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*A Crossings Celebration:  
Ed Schroeder  
and His Ministry*

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*The Lord GOD has given me the tongue  
of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word. Morning by morning he  
wakens-- wakens my ear to listen as those who  
are taught.*

(Isa 50:4 - NRSV)

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## **A Crossings Celebration: Ed Schroeder and His Ministry**

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## ***FOREWORD***

Conventionally, professors' retirements are honored with a *Festschrift* (German: "festival of writing") in which former students contribute scholarly works representing the professor's impact on their own work and how they have capitalized on that early inspiration.

Crossings is *not* conventional.

So, we have compiled a collection of poems, letters and essays, with a few smart remarks thrown in to keep it realistic, to honor a man whose impact is hard to measure.

"Confessions of a Crossings Junkie," one of the titles in this collection, describes what you find here and includes both the light and the serious. Confession implies admitting real feelings, of which there are samples in the direct letters to Ed, and in the less direct implications scattered throughout the whole collection. "The Affirmation," presents a remedy for a TV "worrier" character. Also disclosed are the deep sensitivities of personal faith in Jesus Christ. With these disclosures are revealed the infinite criss-crossings of this trust into the fabric of living. The living encompasses the life-calling, the professions, the work the Crossers regard as God-directed callings. In these vocations, some of the workers are moved to create a harmony among "Arsenal rejects, " or to draw a woman from society's pool of discards.

Also appearing are scholarly pieces. One enlightens the Bonhoeffer picture with the Russian Religious Renaissance. Another crosses a modern theme with Revelation. Still another provides a deep understanding of a man's deliberate advance from an already developed Cross of Life Cross. Isaiah prompts another dedicated Crosser to reveal his rescue from his personally created thought-captivity.

Even Ed's gardening gifts get admiring comment. Certainly not all his gifts nor all the writings about Ed can be noted here. Even the close relationship of Professor Ed, students and connecting table pictured by Mary Lee Rovira, cannot exhaust the limitless possibilities of the Crossings idea.

***Peace and Joy!***



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*Ed Schroeder Himself on Crossings.* Who better than Ed to reintroduce us to Crossings and how the method, praised throughout this book, works. An abridged version of this article appeared in The Lutheran Forum; here we present it in its entirety.

## **CROSSINGS: A MODEL FOR CONNECTING SCRIPTURE AND LIFE**

### **The Past as Prologue**

The **Crossings Community, Inc.** is the legal name of a not-for-profit corporation in the State of Missouri. Crossings is a fifteen-year-old school of theology engaged in theological study for people's secular callings. Crossings is a spin-off of Seminex. Crossings has an alumni roster of almost 2000 names. Crossings sends its newsletter free to 4000 people.

To see Crossings as a model for "connecting Scripture and life," we need to go even further back than Seminex to another Lutheran educational institution, Valparaiso University in Indiana, and to the shift in theological education engineered there by President O. P. Kretzmann and Theology Department chair, Robert Bertram, in the late fifties. Some others of us were involved in the project, notably Robert C. Schultz.

That curricular shift departed from the model of theological education that then dominated American church colleges. That model was really a seminary model--albeit in pabulum format--with one course in Bible, one in church history, one in doctrine, and one in ethics. Kretzmann had a vision, not really new, that the people in the pew were called by God not to be mini-clergy, but to be ministers out in the secular world.

Thus the givens of that secular world and the students' own callings there, these "non-theological" data, became **primary** data for theological study. The standard theological subject matter was now approached, not as a string of discrete disciplines, but as a unitary whole, "The Christian Reading of Reality." The grounding texts for such Christian readings were the pericopes from the church's lectionary augmented by readings

from doctrine, ethics, and church history. The other half of each course was "non-theological" data from the world at large and from the student's own life.

The enterprise was bi-polar, crossing from faith to daily life, crossing the world with the Word of God. We thought that this was what Tillich meant by "correlation." If he didn't, we did.

Crossings today carries on that experiment, modified by what we've learned and focused on a broader clientele than just university people. Our venture is definitely pro-laity, but not therefore anti-clerical.

### **Crossings as a Model of a Method**

People tell us that the way we do biblical study is what makes Crossings different. For both of the two major programs--weekend workshops linking the Word of God to people's daily work and semester-long courses in our school--the texts selected for theological attention come from the lectionary. We call that part of the process Grounding. The other two steps are Tracking and (you guessed it) Crossing. Crossings alums persist in hailing the Grounding process, our style of biblical study, as the fundamental educational benefit they receive. Says one: "I now know how to study a biblical text and get its message out in the open and available for me. Thus if, God forbid, the preacher on a given Sunday is unable to do this (and such cases are known to exist), I can do it for myself."

Here is how we proceed. From our Reformation roots we are inclined to view Christian scriptures as problem-solving literature. So we interrogate the text with two questions: What according to this text is the human problem being exposed? Call this the diagnostic question. What is the solution being proposed? Call this the prognostic question.

We expect the problem to surface at the behavioral level, what today we would call "clinical data," publicly available and evident to perhaps any observer. But we do not rest content there, nor move immediately to the prognosis for solution material. So the probe goes deeper: what reasons, what causes, underlie that initial diagnosis?

Our expectation is that the cause of bad works is bad faith, but we listen for the text's own specifics for the form of that unfaith, just as we heard the text out for its specifics on the initial diagnosis. After determining this advanced diagnosis, we ask once more: is the problem even worse than that? From our Reformation roots we expect it indeed to

be still worse, and that is the turf which the final diagnosis approaches. One way to pose the final diagnostic question, as a student recently did, is: "What is the 'God-sized' problem here?"

This third-level thrust to ask about the God-problem, and not resting content with the faith-problem at the second level nor the works-problem at the surface, has proven to be one of the most difficult aspects of the Crossings project. It is correlated, of course, with the second tough task that is a constant stone of stumbling, namely, to "necessitate Christ" as the resource required to take "all" the trouble away.

For Bible students attuned to Luther it is no surprise that even Christians will bridle at diagnosing the "non-Christian" alternative that also spooks them and acknowledging that it is "that bad." These Christians do have resources for admitting this deepest diagnosis and even trumping it, but when unfaith snares them, for that moment these resources are lost to them. In the Smalcald Articles (Part III) Luther claims that even Christians would not, could not, acknowledge this "third level" of our malady, were it not for the Word of God declaring it to be so, and faith in Christ emboldening us to admit it. Fifteen years of Crossings work corroborate this insight.

One helpful way to get at the third level of the problem is to ask: What is there in the problem complex that would take a crucified and risen Messiah to solve it? In Lutheran confessional rhetoric the "push" to this depth diagnosis is the first step in the exercise of "necessitating Christ." And that, of course, opens the door to ask about the solution, the prognosis.

**Initial prognosis:** What is the anticipated future of this case just diagnosed if and when the Good News is added to the mix? But not just any Good News. Instead we ask for the Good News as this particular text presents it in the context of its author's own theological toolkit, metaphors, images and accents. That proposal of Good News needs to be articulated so that it actually meets the full fact of the final diagnosis so that it crosses over to, and crosses out, the bad news of the God-sized problem.

This is the second "most difficult" exercise in the Crossings model for biblical study. It's easy to say, also using the text's own terms, that the crucified and risen Messiah solves even the deep problem of the final diagnosis. But the skill to "show how" the Good news trumps the bad does not have wide currency, from our experience. Students report this as

fact from their own church life. All too often they are left un-crossed. For when they detect themselves exposed in the diagnostics of the text as it examined people "back then," they long for more than just being told that the Good News is good for them.

In the same way as the diagnosis proceeds by being case-specific, so the prognosis, the Good News, needs to be case-specific, or it is not Good News at all. To be told that there is good news for you, but not to be shown or told how to get that good news over to the place where the hurt is, nor to be told/shown how the Good News of Christ's death and resurrection genuinely un-does the bad news, is to torture, not nurture, people with the Word of God.

Another student put it this way: "Our pastors regularly do get the Good News out of the text, but do not so regularly get it over to me. To preach the Gospel is both to get it out of the text and to cross the hearer's life with it. Exegesis is the first job, preaching the second. Not all preachers can preach. That's why I'm glad I'm now able to preach a text to myself when a worst-case-scenario arises."

The initial prognosis asks the text for its answer to the question: what is the Good News available for coping with the final diagnosis you have just made? Christian readers do not come to that question without expectations. The crucified and risen Christ is expected to be the cornerstone of the answer, of course. Yet we need to hear the text's own way of articulating that and crossing it over to the particulars of the text's own most profound diagnosis. How does this text present Jesus as the Christ, and how does the Christ so presented undo the bad news of the final diagnosis? That is the question.

Just as the diagnosis proceeded deeper and deeper by asking: Is it even worse than that? so the prognosis proceeds by asking the text: Is it even better than that? The advanced prognosis anticipates more resources, more good news, coming from the initial Good News. In this stage of the study we look for adequate resources to counteract the data in the earlier advanced diagnosis, but once more in the text's own terms, metaphors, images, theology.

The same holds true for the final prognostic questioning: is the Good News even better than that just found, enough better to offset and replace the initial diagnosis, that bad news with which we began the textual study? This Good News in the final prognosis brings the journey full circle. As the initial diagnosis had asked for the first available public

evidence of the problem, so now in the final prognosis the patient also "goes public" back into the same arena where the "bad news" once held sway. This third turf--life out in the world--is the final destination for the goodness intended by the Good News. To pun on a questionable segment of the Lutheran heritage, the final prognosis articulates the "third use" of the Gospel. This is the Gospel's usefulness of healing the world through the lives of the wounded healers out on assignment as Christ's credentialed field representatives.

### **In a Nutshell**

To simplify this summary we shall use the abbreviations D-1, D-2, D-3 and P-1, P-2, P-3 for the three levels of Diagnosis and Prognosis as described above.

Briefly:

- D-1 asks what is the problem at the external, the surface, level?
- D-2 pushes to ask about the problem at the internal level.
- D-3 goes for the jugular, the problem at the eternal level.

In more detail: D-1 is clinical data, behavioral, "thoughts, words, and deeds." It diagnoses via the so-called "second-table" of the decalog.

D-2 is focused on the heart and Luther's "verbs of the heart," what people are fearing, loving, and trusting. It diagnoses via the first commandment of the decalog.

D-3 asks for the God-sized consequences, maybe even the God-sized origins of these data. Do the people-with-the-problem have *God-in-Christ* or *God-apart-from-Christ* as their de facto partner in the dialogue of life? The expected answer is that the latter option is the case. No wonder there is little or no fear, love, and trust of this deity.

The prognosis proceeds in correlation to the diagnosis.

Briefly:

- P-1 asks for the text's Good News to solve the problem's eternal level.
- P-2 does likewise for the problem at the internal level.
- P-3 asks for the text's prognosis at the external level.

In more detail: P-1 asks about a Problem-Solver big enough to cope with D-3. For if that search should prove futile, solutions at all other levels are moot. The Christian Message is that no matter in what lethal form D-3 surfaces, the One who has trumped all nemeses, even those

emanating from God's own self, is sufficient for the task. Thus P-1 crosses over to, and crosses out, D-3. God in Christ replaces the hidden God as the sinner's divine partner. The Gospel solves the problem at its ``eternal level."

P-2 asks about the further benefits in the initial prognosis for the D-2 level, the patient's faith-problem. Another way of saying that is to ask: how do the former victims/patients appropriate the benefits of P-1 so that it becomes biographically true about them? Verbs of the heart now focused on God-in-Christ come into view here.

P-3 then probes the consequences of these verbs of the heart for public life, which includes both the corporate churchly, as well as the corporate ``worldly," service to which the ``little Christs" of P-2 are recommissioned. In P-3 the cosmic work of Christ once-and-for-all (P-1) having been reappropriated by the former patient (P-2) now goes public in both the new creation (body of Christ) and the old creation. P-3 crosses over to, and crosses out, D-1, replacing a life of bad faith with a life of Christ-connectedness. The Gospel solves our problem at its ``external level."

### **An Example**

Take the johannine prologue, John 1:1-18, a text appearing more than once in the lectionary. Readers would do well to keep that text in view as they follow this matrix of the diagnosis and prognosis materials in this overture to the whole of John's Gospel.

**D-1** The initial diagnosis is confused priorities of both the people encountering Jesus in John's Gospel and the readers thereof. Hinted at by the several references in the prologue to ``Who's first," it becomes clearer in the subsequent episodes John records. Where do we rank Jesus when we relate him to other revealers, other actions of the God we all believe in?

This is the fundamental question. John's narrative is full of wrong answers from Nathaniel's ``can anything good come out of Nazareth?" in the opening chapter to Thomas' ``I will not believe" in the final one.

**D-2.** To mis-prioritize Jesus is in John's Language a signal that the patient is Lightless and therefore Lifeless, bereft of the divine hookup that was the plan in the beginning. So the problem is indeed worse than the first diagnosis would have suggested. But it is even worse than that.

**D-3.** Disciples bereft of the Life/Light that previously gave them the right to be children of God now stand to lose that very gift. So the problem at the eternal level that reappears--even for disciples--is the primordial one of Disinherited Orphans, a God-sized dilemma that only the only-begotten Son can undo.

To this program of Bad News, the opening verses of John counterpose the following Good News.

**P-1.** Glory in the Flesh. Under this rubric John's gospel narrates sign after sign of God's Special Boy coming all the way to the off-limits D-3 turf of the disinherited and exchanging his preferred family status for their "no rights at all" in the divine family. The glory of the cross is John's rhetoric for the process that opens the door for undoing divine orphanage.

**P-2.** Believing is Living. The transaction that makes former orphans the recipients of the divine family status and inheritance, i.e., the benefits of P-1, is in John's language "to believe in his name." And what does such believing do? It conveys "the right to become children of God," born of God's own heredity, with all the rights and privileges thereunto appertaining.

**P-3.** Life as Witness. These restored divine offspring now "go public." John's key term is *witness*. But his is not the witness of street-corner preaching. John conceives it to be courtroom witnessing, and the venue of that court is daily life out in the world. Daily life is daily litigation with us on the witness stand called to respond to the question: "Who's first," the never-ending adversarial situation of prioritizing Christ in thought, word, and deed. And behind the stage curtains of the multiplex courtrooms of our daily life, says John, is the cosmic court with The Judge sitting on the bench waiting for our testimony. It is not just our own fate that hangs in the balance, but the world is in the dock too. That's why we are on the witness stand so that the world's orphans may know the truth about priorities, that by believing him they might also have the life that is in his name.

## **In Conclusion**

This is how John's prologue opens up when read with Crossings' spectacles. (A full-blown version of this study has appeared in print and is available upon request.)

There are two more steps in the Crossings model for connecting Scripture and life. What we have just rehearsed is Grounding. The next two are Tracking and Crossing. Tracking is an examination of a slice of life, a contemporary case study, selected by students, and studied in its own terms on its own merits. In the weekend workshops the case study is drawn from the workworld of each participant. In the semester-long courses the entire spectrum of life in the world is fair game.

The final step is to bring the two together, **Crossing** the contemporary case study just **Tracked** with the biblical case study done in the **Grounding**. The almost infinite variables in these last two steps do not lend themselves easily to discursive presentation here. (Examples of such Crossings work have appeared in journals and are available on request.)

Crossings is incorporated as a community. That signals collaboration and interdependence among the participants. Our logo has all of us supported by the cross. Our name keeps us minded of the calling all Christians share: the theology of the cross for crossing secular frontiers in ministry to the world. Our model for connecting Scripture and life has proven to be useful for that task.

Edward H. Schroeder, Teacher  
The Crossings Community, Inc.  
St. Louis, June 1, 1989

***Dietrich Bonhoeffer via Charles Ford.*** *Charles has been with Crossings since its inception. Whether he's teaching mathematics or studying Bonhoeffer, the Gospel via Crossings continues to shape Charles' life.*

***DIETRICH BONHOEFFER  
AND THE RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION***

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11 December 1992

*Dedicated to Ed Schroeder*

**Introduction**

The German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) is strongly identified with the opposition to Nazism for which he was eventually imprisoned and executed. The purpose of this paper is to explore a rarely studied aspect of Bonhoeffer's thought - his interest in those thinkers who have been identified with the Russian religious renaissance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Bonhoeffer's encounter with the Russian religious philosophers occurred at a very formative period in his life, during his student years at the University of Berlin from 1924 to 1927. During this period, he began to study in depth the theologian who was to make the most profound impact on him, Martin Luther. He also encountered the other theologian who was to have a great impact on him, Karl Barth. The thesis of this paper is that the Russian religious philosophers, whom Bonhoeffer encountered at

this early stage in his career, may also have had a significant impact on his thought.

Between 1923 and 1925, Hans Ehrenberg and Nikolai Bubnov published two volumes of German translations of Russian religious writers, including Solovyev, Khomyakov, Florensky, Bulgakov and Berdyayev.<sup>1</sup> Bonhoeffer acquired and read both volumes.<sup>2</sup> Bonhoeffer was especially interested in Berdyayev and in Ehrenberg's postscripts. His biographer adds: "Naturally he also plunged into Dostoyevsky."

Bulgakov and Berdyayev were among the group of authors who had published the collection of essays in 1909 entitled *Vekhi*.<sup>3</sup> These essays were very critical of the modern revolutionary intelligentsia. In the analysis of modernity offered later by Bonhoeffer in his *Ethics*, one can detect many similarities with the analysis of the *Vekhi* authors.

Both analyses pointed to the growing secularization and the spread of utopian nihilistic revolutionary ideology. Both analyses saw as decisive the influence of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution on the development of this ideology. Both saw the total rejection of the state and the revolutionary desire to destroy the existing order as particularly dangerous. Both observed that concrete acts of charity on behalf of others are rejected by this ideology in favor of the universal salvation of mankind, that the concrete present is sacrificed to the utopian future.

These similarities (and others) are the more remarkable given that the *Vekhi* authors were describing a Bolshevik Revolution that had not yet occurred, while Bonhoeffer was describing the Nazi revolution at the height of its success. The remarkable prescience of the *Vekhi* authors has been noted by many.

