example, Bondi does acknowledge that ascetic discipline could become an end in itself, rather than the means to a larger love of God and neighbor. To note this is to note the classic grounds for rejecting monasticism. And Bondi notes that the brothers and sisters frequently corrected one another on this very point. Yet, some acknowledgement of the historical and ecclesiastical inclination to regulate the "orders" and structure the rules of discipline might have helped set these issues in a larger context.

Bondi takes up several themes and explores current concerns and problems with those who followed the ascetic way of life. These topics are love, humility, the passions, prayer, and God. Each chapter poses some of the historic theological and ethical questions of the tradition, and seeks, in a conversational setting, the suggestions, advice, wisdom of the early church. Those who have read previously in the "Sayings of the Fathers" will cover familiar territory here, although placed in a new framework of inquiry. Those for whom these writers are new--and that is likely all trained in the classic theological disciplines--they will be
rewarded by the subtlety and ingenuity of their thinking and exposition, even shocked by the provocative, unexpected observations they make on human life. Perhaps all religious traditions have a form of discourse involving the recording of the sayings of the great-souled, but in these writings we have the Mumon-kan of Christianity, that is, the pithy Zen koan in Christian garb, although the content of some of the conversations between masters and pupils is indistinguishable from their Buddhist counterparts.

One of the most provocative images in the books comes from Dorotheos of Gaza, a sixth century monk. Dorotheos spoke frequently of the problem of judgmentalism and self-righteousness, as Bondi points out, and clearly emphasized that "it is impossible to love God and have contempt for the sin and weakness of other people at the same time." Then Bondi quotes this remarkable passage:

Suppose we were to take a compass and insert the point and draw the outline of a circle. The center point is the same distance from any point in the circumference. . . . Let us suppose that the circle is the world and that God himself is the center: the straight lines drawn from the circumference to the center are the lives of human beings. . . . Let us assume for the sake of the analogy that to move toward God, then, human beings move from the circumference along the various radii to the center. But at the same time, the closer they are to God, the closer they become to one another; and the closer they are to one another, the closer they become to God.

This is an absolutely remarkable metaphor, surely the most compelling image the monastic movement proposed for serving God and neighbor. It is also an image that should help overcome the skewed view that these representatives of Christianity fled the world for private and pathological reasons. The complexity of the image captures the dynamism of the growth in spirituality these people experienced, yet it also betrays the possibility that the single individual, in a solitary pursuit of the center of the circle, might leave others behind on the circumference.

Other sections of the book illustrate approaches to questions about the early church's views on the passions, prayer, and the nature of God. These conversations elucidate some of the psychological understandings at work in the early church, and demonstrate the early Christian's difficulty in praying meaningfully and well. To the extent that these issues remain current, and they clearly do, Bondi's remarks are helpful and suggestive.

It is Bondi's discussion of humility that most carefully captures the
essence of the message these brothers and sisters have for our time. Bondi is concerned to reject some of our false notions of humility, such as false humbleness and guilt. True humility does not connote accepting all circumstances of life with abject resignation, nor does it demand that human beings heap upon themselves disabling guilt. These views of humility too frequently surface in our modern civic and social structures to suppress, not to build up.

A stance of humility is, finally, a way of being in the world that keeps one open to God, to the possibility for growth in love for God and God's creatures. Bondi is careful to point out that humility for these individuals also guarded against several tendencies to exaggerate the importance of their own way of life and faith. It is a temptation to view the "Christian life only in heroic proportions," to view the true Christian life of humble love to be filled with dramatic acts of love and self-sacrifice. Several of these thinkers advocate taking only very small steps in spiritual growth. True humility also helps overcome the view that practitioners of the Christian life should be morally perfect and above reproach. The genuine acknowledgement of the sinful inclination of everyone prevents this type of self-righteousness. As Abba Poemen put it, "if you have even a little share of the old Adam, then you are subject to sin in the same way." Against these views, Bondi posits a view of humility which is, by its "renunciation of all deep attachments to what the world holds dear," a source of indomitable power and strength: "humility knows already that force is not effective against violence, and if it is not effective, the force is not realistic either" (p. 55).