Especially noteworthy is Bonhoeffer's insistence that the Nazis are a revolutionary phenomenon. He saw both nationalism and internationalism as revolutionary ideologies, very similar in character, both having roots in the French Revolution. Pyotr Struve, one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Ehrenberg, *Oestliches Christentum*, Oscar Beck, Munich, Band I, 1923, Band II, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Harper and Row, New York, 1970, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Boris Shragin and Albert Todd eds., *Landmarks: A collection of essays on the Russian intelligentsia*, Karz Howard, New York, 1977.

*Vekhi* authors, later offered a similar analysis. Shortly after the outbreak of World War II he wrote:

National Socialism and Bolshevism must be considered together in a spiritual as well as a real sense. Now there are very few who understand this, and practical politicians are even less versed in this regard, although after the joint aggression on Poland and Finland, one would expect the situation to be clear to all.<sup>4</sup>

This paper will compare Bonhoeffer's religious views and his analysis of modernity with that of the Russian religious philosophers. It will also touch on Bonhoeffer's view of Russian orthodoxy and the Bolshevik revolution.

### **Bonhoeffer and Khomyakov**

Already during his student years at the University of Berlin Bonhoeffer took a great interest in Christian unity and in the true meaning of 'catholicity.' This interest was reinforced by his study of Russian Christianity.

The issue of the unity of Christianity occupies a central place in Bonhoeffer's first work, *Sanctorum Communio*, which he presented as his first doctoral dissertation to the theological faculty in Berlin in 1927, at the age of 21. In it he was critical of Kant and Hegel, at least as regards their understanding of the Church. By contrast, he was full of praise for the view of the Church put forward by the nineteenth century Russian religious thinker A. S. Khomyakov.

He referred twice to an article by Khomyakov entitled "The Unity of the Church," which had appeared in the second volume of Ehrenberg and Bubnov. The first reference comes in a discussion of prayers of intercession in the Church, where Khomyakov is quoted with evident approval. In his works, Bonhoeffer usually paraphrased or gave only very short quotes from other authors. A quote as long as the following, which he took from Khomyakov, is quite rare:

No man is saved alone; he who is saved is saved in the Church, as its member in unity with the other members.

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<sup>4</sup> S. L. Frank, *The Biography of P. B. Struve*, Chekhov Publishers, New York, 1956 (Russian), 175, as quoted in *Landmarks*, note 13, xxxiv.

Does anyone believe? - he is in the community of love.  
Does anyone pray? - he is in the community of prayer.  
Do not ask: "What prayer can benefit the living or the dead, since my prayer is not even sufficient for myself?"  
Since in any event you do not understand how to pray, what is the purpose of your praying for yourself: The spirit of love prays in you. ... But the blood of the Church is the prayer of intercession for one another.<sup>5</sup>

The idea expressed here that "you do not understand how to pray ... the spirit of love prays in you," is also found in Luther (and St. Paul) and was very important to Bonhoeffer. He developed it in a later book.<sup>6</sup>

In the paragraph immediately preceding the one containing this quote, Bonhoeffer elaborated on the idea that "Christ died for the Church so that its members might lead one life, with one another and for one another." He made the following assertion, which was a harbinger of his own future in Germany:

Every gift of a material, spiritual or religious kind fulfills its purpose only in the Church. Love demands that we should sacrifice our own interest. But this may include sacrificing even communion with God himself. Here is manifested the love which of its own free will is ready to endure God's wrath for its brother's sake, which even desires God's wrath if by this means they will be enabled to have communion with him, which takes its brother's place as Christ took our place for us. The two great examples of this are Exodus 32:32 and Romans 9:1ff. Moses wished to be blotted out of the book of life with his people, and Paul wished that he himself were accursed and cut off from Christ, not in order to be condemned with his brethren, but to win communion with God for them; he wishes to be condemned in their stead. This is a paradox of love for God which it is difficult to resolve;...

It is remarkable that in this passage Bonhoeffer at the very beginning of his career identified what later became central in his life,

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<sup>5</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints*, Harper and Row, New York, 1963, 132.

<sup>6</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: the prayerbook of the Bible*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1970.

namely his decision to share the fate of the Christian people of Germany under Nazism. This decision led to his abrupt return to Germany in the summer of 1939, his subsequent involvement in the plots against Hitler, and his arrest in 1943. During his imprisonment, two months after the failure of the plot to assassinate Hitler in July 1944, he wrote a poem entitled "The Death of Moses."<sup>7</sup> In it he compared his own fate with that of Moses in the same terms quoted above. He described himself as taking, as did Moses, the risk of being blotted out of the book of life with his people. He predicted that, just as Moses did not live to see the promised land, so he would not live to see Germany free of the Nazis. This prediction was fulfilled by his execution on 9 April 1945.

His second reference to Khomyakov refers explicitly to the original meaning of 'catholicity' as unity:

...the wish is to show that the Church, being united, is also the one and only Church (original meaning of *katholike* = *una sola*). The Russian Orthodox Church lays an uncommonly strong stress upon the idea of unity. Khomyakov's presentation, in which he talks essentially of the unity of the Church, has a strength and depth making it almost without parallel among works on the Church.<sup>8</sup>

This reference occurs in a long paragraph in which the problem of human 'equality' is discussed. This paragraph continues:

The Christian idea of equality says nothing about interpersonal relationships,...the equality of men consists in their universal sinfulness (Romans3:23), that means also their universal need of redemption, and their equal share in God's grace. ... equality before God cannot be proved or demonstrated, nor is it manifest as 'similarity.' It rests ultimately upon the fact that God is always the same. Equality has nothing to do with affinity between souls, ... This is the difference in principle between the Christian idea of equality and all socialist or idealist ideas of equality. And that in turn directs us back to the

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<sup>7</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Macmillan, New York, 1971, 398.

<sup>8</sup> *The Communion of Saints*, note 96, 235.

Christian concept of spiritual unity, as represented in a theological concept of the Church.<sup>9</sup>

The idea of equality is elaborated later by Bonhoeffer in his *Ethics* and is similar to that given by Berdyayev in his book *The Philosophy of Inequality*. A comparison of the two views will be given later.

### **Other Russian Writers**

Bonhoeffer made reference to two other Russian authors in *Sanctorum Communio*. In the second reference to Khomyakov cited above, he also referred to the book *The Church of the East* by Arseniev which had appeared in German in 1926 and which he acquired. He also referred to *Society and the Individual* by Kistyakovsky which had appeared in German in 1899. This is the doctoral dissertation of a B. A. Kistyakovsky who in 1909 became one of the *Vekhi* authors.<sup>10</sup>

The statement by Bonhoeffer's biographer that "Naturally he also plunged into Dostoyevsky" makes one wish to know more about his interest in Dostoyevsky. Other than a reference to Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor,<sup>11</sup> the only information about this is in a letter to his parents. Written on 13 March 1925 during his student days in Berlin, it reflects his interest in the true 'catholicity' of the Church shortly before he began preparing for his dissertation *Sanctorum Communio*:

I have just been reading Dostoyevsky's highly interesting speech on Pushkin, in which he represents him as the first man to make a distinction between Russian and European and as the herald of the Russian ideal: 'supra-national pan-humanism,' as he calls it. It is remarkable that he should call on what is most specific in a nation to show that nation the way to transcending itself, at any rate as a nation. To Dostoyevsky this idea, as he continually emphasizes, is necessarily associated with that of

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-144.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, In his three references to Kistyakovsky only one, in note 17, page 215, gives any initials - and it gives F. That B. A. Kistyakovsky is intended is made clear in the biographical sketch of him in *Landmarks*, 190.

<sup>11</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Macmillan, New York, 1965, 128.

Christianity, and the real 'catholicism' of primitive Christianity is thus re-established.<sup>12</sup>

Bonhoeffer revealed his familiarity with Solovyev at one of the most dramatic points in his *Ethics*:

We begin this section by referring to one of our most astonishing experiences during the period when Christianity was sorely oppressed. The deification of the irrational, of blood and instinct, of the beast of prey in man ... [had placed in danger the defenders of liberal values]. Reason, culture, humanity, tolerance and self-determination, all these concepts which until very recently had served as battle slogans against the Church, against Christianity, against Jesus Christ Himself, had now suddenly and surprisingly come very near indeed to the Christian standpoint. ...it was these concepts that had somehow become homeless and now sought refuge in the Christian sphere, in the shadow of the Christian Church. ... The children of the Church, who had become independent and gone their own ways, now in the hour of danger returned to their mother. ... Reason, justice, culture, humanity and all the kindred concepts sought and found a new purpose and a new power in their origin.

This origin is Jesus Christ. In Soloviev's story of the Antichrist, in the last days before Christ's return the heads of the persecuted churches discuss the question of what is for each of them the most precious thing in Christianity; the decisive answer is that the most precious thing in Christianity is Jesus Christ Himself. That is to say, that in the face of the Antichrist only one thing has force and permanence, and that is Christ Himself. ... There seems to be a general unconscious knowledge, which, in the hour of ultimate peril, leads everything which desires not to fall victim to the Antichrist to take refuge with Christ.<sup>13</sup>

This perception about the return of the defenders of liberal concepts to their "mother," the Church, is a central feature of Bonhoeffer's decision to return to Germany. It also represents the development of the most

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<sup>12</sup> *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 47.

<sup>13</sup> *Ethics*, 55-56.

mature and independent phase of his theology and action and the widening gap between himself and Karl Barth.

Karl Barth, a Swiss Reformed theologian and the leading figure in a revival of confessional Christianity during the 1920's, had a major influence on Bonhoeffer. Barth was especially important in the Church struggle ('Kirchenkampf') that took place in the Protestant Churches in Germany after the Nazis came to power in January 1933. Barth was the primary author of the Barmen Declaration in 1934, the central document of the 'Confessing Church' that arose in opposition to Nazi influence in the Protestant Churches.

There were, however, significant differences between Barth and Bonhoeffer, due in part to the profound influence of Luther on Bonhoeffer.<sup>14</sup> This difference is reflected both in their theological views and their views on society and history. Barth was a socialist with sympathies toward Marxism. This became especially clear after the war when he exhibited a complete lack of public opposition to Stalin and the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, in dramatic contrast to his earlier uncompromising public opposition to Nazism. Before the end of the war, Barth had become active in a communist-led organization, *The Committee for a Free Germany*.

Although Barth had a great appreciation for Luther, he regarded as fundamentally mistaken Luther's views on the relationship between Law and Gospel and between temporal and spiritual authority ('The Two Kingdoms'). He regarded Nazism as a consequence of these mistakes and saw a direct line leading from Friedrich the Great through Bismarck to Hitler. Bonhoeffer rejected this view as a "grotesque mistake."<sup>15</sup> He had a high opinion of both Friedrich the Great and Bismarck. Nazism he regarded as a fruit of the French Revolution, a subject to which we turn in the next section.

At least twice Bonhoeffer spoke of the suffering of the Russian Christianity under communism. At the seminary in Finkenwalde in 1936 he was giving lectures that would eventually become his book *The Cost of*

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Ford, "Luther, Bonhoeffer and Revolution," *Lutheran Forum*, 25-4 (Advent 1991), American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, Delhi, NY, 24-28. The differences between Bonhoeffer and Barth as well as Bonhoeffer's views on revolution are discussed here.

<sup>15</sup> *Ethics*, 100-101.

*Discipleship*. When he came to the topic of martyrdom, he gave as an example "the cold martyrdom in Russia today."<sup>16</sup> In New York on 25 June 1939, he made a notation in his diary about "the strange silence of the American public over the suffering of Christians in Russia."<sup>17</sup>

In 1941 his views on the dangers posed by the Soviet Union are presented in a document he co-authored:

...as Christians...we must not minimize the danger which Russia still represents for all that we hold dear. ...Bolshevism may well become a tremendous menace...There is, furthermore, the very difficult question as to whether the Baltic States, the Bukovina, Karelia, Bessarabia, shall go back to a Russia which recognizes civil and religious liberties just as little as do the Nazis.<sup>18</sup>

### **Bonhoeffer and Berdyayev**

Berdyayev was part of a group that was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1922 and spent the next two years in Berlin. During these two years Berdyayev published three books in Russian: *The Philosophy of Inequality*, *The New Middle Age* and *The Meaning of History*.<sup>19</sup> The last two appeared in German translation in 1927 and 1925 respectively. Also in 1927 a German translation of Berdyayev's *The Meaning of Creativity* appeared, a selection of which had already appeared in the second volume of Ehrenberg and Bubnov. By 1927 a German translation of *The Tragedy of Philosophy* by Sergei Bulgakov had also appeared.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Nachfolge*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, Band 4, Christian Kaiser Verlag, Munich, 1989, note 4, 76.

<sup>17</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Way to Freedom*, Harper and Row, New York, 1966, 237.

<sup>18</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *True Patriotism*, Collins, London, 1973, 116-117.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Spinka, *Nicolas Berdyaev*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1950, 59-60, 66-67, 208. *The New Middle Age* has appeared in English translation as *The End of our Time*.

<sup>20</sup> Nikolas Berdjajew, *Das Neue Mittelalter*, Otto Reichl Verlag, Darmstadt, 1927. Reichl is the publisher of many of the German translations mentioned (though not of Ehrenberg and Bubnov).

Bonhoeffer was a student in Berlin from 1924 to 1927. His biographer has stated that he acquired the two volumes by Ehrenberg and Bubnov and that he had a special interest in Berdyayev. Thus, it is very possible that Bonhoeffer had become familiar with these German translations of Berdyayev's books. Whether this is the case or not, there are similarities between the thought of Bonhoeffer and that of Berdyayev.

Bonhoeffer's description of the French Revolution focused on the revolutionary drive for complete emancipation from any higher authority. This, he believed, actually leads to complete slavery:

An outcome of the emancipation of reason was the discovery of the Rights of Man. They were found to lie in the innate title of every man to liberty, in the equality of all men before the law,...man broke free from all repressive coercion, from the chaperonage of church and state,... 'The law is the expression of the General will' (*The Declaration of the Rights of Man*).<sup>21</sup>

The French Revolution created a new unity of mind in the west. This unity lies in the emancipation of man... Furthermore, there becomes apparent in this an underlying law of history, namely, that the demand for absolute liberty brings men to the depths of slavery. ... The creature turns against its creator in a strange re-enactment of the Fall. The emancipation of the masses leads to the reign of terror of the guillotine. Nationalism leads inevitably to war. The liberation of man as an absolute ideal leads only to man's self-destruction. At the end of the path which was first trodden in the French Revolution there is nihilism.<sup>22</sup>

Even at the present day the French Revolution is still the rallying cry of the modern western world. ... The cult of reason, the deification of nature, faith in progress and a critical approach to civilization, the bourgeoisie and the revolt of the masses, nationalism and anti-clericalism, the rights of man and dictatorial terror - all this erupted chaotically as something new in the history of the western

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<sup>21</sup> *Ethics*, 99-100.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

world. The French Revolution was the laying bare of the emancipated man in his tremendous power and his most terrible perversity.<sup>23</sup>

The new unity which the French Revolution brought to Europe - and what we are experiencing today is the crisis of this unity - is therefore western godlessness. It is totally different from the atheism of certain individual Greek, Indian, Chinese and western thinkers. It is not the theoretical denial of the existence of a God. It is itself a religion, a religion of hostility to God.<sup>24</sup>

This analysis has much in common with Berdyayev's view, which he offered in his book *The New Middle Ages*:

The optimistic presupposition of the natural goodness and kindness of human nature lies at the basis of democracy. The spiritual father of democracy was J. J. Rousseau, and his optimistic ideas concerning human nature have been passed on to the democratic ideology. Democracy does not want to acknowledge the radical evil of human nature. It does not seem to foresee that the will of the people may be directed toward evil, that the majority may stand for the lie and injustice, and that truth and justice may be upheld by a small minority. There are no guarantees in democracy that the will of the people shall be directed toward good, that they shall desire freedom instead of destroying all freedom altogether. During the French Revolution the revolutionary democracy, which had begun with the Declaration of the Rights and Freedom of Man, had by 1793 left no freedom untouched, but had annihilated the last trace of freedom. Human will, the will of the people, had fallen to the Evil One and where this self-proclaimed will is not subordinated to any higher purpose and asserts the claim to determine the fate of society autonomously, then resistance to and betrayal of the truth and the dissolution of all freedom follow easily. ... However, the formally empty and negative interpretation of freedom concealed a poison which overthrew the historical democracies and in them prepared the way for

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.26) *True Patriotism*, 113.

the destruction of the freedom of the spirit. Rousseau denied freedom of conscience as a matter of principle. Robespierre annihilated it in fact.<sup>25</sup>

This critical attitude toward democracy was echoed by Bonhoeffer in the document he co-authored in 1941:

The Anglo-Saxon world summarized the struggle against the omnipotence of the State in the word 'freedom.' ...freedom is too negative a word to be used in a situation where *all* order has been destroyed. And liberties are not enough when men seek first of all for some minimum security. These words remind us too much of the old liberalism which because of its failures is itself largely responsible for the development towards State absolutism. ...we believe that the conception of order limited by law and responsibility, an order which is not an aim in itself, but which recognizes commandments which transcend the State, has more spiritual substance and solidity than the emphasis on the rights of individual men.<sup>26</sup>

In the section on Khomyakov, we quoted *Sanctorum Communio* giving Bonhoeffer's view that equality before God does not imply a socialist understanding of human equality. Berdyayev expressed similar thought in his book *The Philosophy of Inequality*. Although this work, a passionate, vehement protest against the Bolshevik revolution, was apparently never translated into German, much of it was taken over into *The New Middle Ages*, which was. We quote from it several excerpts that resemble ideas of Bonhoeffer. Berdyayev addresses himself to the Bolshevik:<sup>27</sup>

You ... love to make use even of Christianity in defense of your objectives, and have no scruples about referring even to the Gospel in which you do not believe, and which you do not accept. But you cannot find anything in Christianity in your support ... Christianity acknowledges the absolute worth of every human soul and their equal

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<sup>25</sup> *Das Neue Mittelalter*, 108-109.