This book is provocative and insightful. This style of historical inquiry can be most helpful in posing current questions to the past and by the willingness to listen attentively to the answers the past gave to its own similar questions. The study does not, however, pay sufficient attention to the larger historical setting in which the monks and nuns played their part. Recent scholars have helped modern Christians understand the radical diversity present in early Christianity, and the variety of interpretations, divergent and nuanced, current in the early Church communities and thinkers. One of the key issues finally raised by this study has to do with the ability of human beings to exercise freely their choice to grow in the knowledge and love of God. This critical theological issue engaged the labors of the Church's greatest thinkers, and is, in some ways, directly played out in the discussions and debates of the monastic movement. A fuller presentation of these larger concerns would have
been helpful. Certainly the book makes a vital contribution to our understanding of a vivid facet of the early Christian experience.

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Over the last century, the field of biblical scholarship has yielded an average of three books per year on the study of the historical Jesus. In light of this, our author, who proclaims that he offers "a new vision" of Jesus, presents an audacious claim indeed. Yet Borg does stand in the foreground of researchers who continue to pursue the quest for the historical Jesus. His book discusses some of the most recent scholarly investigation into this topic, and presents the reader with an accessible glimpse into workings of historical critical scholarship, and the potential contribution it may make for the life of the Church as well as for the knowledge of the academy.

Borg's project is divided into a prelude, and two major divisions. The brief prelude calls into question two images of Jesus which have predominated discussion of this figure for the past century, popular culture's "semi-deity," and biblical scholarship's wild-eyed apocalypticist. While the first image, that of a Jesus who was fully cognizant of his own divine nature and proclaimed the same during his historical ministry, has roots deep in the Christian tradition (e.g., the Gospel of John), the evidence of the earliest strata of the synoptic tradition suggests that "[Jesus] did not proclaim himself" (p. 5). Thus, Borg points out that historical-critical scholarship has almost uniformly discounted as genuinely historical the figure of a Jesus who knew without doubt that he was God incarnate, and openly proclaimed that message about himself before his execution.

While scholarship has provided that corrective, it "has not generated a persuasive alternative vision of the historical Jesus" (p. 8). Borg sees Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, with its portrait of Jesus as an apocalyptic preacher who expected the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil to be resolved in his lifetime, as the volume which provided the enduring bias in scholarly circles regarding Jesus' self-understanding. A recent poll among a select group of scholars suggests that this image no longer prevails in graduate departments of religion or divinity school faculties (p. 20, n. 25). Borg seeks to fill the
vacuum created by the obsolescence of these two views with the presentation which comprises the two main sections of his book.

Borg's first major section, "Jesus and the Spirit," attempts to reclaim through historical investigation the supernatural or mystical dimension of the religion by which the historical Jesus would have been nurtured and shaped in his life setting. Borg importantly points out that the world-view of Jesus' time is radically different in its perception of reality than is that of the modern historian or scientist. Borg's approach seems diametrically opposed to Rudolf Bultmann's program of demythologizing. Where Bultmann considered discussion of Jesus' visions, miracles and other supernatural aspects of his ministry as mythic dimensions imposed by the early church upon the interpretation of the historical figure, Borg takes them seriously as experiences both integral and normative to the existence of individuals and communities within that ancient life setting. Borg does admit to symbolic aspects of miracle narratives, for example (see below), but he holds out for a level of transcendence within human affairs that clearly exceeds Bultmann's limits. If the goal of the historical critic is to take the ancient text and interpret it as far as possible on its own terms, Borg's book impels the question whether he, or Bultmann, or some median position extant within modern scholarship does that most effectively.

The core of the argument of this first section may be found in Borg's belief that Jesus knew himself to be a Spirit-filled mediator who possessed a deep affinity with transcendent Reality: "... Jesus stood [in the tradition of], ... the experience of Spirit endowed people who became radically open to the other [transcendent] world and whose gifts were extraordinary" (p. 32). Borg argues that biblical scholarship has never come to grips with a means of taking the reality of this other world seriously, and so consequently its categories have been mostly absent from historical analysis of the figure of Jesus. Borg's point is that this charismatic dimension of human experience comprised perhaps the most vital aspect of the life-setting and the religious tradition inherited by the historical Jesus. His first section in intended, then, to stand as a challenge to the methodological presuppositions of his peers, and also to "our culture's way of seeing reality" (p. 34).

Borg's second major section, "Jesus and Culture," attempts to understand Jesus through a variety of socio-religious lenses reconstructed from the sweep of influences alive within the ancient life setting. Jesus' proverbs, parallels and "lessons from nature", impel Borg to see Jesus as a sage, who challenged the conventional wisdom of his time. Secondly, the critique of the religious establishment on his sayings suggest that he was a religious reformer, rather than one intent on founding a new religion. Jesus identified with the prophets, so he must be seen as one,
for he presented "an alternative consciousness to society's most cherished beliefs" (p. 155). And finally, Jesus' death must be seen as a historical consequence of the challenge he leveled against the socio-religious power-structures of his time. These four aspects of his life—as Borg reconstructs it—revolve upon the programmatic presupposition reiterated from his first section: Borg holds that the historical Jesus "saw reality very differently from both us and most of his contemporaries" (p. 100).

We may now summarize the attributes which form the core of Borg's "alternative vision of Jesus." The historical figure is one who must be seen as a product of the myriad of socio-cultural influences of his time, and as one who rose above them, with a unique and charismatic vision of Reality. He did not believe himself to be divine any more than the sages and prophets who were his fore-parents in the Jewish tradition did believe of themselves. Yet he must be seen as one specially endowed with a rare empathy to transcendent reality, which this historical figure used as others had before him: to speak on behalf of God, to call God's people to a moral accounting, and to reform the rituals and laws by which they understood themselves to be religious.

At this point we should step outside of Borg's analysis to assess it with a more critical eye. In order to build his case, Borg seems to mostly ignore the findings of recent redaction-critical and rhetorical-critical scholarship. He rather uniformly attributes to Jesus certain sayings that many would think are more characteristic and therefore the product of a certain evangelist, e.g., Luke 4:18 (p. 45); 10:18 (p. 43); etc. He does recognize, however, that symbolic elements have intruded upon the narrative, and that "the narratives as a whole (and not just the details within them) are to be understood primarily or only in terms of how they point beyond themselves rather than historically at all" (p. 67). Yet Borg makes this last point in relation to the miracle narratives—it is not clear that he sees the whole scope of the narrative of any particular gospel in this sense. Would he accept, for example, John Donahue's thesis that the character of Jesus constitutes the "parable of God" in the gospel of Mark? (Interpretation 33/3: 369-386) The most exciting and groundbreaking work in New Testament Studies is currently being done in an inter-disciplinary setting, where scholars are reexamining the figure of Jesus through the various lenses of reader-response criticism, structuralist methodologies, sociological models and rhetorical criticism—to name just four. For all its excellence, Borg's book may represent a last gasp of the old guard of biblical scholarship, rather than the expression of the emergent main stream of the interdisciplinary matrix of modern scholarship.

Finally, we must assess the main claim of the book: that it presents
a "new, alternative vision" of the historical figure. As Borg himself has cited in his copious and informative footnotes, he has synthesized the findings of many of his colleagues along with his own insights. Any given reader who is familiar with "Jesus literature" would probably not find any isolated segment of this book as possessing great novelty. Yet, where I think the book somewhat justifies its audacious claim is precisely in the combination and synthesis of the variety of portraits which Borg combines and applies to the historical Jesus with a rather unforced continuity. Borg's book is, in the last analysis, worthy of its goal, for it successfully invites all types of readers to reconsider their own presuppositions regarding the figure of Jesus; and in so doing to learn and to debate about those forces which influenced him, as well as those which continue to influence our interpretation of him.

Following is a list of seven books which is intended to represent a fairly wide variety of approaches to the construction of a portrait of Jesus. I believe these books to be comparable in scope and intended audience with the one just reviewed. This list in no way is presumed to be exhaustive. The order of citation is purely alphabetical by author.


examines no less than 18 different motifs which have been superimposed upon the figure of Jesus from his time through the present.

Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 286 pp. As Borg himself notes (p. 35), this book provides a thorough discussion of the charismatic tradition within the time and religion of Jesus. Vermes' two-fold division of The Setting of Jesus and The Titles of Jesus may have suggested itself as a model for Borg to follow.

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Coming in QR
SUMMER 1989

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Temba J. Mafico

PLUS

Women in Ministry: Estrangement from Ourselves
Susan Nelson Dunfee

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