<sup>26</sup> *True Patriotism*, 113.

<sup>27</sup> *Nicolas Berdyayev*, 54-55.

worth before God. But one cannot derive any conclusion therefrom that would be favorable to external, mechanical equalization and undifferentiation. Christianity did not rise up or revolt against slavery at a certain stage in its development; it only acknowledged that the soul of the man in the social condition of a slave has an absolute worth and is equal before God to that of his master. Slave and master could be brothers in Christ, and a slave could hold a higher position in the Church of Christ than a master.

Berdyayev goes further in asserting an idea that may sound offensive to our modern democratic ears, namely, that inequality is necessary for the emergence of human individuality, human personality:

Inequality is the basis of the cosmic order and harmony, and is the justification of the existence of human personality itself, the source of all creative movement in the world.

Your human collective, that anthill of the future, the terrible leviathan, shall finally destroy personality as well as all other reality.

You reject and destroy personality, all you heralds of the materialistic revolution, you socialists and anarchists, radicals and democrats of various shades, all you levelers and subverters, heralds of the religion of equality. You would like to convert men into atoms, and the human society into an atomic mechanism, into a collective of impersonal atoms. But in truth, man is not an atom, but an individual lot in this life and the life beyond, in eternity.

Berdyayev's biographer is keenly aware of the negative reaction that this defense of inequality may generate and proceeds immediately to offer an explanation of Berdyayev's views, lest they be "misunderstood." Bonhoeffer, like Berdyayev, connects inequality with individuality and is also aware of how offensive this may sound to modern sensibilities:

No one can confer upon himself the warrant for ethical discourse; ... it is assigned to his, ...on the basis of an objective position in the world. ...upon the old man and not upon the young one, upon the father and not the child, the master and not the servant, ...What finds expression here is that disparity which is so extremely offensive to modern

sensibilities but which is inherent and essential in the ethical, namely, the disparity between the superior and the inferior. Without this objective subordination of the lower to the higher, and without that courage to accept superiority which modern man has so completely lost, ethical discourse is dissipated in generalities, it lacks an object and its essential character is destroyed.<sup>28</sup>

The Enlightenment [was] right to oppose a system under which society was divided into privileged and unprivileged sections. The ethical...subordination of the inferior to the superior, does not in any way imply a sanctioning of privileges. ...It was wrong only when it went beyond these polemical arguments and once more made man himself an abstraction, employing this abstraction as a weapon against all human order in the name of human equality and human dignity.<sup>29</sup>

The ethical, therefore, is not a principle which levels out, invalidates and disrupts the whole order of human precedence and subordination, but...[instead] implies a definite structure of human society; it implies certain definite sociological relations which involve authority. ...[This is] in direct contradiction to the interpretation of the ethical...which proclaims the equality of all men by virtue of their innate universal human reason. One must be quite clear about the fact - and the history of the past hundred and fifty years [since the French Revolution] has demonstrated it clearly enough - that the actual goal of this new conception of the ethical...has not only not been achieved, but has turned out to be exactly the opposite of what was intended. ...[It] ended in the total atomization of human society and of the life of the individual, in unlimited subjectivism and individualism. ...[L]ife falls apart into an infinite number of unconnected atoms of time, and human society resolves itself into individual atoms of reason.<sup>30</sup>

Bonhoeffer, like Berdyayev, saw that this leveling was motivated by an attempt to correct historical injustices in society, but insisted that the final result was a destruction of the integrity of the individual and

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<sup>28</sup> *Ethics*, 271-272.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

society. Both men used the same term "atomization" to describe the effect of modern revolutionary rationalism on the individual and society. The passages also reveal, however, that the two are using quite different concepts to convey their common central point. For Berdyayev, personality is the key to the integrity of the Christian person. For Bonhoeffer, it is the concrete nature of Christian ethics.

These in turn are derived from concepts which are central to their respective theologies, Berdyayev's vision of God-Manhood and Bonhoeffer's of man being conformed with Jesus the Incarnate God. Each of these visions contain very dramatic assertions about the 'divinity' of the Christian. The importance of personality for Berdyayev is derived from his view of God-Manhood. Likewise, the centrality of the concrete ethics for Bonhoeffer derives from his view of conformation, of man being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ.

There are other issues on which their views are similar. On the relationship between Church and state<sup>31</sup> both adopt, essentially, Luther's 'The Two Kingdom Teaching.' Berdyayev also shares with Bonhoeffer a critical view toward a moralistic approach to Christianity. For example, Berdyayev criticized Leo Tolstoy in the following terms:

For L. Tolstoy, Jesus Christ was not the Redeemer and Savior, but a great teacher of life, the herald of rules of life, of moral commandments. ...he did not accept Christ inwardly; Christ remained for him an external teacher of life.<sup>32</sup>

Bonhoeffer offered a similar criticism of Tolstoy,<sup>33</sup> and spoke to the issue more generally:

But just as we misunderstand the form of Christ if we take Him to be essentially the teacher of a pious and good life, so, too, we should misunderstand the [Christian] formation of man if we were to regard it as instruction in the way in which a pious and good life is to be attained.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Nicolas Berdyaev*, 155-158.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>33</sup> *The Communion of Saints*, 152-153.

<sup>34</sup> *Ethics*, 80-81.

There are, of course, differences as well. Perhaps most noticeably on their views of freedom. Berdyayev's biographer spends an entire chapter (chapter 6) discussing his complicated and controversial views of freedom, including his highly criticized doctrine of "uncreated freedom." His views draw heavily from the theosophical teachings of the mystic Jacob Boehme. These would have been quite alien to Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer affirmed Luther's view of freedom, which to Berdyayev appeared to be a denial of freedom of the will. Freedom, inner freedom, is what God gives us when we respond to His call, freedom from the torment of anxiety and freedom in the certainty of our action.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, we should note that this paper is a tentative exploration of the possible connections between Bonhoeffer and the Russian religious philosophers. It remains to determine, if possible, the extent to which his views may have been influenced by their works and his knowledge of the fate of Russian Christianity under Communism.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 280-282.

*Way of Life; Who, What I am. Deaconess Karen Westbrooks exemplifies what Crossings is all about as she lives the Gospel in each moment, with each breath, no matter what she does.*

May 14, 1993

Dear Ed,

For me Crossings has become a way of life--the way I interpret the sun breaking through the darkness, or the song of birds in the spring or in families who seek change. For me Crossings is a way of crossing from death to life. I have become aware of many forms of death and rejoice in life in Christ, which is the greatest prognosis of all.

Crossings is not just something that I've learned. It is who I am; it is what I am. In Christ I am a crossing personified!

I will miss your wit and enthusiasm, but I know that you will be a blessing to many others. I pray that your crossing to Australia will be one of your most satisfying crossings yet.

Peace and power,  
Karen Westbrooks



*Affirmation - a gift of God. Sherman Lee, software engineer and seminarian, joins what seems to be unjoinable - pop culture and the church - in sophisticated 90's style with both coming out on top - under the Cross.*

To Ed with Peace and Joy

### ***THE AFFIRMATION***

One of the greatest challenges facing the Christian church dwells not within her ranks or even from her staunchest critics, but in the silent majority for whom Christ is irrelevant and Christianity is impractical. Part of the problem lies in the many conflicting theologies and religious traditions stemming from the Gospel. But more pressing is that the eternal words of the Gospel and its subsequent theologies do not speak directly to the anxiety of today's people, leading them to reject the church, and that has caused much anguish among church leaders. Indeed, many people seek church only in times of crisis and death, preferring to solve everyday problems and stress with psychological counseling and/or self-help books, resources which speak the language of the people. And yet, these resources, while helpful, seem to heal only part of the afflictions. It is difficult, if not impossible, to pronounce full recovery. Does there exist a Gospel theology which speaks to the very real pain of today's people, if we but go beyond the veneer of "obsolete" language?

Amidst the growing numbers of available self-help books is *I'm Good Enough, I'm Smart Enough and Doggone it, People Like Me: Daily Affirmations* by Stuart Smalley. The book chronicles a year in the life of Stuart, a character created by comedian Al Franken for the television show, *Saturday Night Live*. Stuart, who is not a licensed therapist, but is an alumnus of many twelve-step recovery programs based on Alcoholics Anonymous, has his own television show, *Daily Affirmations*. As television host, Stuart tries to help the audience by sharing his triumphs over the obstacles of daily life, which is not easy considering his problems with over-eating and co-dependency, that is, aiding a loved one's addiction to the point of being addicted to the aiding.

Invariably while describing his achievements, Stuart unwittingly uncovers some shortcoming which nullifies his deeds. In fact, it is his

perfectionism, which helps the blemish dwarf his accomplishments, that is the crux of Stuart's comedy. And it is in these dire moments when Stuart recalls his twelve-step training, declaring, "But that's okay," the cornerstone of his comedy and the climax of each show.

When Stuart focuses on his motto, "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it, people like me," he *affirms* himself to counter his inadequacies, sort of, and end each show on a high note, sort of. Although Al Franken originally conceived the Stuart character to poke at the comic side of this futility, he has evolved the character so fully that it is difficult to separate our laughing at and with him from the crying for the Stuart in each of us. Perhaps the tail of his motto is not just an affirmation but also a simile, people like *him*. Indeed, this book, *I'm Good Enough...* is more an homage to the survivorship found in twelve-step programs, rather than the typical "laughs-only" TV spin-off books. And in this daily journal, Al Franken truly ripens his tragic, comic creation.

Stuart begins the book by revealing the wonderful news that a publisher wants him to write a book based on his television show. After boldly vowing not to rewrite any part of his journal, he embraces the chance to start anew in his January 1st entry, but then regrets singling out that day over any other day of the year. Regret sours into anguish as Stuart wishes he could start over but realizes he cannot break his vow to rewrite.<sup>1</sup>

This little mishap snowballs into such self-doubt that in his January 6th entry, he declares, "I am a fraud!"<sup>2</sup> in trying to write a self-help book, when he cannot even help himself. The next entry is dated January 1st: "As we start the new year on this the first day of January, January 1st, the first day of the new year, we remove all negative thoughts, and remind ourselves how competent, intelligent, and . . . Who am I kidding? I'm sorry, I give up."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Al Franken, *I'm Good Enough, I'm Smart Enough, and Doggone It, People Like Me! (Daily Affirmations by Stuart Smalley)* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), January 1. [This source is indexed by date of journal entry, not by page number.]

<sup>2</sup>Franken, January 6.

<sup>3</sup>Franken, January 1. [The author restarts his indexing when dissatisfied with his first attempt.]

Stuart's next entry is dated February 7th.

This opening sequence epitomizes the entire year: unbridled enthusiasm, slip-up, spiraling descent, withdrawal from daily life to the point of living in bed for almost a month, followed mysteriously by a shot of diminished enthusiasm, tempered by self-justification. Indeed it is Stuart's survivability in the face of the sheer struggle of daily life that is so endearing, and even encouraging. It's almost as if we just stopped for a moment to ponder our goofs, we could easily fall like Stuart, but we'd get up again, maybe.

All the while, Stuart fights his "Critical Inner Voice," whom he calls "CIV." When he feels he's lost control of life, Stuart counters his CIV by shouting "Just take control!". Likewise, "You judge others" becomes "Don't judge others!"; "You judge yourself" becomes "Don't judge myself!"; "You have no self-esteem" becomes "Choose to esteem myself!"; "You're too obsessive and you give power to the object of your obsession" becomes "Don't obsess!"; "You're anxious about anxiety" becomes "Ignore anxiety!"; "You're inadequate" becomes "Just make progress!", and finally "You're not perfect" becomes "But that's okay!"

Stuart, in confronting his CIV head-on in his March 11th entry, "Today I Will Honor My Critical Inner Voice!", realizes he is exhausted from constantly battling his CIV:

"Well, doggone it, why do I have to fight it? Why can't I say, 'Hey, CIV, I hear you. And you are a part of me. I accept you.' 'Oh, yeah?' says CIV. 'You don't know what you're talking about, you worthless moron. If you accept me, you're accepting that you're a useless piece of crap.' 'That's not true,' says I. 'I can accept that you're there, but not buy into the negative things you say.' 'You're even crazier than I thought,' says CIV, 'that's the lamest thing I've ever heard.' 'I knew you'd say that,' I say, 'but I really think I'm on to something here.' 'You on to something? Don't make me--' 'Shuttup!' See? There, I'm fighting it again. I should have just said, 'Critical Inner Voice, that's *your* opinion, and I'm going to recognize it as such. But my opinion is different. So if you don't mind, we'll agree to disagree.'"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Franken, March 11.

Mired in futility, the only bright spot for Stuart is in his Higher Power (HP), the basis of all twelve-step programs. After hitting bottom, Stuart recognizes that he is not truly in control and cannot actually follow through on his affirmations, and that something else must be in control. Only after the fact does he realize that the Higher Power has been kind to him: "My Higher Power must have sent Andrea to me now to help me through this crisis..." This Higher Power never criticizes Stuart, for the HP is only kind. Besides, Stuart is already more critical of himself than he can take.

That Stuart has a Higher Power is acknowledging more than most people are willing to admit: an external power, greater than our own. The very fact that Stuart (and we) feel the exhaustion, the tension, of constantly fighting this force which opposes our intents, even the best of them, demonstrates the weakness of our own abilities. These battles and exhaustion are all sapping the life out of us, to the point of our shutting down ("taking to bed" ), retreating from the battle (TV, movies) or finding some other way to blunt or numb the pain, such as alcohol, drugs, or excessive food. Truly we are left in despair, that is, paralysis, robbed of the fullness and joy of life. And that is definitely not okay.

Stuart's search for answers and cures requires not only that must he feel good, but also that he feel no more pain than he already subjects himself to in his self-criticism. He seeks freedom from his obsessiveness and from his perfectionism. But the best of humanity cannot truly restore life's fullness and joy constantly and consistently. Even the best of philosophy and religions, belief systems which only heap on even more requirements, do not have an adequate response; that is, except for Christianity.

However, Stuart would have a problem with Christianity: as conscientious as Stuart is, God is even more critical -- judgmental, which brings even more pain. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who in wickedness hold back the truth of God [Rom. 1:18],"<sup>5</sup> or as Martin Luther interprets this: "All men are ungodly and wicked, and in their wickedness they suppress the truth, hence they are all deserving of wrath."<sup>6</sup> There is nothing

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<sup>5</sup>Martin Luther, "The Bondage of the Will," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 178.

<sup>6</sup>Luther, p. 179.

humans can do to avoid the wrath of God. Stuart has glimpses of this; where is his Higher Power (HP) when it is not being kind?

We dare not think of this scenario, for what protection do we have from an un-kind, wrathful HP/God? But what about it from the HP/God's perspective? Luther states, "Are we ignorant of what it means to be ignorant of God, not to understand, not to seek after God, not to fear God, to turn aside and become worthless?"<sup>7</sup> Being self-centered in exercising our wills, we deny the HP/God of true dignity and power by ignoring the HP/God<sup>8</sup>. Considering further that our wills barely affect our ability to treat others well, or even fight the "-aholisms," such as alcohol, drugs, rage, pity or whatever, which are ready to consume us, what can we do while confronting the HP/God? Luther continues, "This ignorance of God betokens unbelief, which betokens disobedience, sacrilege and blasphemy toward God; it betokens cruelty and lack of mercy toward our neighbor; it betokens love of self in all the things of God and men. There you have a picture of the glory and power of free choice."<sup>9</sup>

Clearly this sounds like our powerlessness in our futile struggle for life's fullness. And affirmation, in vainly trying to boost ourselves, results only in our denying the power of our enemies, including the CIV and God himself. We are actually worse off than before the affirmation.

The CIV, the greatest foe Stuart acknowledges, constantly reminds him of his affirmations' failings. But in Luther's eyes, the CIV, or conscience, is only part of the plan of God, our true greatest opponent. For Luther, the conscience is part of the Law or commandments: "the entire Scripture of God is divided into two parts: commandments and promises. Although the commandments teach us things that are good, the things taught are not done as soon as they are taught, for the commandments show us what we ought to do but do not give us the power to do it. They are intended to teach man to know himself, that through them he may recognize his inability to do good and may despair of his own ability..."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Luther, p. 185.

<sup>8</sup>Luther, p. 187.

<sup>9</sup>Luther, p. 187.

<sup>10</sup>Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 600.

Stuart knows he is in despair, suffering from "dis-ease," "ill-at-ease-ness,"<sup>11</sup> steeped in "Stinkin' Thinkin'."<sup>12</sup> But Stuart does not know how truly deep his despair delves: condemned to the wrath of God. Or as Stuart might think: apart, separated, alienated from the good of life.

Luther, who like Stuart spent most of his life struggling, has the luxury to be more critical than Stuart, for he knows that despair is not the final word. Luther's luxury examines deeper, for not only does Luther displease others and himself, but he displeases God. And so would Stuart, if he but had this luxury: "One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says, John 11:25, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.'"<sup>13</sup>

What exactly does Luther mean by the Word? The Word:

...is the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies. To preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching. Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God, according to Rom. 10:9: 'If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.' Furthermore, 'Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified' [Rom. 10:4]. Again, in Rom. 1:17, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' The Word of God cannot be received and cherished by any works whatever but only by faith. Therefore it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not any works; for if it could be justified by anything else, it would not need the Word, and consequently it would not need faith.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Franken, January 4.

<sup>12</sup>Franken, January 1.

<sup>13</sup>Luther, "Freedom," p. 597.

<sup>14</sup>Luther, "Freedom," p. 598.

This is the heart of Luther's theology in Luther's language, from which he was able to battle his demons, the doubts of his being pleasing to God.

Stuart might not understand the language, although overall the words sound good, accentuating the upbeat and positive. But some of the words pose difficulty: *sin, righteousness, faith*. Stuart would argue that he has *faith*, but what exactly are *sin* and *righteousness*?

Even if we do not define sin and righteousness, from context it is clear that sin is bad enough from which to die, and righteousness is good enough off of which to live.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, faith is important and everyone does have faith, but for Luther, more important is faith *in what*? Faith is like mental focus, but even more, like spiritual focus. It is what you attach yourself to, or cling to -- the ultimate obsession, the ultimate dependence. It is that from which one draws life-source. Stuart obsesses on many different things, especially his own obsessing. On the other hand, Luther obsesses on God's Son.

In an imaginary conversation, Stuart's boldest and most pressing question to Luther would be, "how does God's Son work, for me?" Luther's reply:

it (faith) unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom ... (this) is the true marriage ... it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil ... Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his. If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of the bride, how shall he not take all that is hers?

Here we have a most pleasing vision not only of communion but of a blessed struggle and victory and salvation and redemption. Christ is God and man in one

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<sup>15</sup>Robert Bertram, lecturing the LSTC Class, *Theology of Martin Luther*, St. Louis, Missouri, Fall 1992.

person. He has neither sinned nor died, and is not condemned, and he cannot sin, die, or be condemned; his righteousness, life and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent. By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride's. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all. Now since it was such a one who did all this, and death and hell could not swallow him up, these were necessarily swallowed up by him in a mighty duel; for his righteousness is greater than the sins of all men, his life stronger than death, his salvation more invincible than hell. Thus the believing soul by means of the pledge of its faith is free in Christ, its bridegroom, free from all sins, secure against death and hell, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of Christ its bridegroom.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the archaic language, the message is clear. God offers a business transaction: if you but have faith, or in Stuart's language, "obsess" on my Son, He will trade you your negatives, which clearly exist and weigh you down, deeper than you can know, for His positives, to live life to its fullest. It is as if Jesus were saying, "Are you dying? You are but an amateur. Allow me, the professional at dying, to die for and with you, for I can do something you cannot: to rise again. And then you will rise with me."<sup>17</sup>

This is a marvelous revelation. For now, Stuart and each of us can face our CIVs, our consciences, and speak *The Affirmation*, not of self, but of God in Christ. As Luther says,

It is clear, then, that a Christian has all that he needs in faith and needs no works to justify him; and if he has no need of works, he has no need of the law; and if he has no need of the law, surely he is free from the law. It is true that 'the law is not laid down for the just' [I Tim. 1:9]. This is that Christian liberty, our faith, which does not include us to live in idleness or wickedness but makes the

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<sup>16</sup>Luther, "Freedom," p. 603-604.

<sup>17</sup>Bertram.

law and works unnecessary for any man's righteousness and salvation.<sup>18</sup>

In the sweet swap on the cross, we die along with our CIVs and their sting, and are born anew, so that our fear becomes trust, our doubt becomes confidence and our obsessions become liberty, all in Christ.

*The Affirmation* is no longer dual-edged. Affirming God and not ourselves contains no false denial of any other powers, for God, in Christ, puts those other powers to death. As Luther further describes faith: "honors whom it trusts with the most reverent and highest regard since it considers him truthful and trustworthy ... So when the soul firmly trusts God's promises, it regards him as truthful and righteous. Nothing more excellent than this can be ascribed to God."<sup>19</sup> In our faith clinging to Christ, our displeasing God transforms beyond merely being pleasing to God, but goes to the point of God delighting in us.

"Uh... different," Stuart might respond, "but I'm not worthy." Luther himself knew all too well he was not worthy, and that is what distinguishes the Gospel as so different, so radical. We are not worthy, but through the cross God makes us worthy. Luther's perspective on how God accomplishes this is found in his opinion on the glory of God:

Now, a man glories in God when he is certain that God is favorable to him and deigns to look kindly upon him, so that the things he does are pleasing in God's sight, or if they are not, they are borne with and pardoned. If then, the enterprise or endeavor of free choice is not sin, but good in God's sight, it can certainly glory and say with confidence as it glories: 'This pleases God, God approves of this, God counts this worthy and accepts it, or at least bears with it and pardons it. For this is the glory of the faithful in God, and those who do not have it are rather put to shame before him.' But Paul here denies this, saying that men are completely devoid of this glory. Experience proves that he is right; for ask all the exercisers of free choice to a man, and if you are able to show me one who can sincerely and honestly say with regard to any effort or endeavor of his own, 'I know that this pleases God,' and I

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<sup>18</sup>Luther, "Freedom," p. 601.

<sup>19</sup>Luther, "Freedom," p. 602.

will admit defeat and yield you the palm. But I know there is not one to be found.<sup>20</sup>

In this quote, Luther was refuting opponents who did not have a full grasp of the Paul's language in his epistle to the Romans. In the original Greek, "glory of God" means how God glories in us, in what we do and who we are. But Paul's Greek was limited in describing the Hebrew tradition, from which Paul originated. Hebraically, "glory of God" is how we glory in God.<sup>21</sup> For us in modern English, this is simply the nuance of preposition, but in Luther's (and Paul's) eyes, if what we do and what we are clings to the cross, we glory in God *and* God glories in us. In Stuart's own terminology, this is the ultimate co-dependency.<sup>22</sup>

How amazing that we fight so defiantly against dependency and co-dependency, and for self-respect, self-dependence, self-reliance, self-assurance, self-justification and self-esteem, all in vain. The harder we try, the more we fail. Even more amazing is how close Stuart is when he recites, "let go and let God," which honors the capricious, whimsical, benevolent-only Higher Power. If he could only complete the phrase, "let go and let God-in-Christ," he would depend and rely upon, affirm, esteem, and glory the Highest Power, God who puts to death and raises to new life, in the sweetest of swaps.

Everything rests on that sweet swap: God affirms us, God esteems us, God glories in us. In conjunction with this, God in the swap gives us the ability to affirm, esteem and glory in God. And in this ultimate co-dependency, we can and get to affirm, esteem, and glorify ourselves, and others.

And that's more than okay, that's wonderfully good news; it is the Gospel. For with the Gospel's message, clutching to Christ, Stuart and the Stuart in each of us can say, "I'm not smart enough, I'm not good enough, but doggone it, God delights in me!"

Amen!

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<sup>20</sup>Luther, "Bondage," p. 196.

<sup>21</sup>Luther, "Bondage," p. 196.

<sup>22</sup>Robin Morgan, student in the LSTC class, *Theology of Martin Luther*, Fall 1992.

**Rejects Singing.** *Vivian Hauser shares the pain and beauty of her time among the homeless in Washington, D.C. In her poetic words we can truly hear the rejects sing.*

*Dedicated to Ed Schroeder*

## WHAT MAKES THE REJECTS SING?

*“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone” (Psalm 118:22).*

“What makes the rejects sing? Psalm 118 says: Though patently rejected by the builders among whom they live, sometimes wrongfully, sometimes rightfully, but always *necessarily* in view of the building program(s) of the builders, the stones have an ally in Jahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Father of Jesus, the Christ, who rehabilitates rejects into his new building, a project whose future is so bright that the rejects already now sing and do their *todah* (their song of thanksgiving for God's *chesedh*--his lovingkindness).” Ed Schroeder

This is my experience, in Crossings sequence, among rejected stones, the homeless at N Street Village, the shelters of Luther Place Memorial Church in Washington, D.C. I had the privilege of spending a year there in the Lutheran Volunteer Corps working at Sarah House, a residential shelter for women.

### **Rejected, future interrupted: The Stones (D-1)**

No Whispering Way or Country Estates--Road's End, perhaps, faraway country certainly. This is 14th and N, a point on a grid. These once-elegant rowhouses are only a few blocks from the White House, embassies, and posh hotels, but this is the wrong side of the street, the subcity. This is home to those with no other, home in its most basic form--shelter.

The seasons are exaggerated here. Winter is dreaded, survival the only issue. In spring and fall the ubiquitous trash bags become raingear and bushes clotheslines. But summer is the worst. While living may be easy somewhere, here it's just hot. Fans push the air, but it is hot, humid air, filled with smells--food, exhaust, garbage, cigarettes, booze, and the sweaty perfume of people living too closely together.

In the mornings a sister from the night shelter, crowned with greens, lustily welcomes ``Day-o, day--ee-o" (not to the delight of neighbors). Another calls ``Taxi, taxi." None stops, except when a manic Marilyn-Monroe type involuntarily waves. In the evenings people fill the streets, waiting for the shelters to open, waiting for the clinic to attend their pain--just waiting.

The volume is loud. Radios boom. Sirens scream. Buses hiss to their stops, and cars never seem to.

About the only choice here is to stay alive. That's what Cora does. Cora is 42, looks 62, and weighs 82. She makes mid-night trips to the hospital--diabetes, arthritis, strokes, heart attacks. On a waste-of-time trip to get an ID card, Cora told me she had been married, had a decent job and money in the bank, but she got sick. When she came home from the hospital, her husband was gone--and her furniture, money, and savings. She couldn't keep a job because of her health; she couldn't keep an apartment because she didn't have a job; etc. etc. ``Hard luck," she says. A social security check came for Cora Sandberg; her name is Sanders. She couldn't cash it anyway--no ID.

Some are young. Petite Martita is still in high school, running from abuse. She won't stay long; too many rules. Martita has gonorrhea. Martita breaks my heart. Freckled Nancy, 19, has her own special brand of jive. Her parents were addicts, and she had her father's baby when she was 13. She trained to be a nurse's aid, but she took off just before graduation. She came to the emergency shelter once or twice more, and later we heard she had had an abortion. She is HIV positive. What future?

The old come too. Iola, barely able to climb the stairs, came when her abusive son took over her house to sell drugs. She waited while the courts did their work. The stories she could tell! Senior-citizen Pat, widowed, recovering from a stroke, frantically applies for jobs. Her bookkeeping skills are obsolete, and she is terrified that this will be her last stop.

Many are mothers, but there are no facilities for children here. Veronica cries for her baby, who knows only his foster mother. How will she support him and two others on wages from McDonald's? Once in a while she finds comfort. Soon she'll have another baby to cry over.

Pregnant women need special shelters--like Mother Theresa's. (I was there one day AFTER Mother Theresa!) Cute, sweet Bonnie, a rounded, 19-year-old, black woman who had already had 3 abortions,

didn't go to high school, can't hold a job, and doesn't much care what happens, was pregnant--for the 5th time!! When she had to leave our shelter (for stealing) we went to Mother Theresa's. Sister Suma Rani, in the white and blue habit of the Sisters of Mercy, met us at the door. (It's disconcerting to have Mother Theresa's order caring for our poor.) The shelter is convent-like, very clean and very strict--compulsory prayers, meditation. I watched girls-just-want-to-have-fun Bonnie listening to the rules and despaired, but Bonnie's little-girl voice said, ``Well, I guess I can try." Regrettably, she only tried one night.

The sisters of Mary Magdalene walk a few blocks south, against a backdrop of X-rated movies. Traffic is bumper-to-bumper, and the women walk between cars. Drugs are free to women, but eventually they have to pay. A few get out; Tammy didn't. Black, blonde, and sexy at 18, Tammy was full of life. She stayed a few nights, but cooking, cleaning, and curfews were not her idea of fun. She was seen again later, walking the street--stoned.

Becky almost made it. Rebecca Margaret Carpenter, former prostitute and recovering addict, lived at Sarah House for three months. She was loud, emotional, erratic; she laughed and cried and complained, correctly accusing that I didn't know anything about her life. She had friends, went to GED classes, looked for work, attended Bible Class. She had plans. At night, she sobbed out her pain to Michael, who assured her that Jesus cared. Becky loved Jesus, the one she knew by an actor's soft eyes in an old movie. One Friday Becky was found in a dumpster, face-down, half-dressed--Jane Doe #8-88. It's hard to know when the homeless are missing. She had been gone two days when the morgue called. The family of homeless mourned. Connie played the organ (not too well), a volunteer and Eliza sang Amazing Grace (barely heard), and we read Psalm 23 and the Resurrection texts. Then we buried Becky's ashes in the churchyard. The women were quiet and withdrawn. They felt vulnerable and disposable--no families, or homes, or graves, either.

Care-less Becky walked the streets,  
Bleached blonde hair; clothes too tight.  
But her sisters in the shelter  
Heard her crying late at night.  
Victimless they say her crimes;  
I don't see it quite that way.  
Men and drugs abused her body,  
And when done, threw it away  
in the dumpster  
where we found her--  
Just the city's poor white trash.

In the emergency shelter, life is routinely bizarre, and some, like Ellie, cannot cope with the voices within, much less the voices outside.

Safe within the church's shadow  
Ellie wrapped herself in white  
Clapped and danced and sang her praises,  
None but birds within her sight.  
In the city, strange and homeless  
Can't escape the birds of prey.  
Now her feathered congregation  
Marks her final resting place.

Ellie was found one morning, an umbrella stuffed down her throat.  
Becky and Ellie had met the final rejecter--death.

Oh, Christ, can you still pray  
As we crucify anew,  
Father won't you please forgive them?  
They just don't know what they do.

Wendy knew about death, too--living death--imprisonment. Wendy, very young and not very intelligent, lived with two children in an unheated apartment. When her mother died, Wendy could no longer cope, and when the baby wouldn't stop crying, she hit him. Now she was serving 5-15 years for involuntary manslaughter. After two years, public

defenders asked us to take her. I went twice to prison and once to court on her behalf. Now she is one of us.

**These are the stones. What could anyone build with these? Builders reject these stones, ex officio, and so do I (D-2).**

Why must there be shelters? Where are the families? Where are the government programs? Why don't they work? (The public wants to know why the people don't work.) The problem is so large and so complex there seems no solution.

It's understandable. Landlords can't keep tenants who can't pay rent. And moving-in costs include 1 month advance rent, 1 month security deposit, a deposit on the utilities. Then there's furniture, and food, and . . .

Employers can't depend on employees without reliable child-care and transportation, and few use the unskilled and uneducated. (When you have a baby at 14, you probably don't finish high school.) Those that can--fast food, hotel service, janitorial--offer minimum wages and erratic hours. They don't offer sick leave, vacation days, insurance, benefits, or security.

And the ill? Since de-institutionalization a few decades ago, mental health providers work to move people out, but not many hospitals could be worse than the streets! So patients are stabilized and sent where? To shelters? Out on their own? Then medication isn't taken, and soon it begins again. Some estimate that 1/3-1/2 of the homeless are mentally ill. And they are difficult to care for. Prescriptions are hard to get, and even harder to administer. Psychotic behavior cannot be tolerated in a room of women sleeping bed-to-bed. The police will come--when they get around to it--and remove the patient, but the next day she is back.

Improperly clothed, inadequately fed, without haircuts, barely able to keep clean, wrong sex, wrong race. We would rather not see them. And they know it. Lily Tomlin's Trudy says, "I don't mind. No matter how much contempt I have for society, it's nothing compared to the contempt society has for me."<sup>1</sup> For one year, I shared their neighborhood--

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<sup>1</sup>Jane Wagner, *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe: The Broadway Smash Starring Lily Tomlin*. New York: Harper Row, 1987.

a stone of sorts too. But I can leave. I am white, educated, and respectable.

And I am the establishment. To build, maintain, and protect this community, I must reject the people I came to help--ex officio. Stoned, drunk, abusive, violent--they can't stay. Women who can't keep the rules or care for themselves don't belong here. Sarah House takes the cream of the crop, those able to work or go to school--those most likely to get out. My job is to select them, and reject them, and remove them when they don't fit--those like Bonnie and my namesake, Vivian.

Vivian was my favorite, an oversized woman with a mouth to match. She could never be ignored, and she never ignored anything. I let her push at the rules, but she pushed once too often and was sent one notch down the continuum of shelters. The next night she was in the kitchen, screaming at me. I warned I would call the police if she didn't leave. She didn't, and I did.

Yvette had to leave. As quiet and gentle as Vivian was loud, she was streetwise and tough, living in an abandoned building without electricity and heat--with rats and drug dealers. I took her in because she was afraid and I was afraid for her. She had to be up at 3 A.M. for her hotel job--more rule bending. Denise, however, wouldn't bend, and one evening pulled a knife. In a flash, Yvette had her pinned to the floor. We restrained them until police removed them--both. I never saw Yvette again. Denise showed up from time to time, but was not admitted to the shelters--even under another name.

Another decision, made without much thought, caused 2nd, 3rd, and 4th thoughts. Dawn, white, in her late 20's, was pleasant and bright, a school teacher running from a fundamentalistic sect. I liked her and waived the waiting period. The first day she worked to get her teaching credentials. She was calm, but the shelter was tense. The second day she antagonized several residents, all black. On the third day she had to be restrained from attacking a black woman, and on the fourth I asked her to leave. She stood outside ranting that the place was ``run by niggers."

The isms operate among the homeless too. The women have their own pecking order--shades of color, degrees of illness, levels of coolness. Phyllis, black as night, hates black men most, then black women, then white men. As a white woman, I am her closest friend. When she first became ill, her husband locked her in the house--for 1-1/2 years. When the authorities were alerted, they found her emaciated and catatonic.

After a year in a hospital, she came to us. She did well for awhile, but in spite of lithium, deteriorated before our eyes. The women, fearful, isolated her further. She ate cups of sugar; piled mountains of food on her plate, eating none of it; sat on napkins; hid in the bathroom. Her anger was tangible. We begged mental health workers to help. She wanted to stay, but we couldn't let her. She couldn't make it on her own, and she  
c o u l d n ' t            l i v e            w i t h            o t h e r s .

**I am a builder--and a rejecter. God says yes to rejected, no to rejecters--and that's me (D-3).**

Now the problem is God-sized. I am part of the action and inaction of society, and on a one-to-one basis, I do no better. I don't have the power or skill to fix lives. Most often I don't even want to. And I have an "attitude." I have more; I know more; I know what's best; I could not be where they are. But these are God's people, of his creation and his love, people for whom Christ died. Phyllis and Yvette and Dawn are his, and he hears their pain. My role now separates me from him. Now I must face my inability to build and look at the rough edges, the distortion, the ugliness that make me an unsuitable stone for God's building.

"St. Vincent de Paul, the 17th-century saint known for his work among the poor, is reported to have said on his deathbed, 'We must be very humble and ask forgiveness of the poor, because we have given them charity.'"<sup>2</sup> God, forgive my charity.

The rejected can be rejecters too, rejecting God's offer and finding their own gods in alcohol, drugs, and easy money. Or finding nothing, they sink into despair and hopelessness. God forgive their refusal.

And he does. Forgives us all.

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<sup>2</sup>Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, "The Task of the Servant of God: 2 Isaiah," *The Divine Passion*, Nashville: The Upper Room, 1988.

**God uses rejected stones to build when Christ is the cornerstone (P-1).**

Bad news becomes good news. Throughout history, God identified with the oppressed and rejected, from the Hebrews in Egypt to the Samaritans of Christ's time. Who else but Christ would have associated with prostitutes and tax collectors and started a church with fishermen? And he knew homelessness--no room in the inn, nowhere to lay his head. His words and ministry identified him with the poor--in money and in spirit.

Christ's message to the women of N Street is this: His story is their story, and his story has a future guaranteed by his final rejection, on the cross. When God sees the rejected, when God sees me, he sees stones worthy of his building plans on earth and his home in heaven--because he sees us all through Christ, the cornerstone that can bear the burden of all these strange stones.

That good news is told on N Street in countless acts of caring--when it is not always clear who is helping and who is being helped.

It is told, too, when the women gather one Sunday each month for Word and Sacrament--and food. The church serves breakfast, not coffee and doughnuts, but sausage, bacon and eggs, french toast, hash browns, fruit, homemade breads, coffeecakes, juices, milk, and coffee. The tables have tablecloths and flowers. After the meal, chairs are rearranged, and worship begins with this strange congregation. Vicki, in strapless, sequined top and beret (donations!!), who can't say two intelligible sentences, reads the first lesson flawlessly, and Florence, who barely raises her eyes to speak, reads the second and returns to her chair, grinning. The ``choir" sings ``Jesus Loves Me" with the heartfelt sincerity of 3-year-olds. Iola belts out ``Amazing Grace" in the richest alto imaginable. The pastor tells that God loves them (and me) and sent Jesus as their Savior. Their attention is riveted. The Lord's Supper is offered, and only I am reluctant. I share their daily bread. Do I share this meal too? Common cup? My body and blood given for you Florence and Connie and Jewell--and Vivian. Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**There is courage and hope, appropriated from a loving God (P-2).**

There are victories. Sometimes we are a community; sometimes this is a home and family--the first to many. The women learn skills, gain

self-respect, and assume responsibilities. They help each other. June patiently helps Connie with her homework every night, Pam washes dishes for Pat, and Mary fixes Theresa's hair.

Some are empowered. Pam, stranded in D.C. and depressed, finds health, a job, a place of her own, and plans her return to Hawaii. Michael holds a job and is content in her own tiny space. Debbie draws and writes and sends resumes. Iola has her house back and shares it with her grandson. Connie graduates from secretarial school, finds a good job and a safe place to live. Sometimes we give more than band-aids to these wounded. Sometimes this sisterhood of the oppressed is home.

**And there are songs from the rebuilt--todahs for God's chesedh (P-3).**

The women need to give. I don't know why, but I take it as evidence of God, the first and best giver, within them. Eva, the stereotypical bag lady, gave me a lipstick for my birthday. The thought of her, lugging her trash bags, into a store to spend her panhandled quarters on lipstick makes me cry. Cora insisted I take earrings from her box of treasures, and twice Vivian gave me pins she was wearing. When the year ended the women gave me a surprise party. I was so pleased--and so proud of them.

Michael taped Gospel music to remind me that I am never alone, and added her own encouraging message (and I had come to help her). Debbie sat on the steps one long hot day and drew the rowhouses. "Love Street" she wrote on the street sign. Her story is a miracle, and she wrote affectionately to say thanks. Jewell lives in her own room, paid for by work in a motel where the rates are by the hour and the rooms littered with needles and condoms. She struggles to stay dry. Still, Jewell claims all the women as her family. She calls occasionally, long-distance, from a pay phone, to see if I'm OK.

Two women defy categories, their spirit transcending their circumstances. Eva epitomizes the rejected and the rejecting. Of indeterminate age, Eva is the senior resident. No-one knows where she came from or why. She was coaxed in when the shelter first opened. She panhandles during the day, cigarette in hand. She has a tic, vaguely twirling her fingers in front of her nose. She hallucinates and talks nonsense much of the time, often abusively, but she can be incredibly gracious, noticing and appreciating every kindness. She washes,

shampoos, and changes clothes only when required. She arranges pictures of farm animals and flowers beneath her covers, and sleeps on top. Eva is conscientious and a good cook, but others are skeptical. They are less nervous when the food is cooked, but Eva likes tuna salad and potato salad. Once when we had neckbones and beans over rice, a favorite of the women, laughing and gagging sounds came from down the table. Finally, someone explained. Eva had gone to the stove behind me, dumped her chewed-on bones back into the pot, and refilled her bowl. No-one would eat more. Poor Eva didn't know what was wrong (and neither did those who ate later). Somehow though, Eva is everyone's favorite. The first revulsion turns to love. The determination to make her conform resolves to let her be.

Because I'm thankful that Michael listened to Becky, I want to tell about her too. Although named for a wished-for son, I think Michael is more than nominally linked to the archangel. Michael, almost 50, is an attractive black woman (caramel, she says). When children ask about her birthmarks, she tells them God gave her special coloring--like a leopard. Although Michael dresses like a Muslim--caftans and draped head (covered in the presence of men), she is Coptic Christian and calls Jesus "Master." She is spiritual advisor and resident guru of Sarah House, but not pious. Earthy laughter comes from her toes. She's unique--a genius, I think. When I reached for a pan on the cabinets, Michael helped and told about playing basketball. When the talk was self-defense, Michael demonstrated karate. I thought it grandiose thinking, until one day when I was trying to read in French to Eliza (who had the grace to laugh only occasionally), Michael took the book and read fluently, apologizing that time had dulled her French. When someone pointed out that Siddhartha (a local restaurant) was named for Buddha, Michael elaborated on its Sanskrit roots. She cooks like Julia Child (vegetarian, of course) and sings like an angel. She works in a group home for terminal AIDS patients and gives them nursing care and emotional support. I treat Michael with sincere respect, and she responds in kind. Why is she there? I don't know exactly, but there's something vaguely paranoid . . .

I will always be grateful for the privilege of being on N Street. I don't pretend to have shared the lives of those women; I was a visitor. I have no solutions to the problem of homelessness. I have little understanding of the causes. I have no illusion that my year diminished the problem.

But I have stories, and they are my way of giving thanks. Someone said the best part of Scripture was the genealogies. If God thought it important to write down those names, he must remember mine, too--and theirs. Their names are my todahs.\*

Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good  
And his lovingkindness endures forever.

Vivian E. Hauser  
St. Louis, Missouri

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\* My todahs also include the name of Ed Schroeder, who gave me a framework to consider my experience, and who says the Gospel so even a stone can hear it.



***Dear Ed.*** *Lorenz Bohlmann , a recent Crosser, but long-time faithful Christian, shares his heart about Ed's impact on his life.*

Dear Ed,

I am not good at choosing the right words, but I want to say that I benefitted immensely from your classes. I certainly hate to see you leave St. Louis, but I understand you have to go where you are needed most and I wish you God's blessings on your new venture.

I would have been attending more classes, but I have some personal challenges to work out first.

Yours in Christ,  
Lorenz Bohlman



***Harvesting the Divine Fruits.** Irmgard Koch, retired English teacher and veteran Crossings student par excellence, digs deep into Ed's love of the land and finds the Seed from which all of Crossings spring.*

## ***WATANABE IMAGES THE VINE***

First you are captivated by Jesus' face, a large, oval, oriental one. Naturally the face has to be one from his own people, the Japanese. The artist then concentrates attention on Jesus' elongated forefinger, which points to the twisting branches. Now you see that Watanabe wants to picture "I am the vine, you are the branches." Another feature which captivates you with disproportionate size is the fruit, the grapes. But why should not the fruit of Father Vinegrower be large? You recall, "He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit." Does Watanabe suggest that a good deal of pruning has preceded the rich growth?

### **After-Image**

Enter another kind of gardener-artist. This one has cultivated student-gardens, and he uses plenty of Father's Miracle Gro. And the gardens produce. The students learn and grow. Their tendrils reach outward. They question: How can we reach uninterested friends and relatives? How can we give more unstintingly of ourselves? Can we really temper the ill winds of politics? The pointer-finger shoots out. "There he is, folks. The Vine. The Source. That Source is direct--vine to consumer-branches. There's no question about the harvest. Your Vine is dependable. That's what I depend upon. I invite you to join the garden party, to celebrate!



***En-courage-r to be liberated.** Pastor/Professor Michael Hoy brings together two of Ed's passions - the voices of the Reformers speaking directly to the oppressed and marginalized of today, and the Great-Liberator-Christ, who crosses all cultural and temporal boundaries.*

## ***THE COURAGE TO BE LIBERATED***

*Thesis: The most liberating use of Christ and his Gospel (**promissio**) must necessarily presuppose, but also have the last word over, that critical, mortifying reality in our lives, God's Law (**lex**). The courage to be liberated ("faith") must face God's **lex** and grasp, "in spite of" it, God's **promissio** in Christ. This Pauline-Lutheran truth claim can provide a more critical, but also a more promising, appraisal of one of the most courageous contemporary movements "in spite of" critical obstacles--Liberation Theology.*

I admit that the theological import of this thesis has been used by other representatives in the Pauline-Lutheran trajectory. Edward H. Schroeder, for example, has theologically defined death and the liberation from death as follows: "The fuller truth about death . . . is that my creator encounters me as adversary in a situation that I cannot handle. But although that is the fuller truth about death, it is not the full truth about God. God's last word to me and about me is Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected. With that last word and full truth about the Creator, I am *liberated* [!] not only from death's sting and clout, but also from hangups that might inhibit me from admitting the fuller truth about death."<sup>1</sup> What is hopefully novel in the use of this thesis is how we will bring it to bear on Liberation Theology.

Until recently, the Pauline-Lutheran trajectory was looked upon with jaundiced eye by proponents of Liberation Theology. Their reasons are clear enough: Luther and the Reformation are perceived as both validating the *status quo* and as denying human beings "causality" in the

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<sup>1</sup>Edward H. Schroeder, "Encountering the Last Enemy," *dialog* 11:3 (Summer, 1972), 194. Italics mine.

work of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Lutheran counter-arguments surfaced charging Liberation Theology with a reckless abandon to a Marxist concept of "praxis" and superficial connections between justification and justice.<sup>3</sup> This polemical exchange would seem to undermine the possibility of any fruitful relationship or connection.

However, within the past few years two monographs have been published which seek to reinforce the connection between Luther and Liberation Theology.<sup>4</sup> Richard Shaull, a Reformed theologian, and Walter Altmann, a Lutheran, have sought in their texts to remain faithful to their own Reformation heritage; but they also have had experience in the Latin American context as avowed liberation theologians in their own right. Furthermore, they both testify to their participation in efforts within Latin America to enhance the dialogue between the confessional heritage of the Reformation and Liberation Theology.<sup>5</sup>

Shaull, writing from his Reformed background, highlights the significant contributions of the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anabaptist Reformation for Liberation Theology. Altmann focuses exclusively on

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<sup>2</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, S.J., *The Liberation of Theology*, translated by John Drury, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), 142-151; Jose Miguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 22-25.

<sup>3</sup>Carl E. Braaten, *The Apostolic Imperative: Nature and Aim of the Church's Mission and Ministry*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 92-114; Braaten, *Justification: The Article By Which the Church Stands or Falls*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 120-121; Gerhard O. Forde, "The Viability of Luther Today: A North American Perspective," *Word & World* 7:1 (Winter, 1987), 22-31.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Shaull, *The Reformation and Liberation of Theology: Insights for the Challenge of Today* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); Walter Altmann, *Luther and Liberation: A Latin American Perspective*, translated by Mary M. Solberg (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup>Richard Shaull notes the Departamento Ecumenico de Investigaciones in San Jose, Costa Rica, where Latin American pastors and lay persons are brought together "to study their particular confessional heritages in the light of the liberation struggle and liberation theology." Shaull, *The Reformation and Liberation Theology*, 12. Walter Altmann shares how his own work was shaped by his invitation to speak on "Luther's positions on some key social-ethical questions" at the Instituto Superior Evangelico de Estudios Teologicos (ISEDET) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Altmann, *Luther and Liberation*, ix.

Luther's contribution to Liberation Theology. Both explore common theological themes in their analysis (e.g., justification by faith, the Bible, ecclesiology, the "two kingdoms" of "church and state"). Though there are differences between them, especially in methodology, their arguments may be seen as complimentary. We will not be able to explore in detail all the issues they present. However, we will seek to examine the positions of Shaull and Altmann particularly with regard to their understandings of the contribution of Luther vis-a-vis the courage ("faith") of the Latin American life-and-death struggle for liberation; and we will highlight the challenging implications of these positions for those outside the Latin American context.

### **Shaull: The Courage to be Liberated in the Struggle of the Poor and Marginalized**

Shaull is not shy about using the word "faith" to describe the liberation experience of the Christian base communities, which he calls the "New Reformation." "Sustained by their faith and their life together, they have become a significant force for the transformation of their society."<sup>6</sup> By contrast, Shaull sees many of his North American Protestant readers belonging to "religious institutions that have settled into a process of repetition and stagnation. But our faith connects us with a Power capable of breaking this bondage and bringing life out of death."<sup>7</sup> Because the faith is so vital to the cause of liberation, and because such faith is especially evident in the lives of those engaged in that "struggle," Shaull believes that the real initiative for liberation "may well come from those who have been kept at the margins of our churches," specifically, women, minorities, and those who dare to challenge "the established order."<sup>8</sup>

Shaull views the theological enterprise of Luther and the Reformation as "fundamentally a movement of *spiritual* liberation, which cut to the heart of the struggle for liberation from oppression in that time

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<sup>6</sup>Shaull, *The Reformation and Liberation Theology*, 17.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 17, 22.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

and place."<sup>9</sup> He acknowledges "justification by faith" as being central to Luther's gospel and his biblical hermeneutic; but he believes that the more accurate biblical hermeneutic for today is "God's concern for the poor and marginal and God's dynamic action in history to offer liberation in the *fullest sense*."<sup>10</sup>

Shaull argues that Luther's "religious" struggle in the sixteenth century was conditioned by the framework of medieval Christendom, where "the church was at the center of society, and religion provided the milieu in which women and men lived and moved and had their being."<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the church inherited tremendous economic and political power, and sought to solidify that power by appealing to a divinely legitimated "hierarchical structure of society" whereby God's authority "flowed downward" (what we might call "trickled down") from Christ to the pope, to bishops, to priests, and then to the laity. But "the real power of domination" was in the oppression of the peoples' spirits through the hierarchical-sacramental system: "as long as people were supremely concerned about their eternal salvation and were convinced that grace was available to them only through this means, they were oppressed in the core of their beings and there could be no liberation until that domination was broken."<sup>12</sup> Martin Luther, therefore, enters as the "great liberator" by challenging this system and undercutting its theological tenets: "The impossible problem of trying to justify oneself before God, to which Luther could find no solution, has been solved--*by God*. God takes the initiative in coming to us. God approaches us directly, without intermediaries. And God offers us, freely, everything of which we are incapable; we are not only forgiven but stand before God justified. And all this is daily available to us, on one condition alone: that we dare to

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 19-20. Shaull believed that Luther was so preoccupied with this spiritual liberation that he could not devote adequate "attention to the task of working out its implications for the social and political realms."

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 20-21. Italics mine.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 27-29.

accept it, trusting completely in the promises of this God. In other words, that we live by faith."<sup>13</sup>

Shaull then asks how this contribution of the Reformation can contribute to the New Reformation of liberation today. His answer is that Luther's contribution can only be of value if it is "reactivated." "And it will be reactivated, as we *dare to situate ourselves on the frontier of the human struggle of our time*, as Luther did in his. . . ." <sup>14</sup> "At this point we have one great advantage over Luther. We don't have to go through an agonizing struggle for years, as he did, to find that message and reality for our time. We now know that the frontier of God's redemptive action is *where the vast numbers of poor and oppressed peoples of the world are*."<sup>15</sup>

### **Altmann: The Courage to Be Liberated in the Struggle Against Evil**

Like Shaull, Altmann affirms that Luther's discovery, or rediscovery, of justification by faith was a "profound personal experience" which helped to undermine the ecclesiastical system of his day. But Altmann's greater adeptness with Luther's writings also leads him to acknowledge two further points: that christology, for Luther, plays a significant role in justification; and that the element of "passivity" in justification did not mean, for Luther, "ethical passivity."<sup>16</sup> In fact, Altmann affirms what Shaull did not, that Luther made "profound economic and social reforms."<sup>17</sup>

With regard to the Latin American context, Altmann claims that justification by faith can play "two liberating roles." "First, it can function as a critical principle with respect to the institutional church when the church interposes itself between God's liberating activity and human activity for liberation. . . . Justification by faith (and only by faith) unmasks the ecclesiastical demands with which the church stops being an

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 30-31. Shaull will later explicate how this understanding then gave birth to Luther's concept of "the priesthood of all believers" as a substitute for the hierarchical-sacramental system. Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 42-43. Italics mine.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 43. Italics mine.

<sup>16</sup>Altmann, *Luther and Liberation*, 37.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 3.

instrument of salvation and transforms itself into another system of domination. Second, it is not difficult to trace a route from justification by grace (and only by grace) toward the inalienable value of every human being. . . . Over against the multiplicity of ideological and social claims such as production and property, culture and power, the valuing of the human being for what he or she *is*, even and especially in deficiency, weakness, impotence, and marginality, returns us to the path that leads to Jesus of Nazareth, born in a stable and killed on a cross."<sup>18</sup>

This last sentence alludes to two key elements in Luther's christology, which is central to Luther's doctrine of justification. Altmann highlights the two elements of Jesus' "dependence" and the "combative" nature of the cross. The dependence of Christ is based on the doctrine of kenosis ("emptying," Philippians 2:5-11) which Altmann sees evident in Luther's explanation to the second article of the Creed and in his Christmas sermons.<sup>19</sup> The cross of Christ marks a "battle against tyrannical powers" from which Christ emerges as victorious (*Christus victor*).<sup>20</sup> The corresponding implications of these two components in Luther's christology for the Latin American context are the solidarity of the historical Jesus "at the side of those who are in need, who are marginalized, and who suffer because of injustice and oppression," and the call for greater boldness in the struggle. "Here, there is no defeated resignation but rather shared and redemptive suffering. . . . His cross is not defeat, but rather the victorious culmination of an all-out battle."<sup>21</sup> As Shaul calls for North American Protestants to have "faith" for the struggle, so Altmann calls Lutherans to the vital perception and work of liberation: "Linked together with Christ by his redeeming work, we are liberating partners in the experience of the cross and in the struggle against evil today."<sup>22</sup>

### **The Courage to Be--Liberated**

Before we examine more carefully the positions of Shaul and Altmann in light of our opening thesis, we will carry out such an

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 20, 24.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 25.

examination of the position of Paul Tillich on "the courage to be," as he developed it several decades ago in a publication by the same title.<sup>23</sup> The decision here is not random or incidental, for it is Walter Altmann who explicitly mentions, and favorably, Tillich's exchanging of Luther's terminology of "justification" for new terminology ("acceptance") to provide the "more appropriate response" to the "problems of our time." This allows Altmann to argue for the use of other terminology (specifically, "liberation") for our own age.<sup>24</sup>

Tillich defined "courage," or the "courage to be," as "the self-affirmation of being *in spite of* nonbeing." As such, courage includes the element of "risk" and the threat of "losing one's world in an empty self-relatedness."<sup>25</sup> Tillich's favored use of the phrase "in spite of" is traceable to Luther. "Again and again he [Luther] uses the word *trotz*, 'in spite of.' In spite of all the negativities which he experienced, in spite of the anxiety which dominated that period, he derived the power of self-affirmation from his unshakable confidence in God and from the personal encounter with him."<sup>26</sup> Luther is Tillich's premier example of the human being with the "courage of confidence," and perhaps also that unique "courage" which Tillich calls "faith."<sup>27</sup>

Tillich does affirm that Luther and the Reformation brought "immense *liberation*" to the people of the sixteenth century with their accent on justification *sola fide*. For Tillich, "justification by faith" and "accepting acceptance though being unacceptable" are equivalent concepts.<sup>28</sup> Tillich favors the latter concept over the "original phrasing" of "justification by faith," which, according to Tillich, "has become

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<sup>23</sup>Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

<sup>24</sup>Altmann, *Luther and Liberation*, 41. Cf. *Ibid.*, 4-5, 142.

<sup>25</sup>Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 155. Italics mine.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 161, 167. Tillich defines "faith" as that which "embraces both mystical participation and personal confidence" as "the state of being grasped by the power of being-itself." *Ibid.*, 160, 172. Tillich does not explicitly say that Luther had such "faith," but certainly alludes strongly to that fact. *Ibid.*, 171, 189-190.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 164-165.

incomprehensible."<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, as Altmann rightly notes, Tillich believes that "the anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness is dominant" in the modern era, whereas the "anxiety of guilt and condemnation" (e.g., Luther's *Anfechtung*) was more dominant in the sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

Tillich resolves his own depicted problem of "doubt and meaninglessness" by seeking to absorb it into the "ground of being" (God). His solution, therefore, is strictly ontological. He affirms the courageous doubter, or the one with "courage of despair," as having "faith" when they accept their despair and meaninglessness;<sup>31</sup> for in accepting one's negation, they are united in that negation which is an essential part of God's own being. "Nonbeing makes God a living God. Without the No he has to overcome in himself and in his creature, the divine Yes to himself would be lifeless. There would be no revelation of the ground of being, there would be no life."<sup>32</sup> It is in this ontological light that we must read Tillich's conclusion: "*The courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt.*"<sup>33</sup> Tillich believed that this statement had the support of Luther's theology. Perhaps if this statement were read with radical *christological* implications, and not simply *ontologically* (as Tillich clearly does), it might be acceptable. However, as it stands, it does not enjoy the support of Luther's theology.

The point can be made clearer perhaps if we see how Tillich answers Luther's own personal experiences of *Anfechtung*: "For him [Luther] this was not the last word. *The last word was the first*

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<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 173. Note that Tillich does not contend here that the anxiety of guilt and condemnation is lacking altogether. "It is surprising how much anxiety of guilt comes to the surface in psychoanalysis and personal counseling." Nevertheless, he attributes this to "puritan and bourgeois repression of vital strivings," even as he attributes the guilt feelings in the Middle Ages to "the preaching of hell and purgatory."

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 175-176. "The act of accepting meaninglessness is in itself a meaningful act. It is an act of faith." Cf. also Paul Tillich, "Rechtfertigung und Zweifel," *Offenbarung und Glaube, Band 8, Gesammelte Werke* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1970), 85-100.

<sup>32</sup>Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 180.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 190.

*commandment, the statement that God is God.* It reminded him of the unconditional element in human experience of which one can be aware even in the abyss of meaninglessness. *And this awareness saved him.*"<sup>34</sup> But is this truly the case? As Altmann correctly notes, in Luther's own historical recounting of his life and conversion in the *Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings*, neither the first commandment nor the awareness that "God is God" was salvific. In fact, that was part of the problem for Luther, who described his situation as "crushed by every kind of calamity *by the law of the decalogue*" and threatened by God's "wrath." But, Luther recounts his experience of the "mercy of God" only when he came to trust in "the gospel" as that "passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith."<sup>35</sup>

Tillich is quite formidable in his willingness to take the plight of the human condition to the *existential* extreme to which he takes it. So for that matter are H. Richard Niebuhr in his call to responsibility "in the contradictoriness of our existence" and in the face of negative "altercations;"<sup>36</sup> or social theorist Alvin Gouldner in calling for the "culture of critical discourse" (CCD) to "put its hands around its own throat, and see how long it can squeeze."<sup>37</sup> The issue is whether Tillich in his ontological safety net, or H. Richard Niebuhr in his voucher that "whatever is, is good,"<sup>38</sup> takes the matter of the human plight to its proper *theological* extreme--under God's legal criticism. Does he take the human condition *that* seriously--as seriously as Paul and Luther did, and more important, as seriously as God does in criticizing his creatures to a just and deserved death? For that serious a problem, the only adequate solution is the one which God offers to us--taking that critical reality upon himself in Jesus Christ and suffering it out of existence, and giving to us the benefits of his Lordship over death (righteousness, forgiveness, eternal

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<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 171. Italics mine.

<sup>35</sup>LW 34:337. Cf. Altmann, *Luther and Liberation*, 31.

<sup>36</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 140, 162.

<sup>37</sup>Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 60.

<sup>38</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 125. Gouldner, who was an atheist, was also willing to carry "auto-critique" only so far--never to the radical point of death.

life). That liberation in Christ, "in spite of" God's Law, comes to us *sola fide*.

### **The Courage to be Liberated: Having the Last Word**

The positions of Richard Shaull and Walter Altmann on Luther's contributions to Liberation Theology will be strengthened if we reexamine them in the light of our opening thesis. Shaull, we will recall, distinguishes Luther's hermeneutic of "justification by faith" from the need for a contemporary, a biblical hermeneutic which takes into consideration God's concern for the poor and marginalized and God's historical involvement to foster liberation "in the fullest sense." This distinction will need to be challenged. First of all, the Lutheran hermeneutic of "justification by faith" originates from within the Scripture (specifically, from St. Paul). Secondly, even though historical distance could not permit Luther to envision our particular concerns about liberation today, it need not mean that the hermeneutic of "justification by faith" has nothing to say to those concerns. Thirdly, we might want to consider what would be lost if we abandoned the hermeneutic of "justification by faith" in favor of a new hermeneutic. Most assuredly what would be lost is the very thing which Shaull wants to affirm-- liberation "in the fullest sense." To be sure, God's concern for the poor and marginalized can be seen in the Scriptures; but without the hermeneutical principal of "justification by faith," it might not be seen as God's *merciful and/or legal* concern (for which we may be his chosen agents). Furthermore, the liberation "in the fullest sense" is not simply in overcoming the political and institutional barriers, which is all that Shaull acknowledges. It needs to get to that ethical level; but it needs to start where the fuller problem exists--in our relationship with God. Shaull seems to miss out on this depth dimension when he regards Luther's discovery of "justification by faith" as liberating "women and men from *bondage at the center of their beings*."<sup>39</sup> It may be true that there is

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<sup>39</sup>Shaull, *The Reformation and Liberation Theology*, 32. Italics mine. Shaull, on the same page, also shares this "slice-of-life" case and explanation: "I had a new sense of what this [Luther's "justification by faith"] must have meant for many at that time as I recently took part in an intensive workshop that focused on personal growth and the cultivation of interpersonal relationships. Those who took part in it were helped to identify clearly *out of their pasts and in their personalities* that kept them from living fully. They also began to get more in touch with resources and energies *within themselves* that they could draw on to overcome these obstacles." Italics mine.

"bondage" there, but this does not reach to the theological dimension of the bondage to sin, let alone the bondage of the *servo arbitrio*. To only offer this consolation is not to set people free, but to leave them in their bondage. Furthermore, to emphasize, as Shaull does, that "God approaches us directly" is not necessarily liberating, "good news." If we are to truly take the courageous step of situating ourselves "on the frontier of the human struggle of our time," we cannot do so without considering that neglected frontier of our relationship with God which Luther's "justification by faith" was not afraid to explore.

Altmann, for his part, regards Luther's "juridical terminology of justification" as dated: "we would be deceiving ourselves if we thought that the doctrine of justification as Luther formulated it, could retain the same relevance for all eras and situations. Such a perennial theology does not exist."<sup>40</sup> In place of Luther's "juridical" terminology, Altmann's "liberation" terminology speaks only of the Christian struggle against evil. For this position, Altmann uncritically relies on Ulrich Duchrow's interpretation of the "two kingdoms."<sup>41</sup> Altmann, therefore, offers the following explanation of the Christian's struggle: "History itself is the battleground for this fight; humanity and creation are the objects of the dispute. But they are not merely spectators but participants. They may be instruments of oppression or of liberation. Faith centered in Jesus Christ, who is dead but risen, gives the certainty of victory even if, at the moment, this seems to be against all appearances. Against the apparent victory of injustice, despair, oppression, and death, faith clings to reality and to God's promises, trusting in the power of justice, hope, liberation, and life."<sup>42</sup>

The problem with this explanation of the Christian struggle is that it is confused. It is as much enslaving as it is liberating. To be sure, the Christian can and should, together with all persons of good will, participate in the critical alliance against evil. It is also true that the

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This may have some psychological merit, but it hardly addresses the crucial theological problem for the liberation of human beings.

<sup>40</sup>Altmann, *Luther and Liberation*, 41.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 75-83. It is curious that Altmann, for all his first-hand citation of Luther's writings, never considers "Temporal Authority," *LW* 45:75-129.

<sup>42</sup>Altmann, *Luther and Liberation*, 77.

Christian can be enhanced for that struggle by their faith in Jesus Christ when all appearances are that they are not victorious. But Altmann's picture of the struggle confuses God's Law with God's Gospel, and the result is not a clear picture of God's liberating action. If history is the battleground for objects in dispute, then we need to recognize that *we* are part of that battleground which God is seeking to claim--and not through justice (which is ineffectual), but through the mercy of Christ. Furthermore, if all we wield is the sword of retribution against evil, then we may be *at the same time* instruments of oppression and liberation. Finally, it is unclear, from Altmann's description, how *we* are really winners in the cosmic conflict. What if, instead of the apparent victory of injustice, *justice* were winning? Is that truly "liberation" (Altmann's preferred terminology) for the Christian, or is it a sign of the daily, mortifying defeat which needs to be overcome again and again in the victory of Christ *on our behalf*?

The Crossings Community in St. Louis, founded by Ed Schroeder and his friend and colleague Robert W. Bertram, has helped to popularize the terms "diagnosis" and "prognosis" in a more theological (and less clinical) light. In keeping with the opening thesis of this essay, it could be said that the Prognosis (seeing one through) is only as good as the Diagnosis (seeing through one). But, for the sake of the liberating Gospel, the courageously faithful living and dying in the midst of all the challenges of our day will be sure to affirm: "Let the critical Diagnosis be as great as it really is--the Prognosis of Christ will still be the Last Word."

Michael Hoy  
Capital University, Dayton, Ohio  
July 30, 1993

***Never Too Late.** Retired school teacher Sallie Holland has begun a whole new life of professional church work with the help of Ed and the Crossings Community.*

4711 Kossuth Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri  
May 8, 1993

Dear Professor Schroeder,

You know I don't like to write, but I promised someone very dear to me I would write a paragraph for you to take to Australia.

I have grown so much spiritually in my Bible studies since taking the Crossings course with you and my dear friends. Dr. Bertram, Dr. Danker, and Dr. Lottes have also played an important role in getting me ready for God's work. With God's blessings I will have more names to add to my list by the time you return home again.

God has given me a clear path to follow through the ministry by way of the Holy Spirit. I can't begin to tell you how much the information I gained through your course has meant to me. Maybe one day, when you return to the United States, you and your family will come visit God's church where I will be working and enjoy the Sunday morning worship with the rest of the community. This is a promise: I will always use your methodology when delivering a sermon on Sunday mornings.

I feel joyous and elated most of the time. When I feel depressed I recite the 23rd Psalm. Then I think about God and start thanking him for sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for all our sins.

Not just a few will benefit, but the whole world. With that in mind, I send joy, love and peace with you and your family, always.

Love,  
Sallie



***Reclaiming the Strays.*** Author Rose Marie Brauer points to one important aspect of Crossings and Ed's ministry: the support and nurture that we feel being part of a caring Christian community.

Summer 1993

Dear Ed,

Don and I cannot thank you enough for always including us in your Crossings family, bringing so many of us "strays" together who need folks like you and Marie. You are the kind of people who care about all of us creatures of God, and are willing to lead us into the paths of the Bible. The paths are illuminated by your lives.

You and your beloved wife have been an inspiration to me as I wrote my thoughts and feelings about the last forty turbulent years into my second book. My Bible and dictionary were next to me during that year and a half, but you and Marie were only a phone call away, always willing with helpful suggestions and assistance in editing. I felt comfortable and confident, knowing you two were my friends, and that you would be around when I needed that best advice.

Though you will be sorely missed, I can only say how happy I am for you. Having this wonderful opportunity to serve in Australia can only enhance your ability to inspire others to serve our Lord.

With peace in serving Him,  
and my love to you both,

Rose Marie Brauer



*Y is for Yes. Michael Kunz, dad and counselor-in-training, honors Ed for being a "yes-man"... when it comes to reminding us of God's Yes for us.*

## **"Y" IS FOR YES**

*For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not "Yes and No"; but in him it is always "Yes."*

*For in him every one of God's promises is a "Yes." For this reason it is through him that we say the "Amen," to the glory of God.*

*-- 2 Cor 1:19-20 (NRSV)*

Look at the streets, the headlines; it is news, but is not new -  
life is cheap! Or so we have said, said to life, NO!

Look at our lives, yelling, belittling, harsh words and actions  
coming from our lips and limbs. We are so quick  
to hate, to say to love, NO!

Look at our history, for we have found, each of us, our own  
way -- away from the Creator, and life and love and faith.  
We have said to God, NO!

Nevertheless, listen...

Yes

YES

**YES!**

You, Jesus, are the resounding

**YES**

to all of God's promises.

No ifs, ands, buts, maybes, excuses, "I'm sorry, I gave at  
the office," "maybe next time," -- only Yes!

Now -- Yes; Then -- Yes; Always -- Yes!

God's promises all  
are full  
of grace  
and hope  
and truth and life and love,  
For the promises never are broken.  
Count on it. Take it to the bank.  
These aren't campaign promises,  
or midnight whispers forgotten at dawn  
or even well-intentioned wishes  
or one unable to deliver the goods.

The Word of God is Yes!  
Yes to life -- and hope and faith.  
Yes to love -- and compassion, healing, understanding, forgiveness.  
Yes to the eternal -- home and family and forever with God.

The Yes Word of God is Jesus, my Yes, our Yes, God's Yes.  
Jesus, help us say Yes to you,  
For you have said Yes, been Yes, to us, for us...  
Yes to suffering, Yes in Gethsemane to your Father's will  
Yes to abandonment  
Yes to the death penalty -- *our* death penalty  
on a criminal's cross.

God's grave-shattering, life-renewing Yes to you  
is a baptism yes for us. Let the waters roll.  
The tears of joy shall flow, for God did not just say NO!  
Life is not about no. Life is about yes.  
Thank God for Ed Schroeder? Yes!  
For Ed remembers to point us  
to the Eternal **YES**, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Spirit of Christ Amidst Our Slavery. Sue Eigel touches the heart of Crossings and the heart of the Gospel as she crosses her workplace slavery with our freedom in Christ.*

The summer before I experienced the Crossings of Galatians, I took a course called "Group Processes in Organizations." There to my surprise I learned that I, a high school librarian with a staff of two besides myself, was a manager. Further, I learned I was a transformational sort of manager in a basically transactional sort of organization.

So I came to the slavery and freedom of Galatians steeped in discoveries and insights from the earlier class. It was very easy to see the slavery of the law within the transactional management style; the two quotes at the beginning of this paper I have heard used at work more than once. The second example is my experience. I was well aware of the slavery to the law of the group inherent in the transformational style when I wrote this paper, but recently it has been made more vivid as I work with a planning committee for whom the transformational style is law.

It takes hindsight for me to realize that the freedom of the Spirit of Christ is at work in our office. Again, the paper's second to the last example is my own experience during the earlier class. Reflecting now, I realize that a recent office crisis was not dealt with transactionally or transformationally, but with the loving concern God's children have for each other in Christ.

## ***SLAVERY IN THE PYRAMID OF POWER***

"Well, that's why they pay us the big bucks, to make the hard decisions." "We're not expected to win popularity contests you know." The cliches from the other division supervisors followed him into the elevator. The rumors had been right. The company continued to feel the effects of the recession, and drastic cuts were needed in its expenditures to pull it out of the red by the end of the year. Each division was required to cut its expenditures by the same percentage, and it was his task to decide where those cuts would come in his division. He wanted to protest that the work his people did was essential to the long term survival of the company, and these cuts could cripple the company's competitive edge for years to come. But surrounded by his fellow supervisors and before his superiors who had determined this action he remained silent. Almost all the others could make similar claims, after all. Having reached his position on the corporate ladder, he thought it unwise to risk its loss by antagonizing those who could keep him there or help him climb further. The current crisis would not last forever and he must protect his position. Still, he had hoped that this position would give him the power to further the welfare of everyone under him. Instead, many people under him would soon be without jobs, and which ones was his decision. Right now he wasn't feeling very powerful at all. Rather, he felt like a puppet whose

superiors held all the strings, a tool of the powers above him just as those below him were seen as his tools. He felt a slave to the system.

Hot tears welled in my eyes as I walked away from that senseless interview. I needed answers and, trustingly, I expected to have them at last. Instead, I had received rebuke and insult. I had become a librarian less than a year before when my predecessor resigned under the pressures of the upcoming move to new quarters and what she described as lack of support from the administration. Students and teachers depended on the availability of the materials our library housed. It had been an awkward and frustrating year trying to operate in the cramped temporary quarters, and the staff was determined to move to the new facility with as little disruption to service as possible. But to do so I needed to know when the move would take place and what assistance would be available and for how long. Repeated requests to my principal were answered with I-don't-knows. The central administration staff were not giving him any information. This, rumor said, was not unusual, for the principal was not too popular with the higher powers. Teachers claimed he had taken their part too often.

In frustration the principal sent me to talk to the administrator who oversaw all the new building projects. This gentleman informed me that since he was only weeks away from his retirement and a replacement had not been named, I should make an appointment with the assistant superintendent to find my answers. I did. I had gone to the interview feeling that at last I would be talking to someone who knew what was happening and when and how. At last here I could find the information I needed to plan our move. Instead, the man scolded me for bringing my questions to him and said the principal should supply that information. He went on to imply that the principal's lack of the needed information reflected his basic incompetence. I left the interview with my questions still unanswered, feeling like a pawn in someone's cruel game and angry at myself for letting myself be so used. Fuming, I reviewed what I had learned. I had learned that my principal needed support. I had learned never to vary from chain of command. I had learned never to trust anyone in central administration.

The traditional management style in this country is the transactional style. Its basis is legalistic. Its language, "if you do this, then I will do that" employs the same terms as legal contracts. The manager has agreed to be responsible for the accomplishment of some task involving the combined efforts of others for completion. For the transactional manager, this implies controlling the actions of others in order to reach the desired

end. It is in this need to control that the enslavement within the system can most easily be seen. It is generally much easier to control things than to control people. Therefore, the temptation to think of people in terms of things or categories rather than as individuals may become a convenience for the transactional manager. This is by no means a conscious decision on the part of the manager, but a trait of human nature and of the management system that can be enhanced under pressures of deadlines and distractions until it becomes habit. For example, it is easy to ignore a valid protest when it comes from a chronic complainer, and a good idea can be overlooked because it came from "just a janitor" or "just a clerk."

The focus on the work itself leads the manager to ignore the needs and concerns of the people who must accomplish it. So those people become objects rather than persons. Meanwhile, the manager herself becomes a slave to the task. She cannot think of others as tools for the task without suffering the same fate herself. Rather than an individual she becomes the manager for whatever is at hand and the title becomes her identity. This is how she is seen by her superiors and how she comes to see herself. If she retires or loses her position, she finds herself bereft of any identity, at a loss to know who or what is left without the work. A further temptation is to rely solely on the power of authority to one's control. The manager was put in charge so things will be done the manager's way, and anyone who disagrees can find work elsewhere. Likewise, the transactional manager must honor directives and decisions handed down from her superiors whether or not she is in full agreement. So to retain or advance her position she must bow to the same power of authority she invokes, trapped within the system.

The transactional manager risks confinement in the world of self. Attitudes and habits exercised at least eight hours every working day on the job become ingrained and carry into life outside work. If people at work exist as tools for a task, people outside work can be seen in a similar light. They are identified by the task they perform rather than as a person performing a task, such as mailman, taxi driver, or checker. Even in social relationships people can be viewed in light of being either assets or detriments to the manager's social position or network of work related contacts. Both social and work-related associations are viewed by the standard of what benefit they can hold for the manager. The legal obligation to perform the task subtly shifts to the sacred duty to perform "my holy task, do my job" above all else so that I am seen as more than worthy of all consequent rewards. The work becomes an object of worship around which the manager's life revolves and "my ability to do

that work well" becomes a justification for existence. "Without me that place would fall apart" becomes the manager's creed. There is no room for other gods in this little universe, even a real one. All others, be they family, friends, fellow employees, or even the employer, exist only to serve the dual god of work-self and its entrapping law that work comes first.

Even the law of work is too demanding to be met by its worshiper, and the god of work-self cannot stand against its own standards. Deadlines are missed, important memos are mislaid, meetings must be rescheduled, and items are forgotten. The manager cannot perform even the basic duties perfectly and therefore, truly is not entitled to the contractual rewards. Beyond that are the other direct commands of a very real and jealous God, the first of which is violated by the mere existence of the work-self god. The manager by placing work-self first has divorced herself to a twin god that leads only to destruction. The real and just God tolerates no such objects of worship and seals the divorce by pronouncing the manager cursed, standing in the wrong place in relation to God and destined to stay so forever.

There is no way the little god of work-self can overcome the curse of the real God. It takes a real God to cancel such a curse, a real God who knows what it means to be in the right place with God, to be blessed. The real God knows the right relationship is not seen in one of servant or slave to master, or employee to employer, but in that of child to parent. Only the real God can rescue the manager from her curse and at the same time show what it is to be a child of God. This He did when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, placed Himself under the law and took its curse on Himself and suffered the total alienation from God that is the rightful place of the manager, and all managers and all who are managed, and all created life that had been cursed by sin. Jesus canceled the curse by His death and triumphant resurrection and restoration to the blessed, right relationship with the Father. No longer under the law in any sense, He is free to show what it is to be an heir in God's kingdom.

Having taken our place, Jesus makes that same freedom available to all who trust Him to supply it, even the manager. As an heir led by the Spirit of Christ, the manager is free of enslavement to work and self, free to put the real God first in all things and free to see others as fellow heirs in God's kingdom. It is in her relationship to God that the manager finds reason for existence and the purpose for actions. The work becomes opportunity to express that relationship. Others are no longer tools to be used, but fellow redeemed to be encouraged, loved, and brought to

understand the freedom that is theirs also through faith in Jesus. People become individuals performing their own tasks: Walt, the mailman; Henry, the taxi driver; Shelly, the checker. They are important to the manager because they are important to God, important enough to die for.

The transformation management style encourages all members of a group to work together for a common goal. Since the manager has been transformed from slave to law to heir of God, she also is free to choose a management style appropriate to her God-centered existence. The transformational style may be useful with the knowledge that she is not bound by it. But she is free also to use a transformational style even in the midst of an organization where the transactional form is expected. She is free to accept advice from Mike, the janitor, or Debbie, the clerk, and even to seek it and give them credit for it. She is free to listen to Claude, the complainer, or not to listen, as the Spirit of Christ leads her. She is free to acknowledge the needs and concerns of others. She no longer needs to control people. She is free to move beyond even the transformational style where the welfare of the group or organization is given priority to consider the welfare of individuals within the group. She is free to assign her task high priority or to acknowledge the task of another as of greater importance. The basis of her task is no longer merely the legal agreement; the basis is found now in her freedom to be God's child in the given time and place in which she finds herself. Her language has become that of freedom, "because God has redeemed me, therefore I can..."

The move was a disaster. All of the alternative plans composed by the library staff were swept away with orders to move within two days just before the start of school with the "help" of college students hired for summer work on the last days of their jobs. The task of settling into the new quarters, which should have taken less than a week, took over two months.

Some years and two superintendents later, I again sat in the office of a central office administrator. To fulfill an assignment I was to interview an administrator (not my immediate superior) about group processes and leadership. Following the instructor's advice, I interviewed the superintendent. He was a bit late and apologized. We sat at a conference table in his office, not with a massive desk between us. He listened to my questions attentively and answered candidly, giving examples from his experience. He spoke of the strategic planning committees composed of individuals from the community, as well as parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and students working together to determine direction

for the district. Decisions made by those committees would be honored even if he disagreed with them. He noted that he will listen carefully to what another has to say even if the other obviously dislikes him, because what is said can have value.

He extended the time of the interview slightly until I had exhausted my questions, and then added a bit of district background that became essential to my paper. This time as I walked away from the administration building, I felt encouraged for the future of the district. A transformational leader was at work transforming a formerly transactional organization. There is still a long way to go in reconciling old factions and breaking the bonds of old habits, but there is hope that these things can be done because the superintendent is not only a transformational leader but a man who has been transformed from slave to heir by Christ.

As the elevator rose, he clutched the proposal more firmly. It was a risk. He could lose his position. He had decided not to make the decisions on what and who must be eliminated without input from those affected. He had told his managers what reductions were required and instructed them to find ways to cut expenditures with minimum reduction in production for the division. Further, he had insisted that they involve as many of the workers as time allowed to help in making the determinations. Meanwhile, he had followed his own instructions talking to those who knew the requirements best, being open and honest about what he needed. Now the results were in his hand. He had discovered ways to cut costs he never would have considered on his own. It was not the conventional way of doing things in the company, but in Christ he found the freedom to be unconventional. In what he believed was a Spirit-led decision, management in his division had agreed to a temporary cut in pay, himself included. Now it remained to be seen if the proposal could be accepted. The door opened at the top floor.

L. Susan Eigel

***Cultivator for Christ.*** Janet Racen, a Missouri Botanical Garden Master Gardener herself, feels the profound impact of the gardener-teacher on her life and on her ability to grow.

## **A G A R D E N F O R E D**

In the beginning there was a Garden and Life began.  
Today there is a garden and life begins.  
God said, ``Behold, it is good."  
The First Gardener began a good work.  
The gardener today continues a good work.  
The class says, ``Behold, it is good."

Two pupils came to the Garden to learn.  
The Gardener-Teacher said, ``Cultivate correctly."  
They ignored the Gardener-Teacher, failed their test, and hid.  
When they tried to erase their mistake with a leafy cover,  
Teacher said, ``Wrong! NOT!!!"  
``Put on these skins, go into the world and toil, teach your  
children."  
His Word put the D's and P's into the Beginning of the  
World!

Leaf and skins,  
    Harvest and animals,  
        bread and wine,  
            body and blood,  
                shame and sweet swap!

What a glorious, glow-ry garden we live in today!  
Our gardener-teacher cultivates the soil of our minds  
And brings to fruition rich blooms of vibrant hues.  
We trace the time-march of the Gardener-Teacher.  
What is His Word for us today?  
Still to put on His covering skin, still to toil in the world, still  
to teach.  
Still to learn our D's and P's; (Along with P's and Q's and  
ABC's!)

The Gardener-Teacher began to use other methods of  
cultivation.  
Our gardener-teacher will cultivate a new field soon.  
The Two Pupils struggled without Gardener-Teacher's direct  
contact,  
And so shall we be tossed about without our special  
cultivator.  
But the garden is weeded and watered and growing.

We shall surely miss our Ed, our dear gardener-teacher.  
May God, our holy Gardener-Teacher, bless you anew  
As we give you our love in our tender: ``Till we meet again!"

Janet Racen  
May 15, 1993

***His Life Shared.*** Pastor Kris Fahey highlights one of Ed's great gifts as a teacher - his willingness and ability to share himself as he proclaims the Good News.

### **WHAT I APPRECIATE ABOUT ED**

I have truly appreciated knowing Ed and having him as my professor. I'm so glad our paths crossed in life.

While I was at Eden Seminary, I remember taking "Lutheran Confessions" from Ed, along with Cathy Ammlung. This was when I first realized Ed's ability to proclaim the gospel. I would go to Eden and feel the weight of judgment and then go to Ed's class in his basement classroom and hear the gospel. I distinctly remember walking out of his house into the summer evening air with a feeling of liberation after his teaching.

Not only did I experience that freeing word of Christ by way of Ed, but he also taught me how to articulate it to others. I grew up in a grace-filled Lutheran church in Duluth, and the people and pastors there certainly played an important part in the cloud of witnesses; however, it was Ed who brought into focus for me why it was so grace-filled. Ed gave me the theological tools to analyze a situation and find Christ in it---or not in it. It is clear to me why Christ makes the crucial difference.

But more than the Gospel, and more than the theological tools to articulate the Gospel, there was Ed himself! His "aside comments," his vast knowledge about so many academic areas, and his clear and direct way of communicating an idea were valuable to me. Many things he said in his classes are still with me and will remain in my knowledge bank. Thanks to Ed for sharing himself with us!

Finally I appreciate Ed's caring and time spent on my behalf helping me to sort out perplexing issues. He is compassionate and Christlike.

What a valuable human being! Thanks be to God for blessing us with our beloved professor, Ed Schroeder!

Kris Fahey  
June, 1993



***Rescue from the Captive Darkness.*** *Jim Squire, software engineer and long-time Crossings student, asks hard questions and gets profound answers - both scary and, ultimately, gracefully freeing.*

CROSSINGS FROM ISAIAH 42:1-9

***MY RESCUE  
FROM THE DARKNESS OF CAPTIVITY***

by James Squire

*Dedicated to Ed Schroeder, God's Faithful Messenger*

**Introduction: Garden of Eden revisited**

So it came to pass that I cast aside my security blanket, and opened my eyes to the world of beliefs. It was going to be somewhat like choosing from a menu: I get to decide what tastes good. I decide what fits. God certainly had a leg up over humanism, since he had been a "part" of my life for so long. But others were watching so I felt I had to make my choice as objective as possible.

But something happened on the road to the choice: God sent one of his faithful messengers to inform me that a certain part of that choice was not free at all. I was willing to accept that I could not reach God's level on my own. But I insisted that if I didn't choose God on my own, the choice didn't mean much. "Oh," he said, "So you're still not free. You must choose on your own." I did not feel like this was a fair fight. I expressed my frustration by saying, "This kind of God scares me." Interestingly enough, I was not scolded for this attitude. Instead, God's servant invoked Martin Luther to console me: "Whenever God is encountered apart from Christ, scared is the proper response." Then since the same arguments had already been made 400 years ago, he pointed me to the Augsburg Confession so that the discussion on Free Will could continue. As I

examined this document, the topic slowly changed from Free Will to Babylon.

Babylon is the place of captivity for the Jews at the time of Second Isaiah (chapter 40 and beyond). After Israel was defeated as a nation, its people were taken against their will from their "devastated land" (49:19) to a hostile environment where they "fear continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor." (51:13) (*A Baptismal Crossing*, Isaiah 42:1-9, Robert W. Bertram, p. 345)

But this can be applied metaphorically as well. Babylon is not so much a geographical place, as it is a description of my relationship in and with the world. And that relationship is one of captivity to someone or something.

### **Diagnosis Level 1: Babylon**

The first order of business is to agree on the nature of my Babylon. I begin by declaring my total innocence and demanding justice. I accuse the very Reformers who founded the denomination I belong to of oppressing me on the subject of Free Will. Their authority as Lutheran forebears makes this feel very much like captivity. If they didn't hold such authority for me, I could just ignore them. This is my view of Babylon.

As you might expect, they have a different view of my Babylon. In their Augsburg Confession, they point me in a different direction: "Our churches teach that man's will has some liberty for the attainment of civil righteousness and for the choice of things subject to reason. However, it does not have the power, without the Holy Spirit, to attain the righteousness of God--that is, spiritual righteousness--because natural man does not perceive the gifts of the Spirit of God; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Spirit is received through the Word." In other words, the Holy Spirit walks right in, uninvited, and says, "zap!!!" This, I must protest against. How can it be true that I don't even have the capacity to desire fellowship with God? I don't want the Holy Spirit invading my heart and placing a desire for God inside me,

against my will. I want the right to desire God myself. Otherwise I feel like a robot. People have the right, I think, to decide whether they want God in their life. Now God doesn't have to answer such desire. But such desire should come from within the person involved or it seems to lose its meaning.

Yet, the more I think about this, the more I realize I don't do the things which I can plainly see make a lot of sense. Things like taking care of myself, and my apartment, for example. Even though they make sense, I resist doing them. Why? Because I resist anything that means taking advice from someone else, and putting aside the way I want to do things. I hate the idea of following their advice, because if I follow it, I might lose control over my life. If I find, in my own way, a reason for self-sacrifice, that's different. But I don't like other people, like my Mom especially, telling me what is good for me. It occurs to me now that I felt she was invading my turf. I was afraid of giving up control, and as a result, I perceive now that I lost out on a lot of good wisdom. I am still like this to a certain extent, only now my Mom is replaced by good friends - peers. People who are harder to brush off. Harder to frustrate. I want them as friends, but I still don't want to sell out my control. Could it be that all this time, I've been saying the same thing to God?

Now that my eyes have been opened, I can see my Babylon for what it truly is. I can see gadgets that entertain me, such as the TV and the VCR. I can see the mess that develops after weeks when papers are just left lying anywhere instead of being put away. I can see how the TV pacifies me, as if the TV could really command me to be a couch potato for hours on end. But I also feel the absence of justice, and I long for its return. Interestingly enough, I long for that which I used to have under Mom. Things got taken care of. I got taken care of. There was something about those days that now looks good to me.

But today I live in Babylon, where nobody and nothing ever gets taken care of, unless someone holds a gun to my head, figuratively speaking. That is what Babylon is for me, and I do feel held captive by it.

Meanwhile, I can just hear the Augsburg Confessors whispering to each other behind my back, "Hey, was that the Holy Spirit that just walked by?" How silly it seems now to claim the right to desire fellowship with God! That was just a smokescreen on my part. I have not the slightest interest in exercising that right, even if I did have it.

### **Diagnosis Level 2: Blindness**

To take matters one step deeper, where do I turn for help from Babylon's injustice? Now I also see something else I didn't see before: My Babylon is not different from the world "out there." There is one fundamental similarity between the two, and I have already expressed it in my claim of Free Will: Freedom of Choice! We live in a choice-oriented society. I have been taught, apparently by that same society (I don't think Mom was big on Freedom of Choice), to value the freedom to choose, as if I am "the boss." So, like the Jews in captivity during Second Isaiah's time, when I seek help from Babylon's injustice, I seek help from Babylon! In Babylon, they worshipped Marduk. I worship "free choice!" To value "free choice" is fine, but when one worships "free choice" one has no need for things like "responsibility." And obviously if I see God simply as a choice, I certainly don't see him as rescuer. For me rescue comes via "free choice." Second Isaiah calls that "blindness."

The Augsburg Confessors put it this way, "... through the fall of our first parents man is so corrupted that in divine things, concerning our conversion and salvation, he is by nature blind and does not and cannot understand the Word of God when it is preached, but considers it foolishness; nor does he of himself approach God, but he is and remains an enemy of God until by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word which is preached and heard, purely out of grace and without any cooperation on his part, he is converted, becomes a believer, is regenerated and renewed." Enemy of God? Well, if I think of him as merely a choice, yes I am an enemy of God.

### **Diagnosis Level 3: Blame**

For enemies of God, Babylonian injustice becomes justice. Once more, my feeble claim of Free Will is a symptom of what I have trouble seeing: How Babylonian injustice is also God's justice toward me. And why would I ever think of God as my rescuer, if I can't see him as my punisher?

The Augsburg Confessors have the answer: "If a person will not hear preaching or read the Word of God, but despises the Word and the community of God, dies in this condition, and perishes in his sins, he can neither comfort himself with God's eternal election nor obtain his mercy. For Christ, in whom we are elected, offers his grace to all men in the Word and the holy sacraments, earnestly wills that we hear it, and has promised that, where two or three are gathered together in his name and occupy themselves with his holy Word, he is in the midst of them. But if such a person despises the instruments of the Holy Spirit and will not hear, no injustice is done him if the Holy Spirit does not illuminate him but lets him remain in the darkness of his unbelief and be lost, as it is written, 'How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!'" A rude awakening, indeed.

What's scary here is I still feel like I am a good person. It's hard to know exactly where I went wrong. And yet, I am blind to God. Because I am blind to my lost state, and my total need for God (I said I desired God, I never said I needed him), I remain where I am, and the Holy Spirit, if he happens to wander by, finds me asleep. Meanwhile, God knows that deep down inside, I want to be in control. I mean in control of what is right and wrong. Good and Evil. Sound familiar? I don't often think of it in those terms. They seem weird even now as I am writing them. It's because they are scary words. But they seem to be true. All of what I have discerned in the depths of my soul to this point tells me they are true. And so, without ever realizing it, it was I who took the bite of the apple in the garden of Eden, and it was I who then turned and hid. God knew where I was all along, and though I wasn't listening, he was saying to me, "Jim, what is this that you have done? ... Because you have ... eaten of the tree

of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

I have been blamed, and now the sentencing begins. I watch from afar, in secret, as Jesus is nailed to the cross. Interesting. As they drive the nails in, I feel more and more of my absolute control slipping away. As I see those nails going in, situation after situation in my life is held up for my benefit, then individual judgment is exacted. It is hard to watch this scene unfold. I want to plead for a second chance, but God knows I am evading the issue. Like the Jews of Second Isaiah's time, what I plead for is a new Nebuchadnezzar or a new Cyrus. A new instance of the same old rescuer. Ultimately that rescuer is Marduk, and God is rendered irrelevant in my life, even as I seem to be reaching out to him. That is the ultimate kiss-off, and fittingly that very kiss-off becomes my ultimate punishment: (42:24-25) "Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? So he poured upon him the heat of his anger and the might of battle."

### **Prognosis Level 1: Birth-pangs**

Look again. See the suffering servant spoken of in Second Isaiah hanging on the cross. He is in a darkness worse than mine, for he has done nothing wrong. Moreover, he is going where I cannot go: to the grave, then even further, to Hell. Notice the silence with which he suffers the nails which are my Sin, suffering the punishment that is rightly mine. In him, God's final diagnosis ("you blind", "you deaf") is being silenced. And then when he emerges from the tomb, this provides God's seal of approval on this Suffering Servant and what he has done for us. In effect, God says, "Sounds Good to me!" All of which means that those nails going into Jesus' body are Good News for me, not Bad News.

To some it might seem cheap, and certainly not just what he has done for me. But to me it is entirely just. God is the one who sees

through my Free Will facade. He is the one who turns my Babylonian injustice into justice. And ask the Suffering Servant himself if the price of my salvation was cheap! Isaiah 42:14 - "For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in travail, I will gasp and pant." And indeed, he did cry out on the cross: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No, the price was not cheap, not in the least. Who am I to argue? And in my position, why would I want to?

### **Prognosis Level 2: Beholder**

Isaiah 42:1 - "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations." Isaiah 52:13 - "Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." Why does the writer's soul delight, and why will this servant be exalted and lifted up? Behold what the servant will do (fulfilled in the person of Jesus)! Isaiah 53:4-5 - "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed." This is what was talked about in Prognosis level 1, but the writer's plea is heard in the word "Behold!" It sounds like a command! Actually, it is called an imperative, which means an instruction pertaining to the receipt of something by the other person. Normally, we are used to "law" imperatives which are of the form, "IF you do this, THEN I'll give you that." The imperative "Behold" doesn't seem to fit that pattern, not in the way the writer uses it. No! What the writer is saying is "Behold the suffering servant, and by doing so, receive the justice that he has brought for you." Isaiah 42:2-4 - "He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law." The unmistakable pattern of this "Behold" imperative is that of a "Gospel" imperative, which is of the form, "Because I did this for you, you are then able to do the following." Note

the reverse orientation here. The law imperative sets us up for failure, especially when the imperative comes from God. The Gospel imperative is more like a gift to us in which success is already guaranteed and fulfilled and failure is not even part of the equation.

Therefore, I am rescued from my blindness by Beholding the suffering servant who turned out to be Jesus (thank God!). I get justice (undeserved, but given nonetheless) by feasting my eyes on his suffering servanthood and gazing at what he did for me. I am, along with the writer of Isaiah 52:14-15 - "...astonished at him - his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men - so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand." Oh, what beauty to Behold!

### **Prognosis Level 3: Brilliance**

So, what of Free Will? What of Babylon? How does it look to me now? It still looks the same, and sometimes I look the same in it. But look again! I have been made anew. I have not been rescued from a place called Babylon, but rather I have been rescued from the captivity of Babylon. For now I inhabit Babylon, looking like the Suffering Servant - mainly because I now fix my gaze upon him. My beholding of the Suffering Servant as opposed to Marduk has to have some kind of effect on those who "run the asylum." The reason is that as a Beholder, I no longer seek Babylon's way of escaping captivity. In fact, I may sometimes choose not to escape at all, all the better to shine the Light of the Suffering Servant on those who sit in darkness.

Looking good no longer means looking glamorous, like Marduk. Now it means looking like the Suffering Servant, and it means gentle treatment for the bruised reeds and dimly burning wicks, rather than tooting my own horn. And I have Second Isaiah's (and God's word for it: (42:16)) "And I will lead the blind in a way that they know not, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them." I am so happy to be

associated with such an agenda; it's exactly what those who sit in darkness need.

**Postscript: The Suffering Servant who found me "sitting in darkness"**

Some might get the idea that a Suffering Servant would not have confronted me the way I was confronted at the beginning of this paper. On the surface, it would seem that more gentle handling would be called for. That would've been too bad in this case. Happily, I was confronted. What makes it fit with the Suffering Servant model is that I was confronted "right in the place where I was at." He listened to me, heard my own description of where I was coming from, and pointed out to me my unfreedom. It seemed a bit blunt at the time, but then again, he wasn't operating alone. The Holy Spirit was active in my life, so that I wasn't turned off by his "assault," but rather examined myself to check out what he was saying. Lucky for me I did, because I discovered the assault was not against me, but Marduk. Jesus reached out to Peter, hoping to save him, by saying, "Get behind me, Satan." (Mark 8:33) Something similar took place here. Because of this servant (and others), I have been able to Behold my true rescuer from Babylonian captivity, and am now able to play the same role myself with those around me. All praise be to God that this one risked my anger enough to save me from the darkness. What a great freedom we have shared ever since.



***One Among Many - a Crossings Junkie Confesses.*** Marie Prange, retired advertising executive, gives us a snapshot of "The Saturday Morning Class" and how the community continues to be drawn together, "irresistibly" no less, to hear the Good News again and again.

For approximately the past ten years, Saturday mornings have been Crossings mornings for me. Although I've written only one paper, and that for my first course, I've been drawn back, irresistibly. I had to hear how the D-1, D-2 and D-3 were taken care of by the P-1, P-2 and P-3. Early on it became clear that whatever the problem, it couldn't be solved satisfactorily until the problem at hand was considered in the light of our relationship with Jesus Christ and the recognition of His "sweet swap" with us. But even though we knew the answer, it was often difficult to articulate.

The classes were so open and friendly that the "regulars" really became well known to each other. More than once we cried as well as laughed together. And our mid-morning breaks gave another opportunity to deepen relationships or add more depth to our preceding discussion.

Being a part of the older generation, I considered it a treat to hear the ideas of the younger members of the class. In addition, the readings gave us new knowledge and insights on many questions I hadn't considered before, or religious history with which I was unfamiliar.

I will not forget that in addition to our Saturday morning classes, we were given the opportunity to enjoy the gracious hospitality and thoughtfulness of Ed and Marie Schroeder in inviting us to their home to meet and hear their many interesting friends and acquaintances who were traveling through St. Louis. Among others, we met an East German bishop, four scientists from Russia, and a Quaker with a background of work in Central America. The list goes on and on.

I will be interested to discover how I and other "junkies" will handle the withdrawal symptoms. Thanks to Robin and Sherman, "Greenhorns"\* should help.

*To Ed and Marie as they go Down Under, "Shalom," but don't stay away too long.*

Marie Prange  
18 May 1993

\* For a description of Greenhorn, see the next page.



**Editors' Note:** *Greenhorn is a fellowship for theological discussion and support. Founded in the spring of 1993 by Crossings-inspired people, Greenhorn meets monthly to discuss topical issues ranging from the personal to the political. Every third month, Greenhorn hosts a guest speaker - the first such speaker was Charles Maahs, Bishop of the ELCA Central States Synod. Among Greenhorn's membership are many of the contributors of this book which also include St. Louis-based students of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.*

*For more information, please contact the editors of this book.*

***Expectations Reluctantly Fulfilled.*** Robin Morgan - seminarian, writer and poet - distinctively describes her friendship and apprenticeship with Ed amidst the backdrop of this summer of taking Clinical Pastoral Education and (unbeknownst to Ed) co-editing this book. Whenever Ed mails out individual relevant news clippings to students, his notes usually start with "F.Y.I." - that is - "For Your Information."

### **"F.Y.I."**

Ed, your brash pronouncements about my life have always irked me.

*"Nobody comes back from their first trip to Asia unchanged..."*

*"You hold God responsible? I think God holds you responsible."*

So, naturally, your declaration about my summer of CPE at the State Hospital left me peevish and more than a bit nervous.

***"Arsenal Street will make or break you."***

Nobody wants their life permanently changed by a hospital full of crazy people, social outcasts, pariahs. Someone without form or majesty, despised and rejected.

Marvin, a middle aged African-American man, asked if we could meet at three o'clock and talk. He was a forensic patient, brought in by the courts, but "not guilty by reason of insanity." From what I could gather in our previous conversations, I reminded him of Marie Osmond who he wanted to meet. We sat down at a picnic table behind the hospital where very few people gathered. We began to talk about his life and how he hoped to return to his family in six months or so.

Within a few minutes there were four other African-American men, all forensic patients, chatting and smoking around our picnic table. This was a new experience for a Scandinavian woman from rural Wisconsin.

Jerome told me that he would have gotten out of the hospital several months ago, but he had used alcohol illicitly and then had another guy take the urine test for him. Unfortunately, that guy had been using drugs so Jerome got a stiffer penalty than if he'd been honest about his drinking. However, he never exposed the other man.

They take care of each other. When the money's low, they share cigarettes and buy each other sodas. Several of them have been in and out before and know it'll be tough to make it on the "outside," but they keep hoping. Not everybody on Arsenal Street takes responsibility for their own actions, but these men are trying.

We all talked about how scared we were the first time we saw the hospital and yet how we had all met some wonderful people inside. Alfred talked about the services in the chapel he attended on Thursday nights. Theo said he wanted to find a Christian woman to share his life with. Jerome told Theo that his mother was praying for him, and then Theo prayed for me.

**I hate it when you're right.**

***Dentistry and Theology - an Inspired Combination.*** Richard Lyon, dentist, preacher and world traveler, shares his cross of life and shows how "the lively Christ" not only makes peace with the Creator God, but enlivens all aspects of Richard's life - now and eternally.

## ***CROSSING THE "CROSS OF LIFE"***

Richard L. Lyon, DDS, M.Div.

***A Theological Position Paper in Honor of  
Edward Schroeder , September,1993***

Luke 9:18-27

Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, "Who do the people say that I am?" And they answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen." And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God. But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste of death before they see the kingdom of God."

In all of life we want to be winners: winners in love, winners in work, winners with God, winners at play. We tabulate our actions

according to our gains and losses in the stock market, whether the risks that we take are a threat to our self-preservation. We look to enhance the romance of life by the adventures we pursue, and we carefully note if the world will think more of us according to the road we travel. There is a theme in the pericope from Luke that speaks to such a commercial metaphor. It is a theme of winning by losing. It speaks to the philosophy of success and says that we cannot really "make it" in the long run by our own effort.

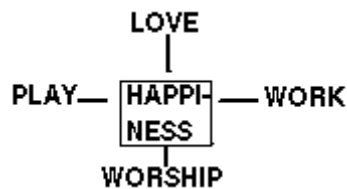
As time slips away I have thought about that in recent years and what it means in my past, present, and future. In the family culture there were certain aphorisms that I had heard from parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, even cousins, from the earliest memories of my life. Typical of them were:

- Out of all adversity there are seeds of equivalent benefit.
- Whatsoever ye want, O discontented man, step up, pay the price, and take it.
- Success is such a personal matter; it seems one makes the rules as he goes along.
- What the mind can conceive and believe it can achieve.
- You become what you think about.
- The magic of giving--nothing less than your best.
- It's easier to be a 100 percenter than a 50 percenter--there's so little competition.
- If one goes through the motion long enough one get the corresponding emotion.

I was conscious of such wisdom even when fishing in the creek, playing baseball in the street, or even when recovering from an illness that periodically put me on crutches from age seven to twelve. Even with that handicap my life was always entrepreneurial. I had a role model in my father, an Oklahoma chemical engineer turned insurance salesman. Mother was a farm girl but she went to college a couple of years and became a country school teacher in the Ozarks. Both were solid in discipline, Scot-English Calvinists, decent and orderly. They never left me in doubt of their love, providence, and protection. Church life was an integral part of our family life, but there was no clear line between religion, work, and our social life. God was always present but Jesus and the Holy Spirit were sort of add-ons.

That sort of format for functioning in life can be very productive. As time passed, however, it came to me that I needed something more than proverbs, prayers, and the Ten Commandments.

Eventually there evolved a philosophy of life that became known to me as "The Cross of Life."<sup>1</sup> That cross became my religion. The arms of that cross were labeled "Love," "Work," "Worship," and "Play." With the intersection of the arms as the fulcrum the net result would be Happiness when the arms are of equal weight. The idea is to work at it hard enough so that my cross can stay in balance.



Trying to keep the cross in balance is the difficulty. I seemed to do a pretty good job of it compared to some people I observed. I usually could attribute that to my education, intelligence, experience, and family environment. Some people, it seemed, were frequently in serious trouble, ill health, slow or indifferent. On the other hand, there were obviously many people that seemed to have, as they say, "their act together" much more than I. Whereas, I was always in the top ten percent of the "shakers and movers" I was never the class president, the disciplined student, or the "top gun." Those people seemed to have their priorities in order more than most folks.

Most often those sorts of differences in people are attributed to the difference in their ethical/moral and spiritual life. That may be true, but I think that those levels of life are more often the result of their genetics and environment rather than the result of their control over their circumstances.

People cannot do much about whether they are persons who are an organized or non-organized type of personality. People biologically inherit whether they are organized or not. Nor can they do much about changing environmental circumstances under which their life is trained. Oh, yes, people can change, but not much. They can, however, compensate. Yet, when push comes to shove, when trial demands the

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<sup>1</sup>L.D. Pankey, D.D.S.; *A Philosophy of Dentistry*; Personal Communication; 1955.

basics of courage and self-denial, people most often respond according to the imprint of their genetics and training. As it is written, "The sins of the father are visited on the sons to the fourth generation." It is *disorganization* that knocks the "Cross of Life" out of balance.

What seems to be the etiology of disorganization in my life and, for that matter, in all others that I know? It is the constant striving for personal independence, the will for freedom. On one hand the will for freedom may result in a person who "lives on the edge," who may develop technological advances, who may create higher social and economic levels. On the other hand there is a tension and anxiety to preserve the life that achievement has empowered. There is an underlying uneasiness that natural law may deal a crippling blow at any moment. The reaction, then, may be to work harder, maybe to embrace one's sphere of influence too passionately (love), or to over-emphasize cultic practices so as to put on trial the perceived power that puts limits on our unrestrained independence (worship), or to hide our uncertainty in excessive pleasure (play). Thus, our cross gets out of balance, happiness eludes us.

It cannot be denied, however, that the principles for "success" in the world are valid. Experience bears that out. But, they need to be examined further, more than superficially. As stated, the aphorisms actually reflect a positive mental attitude. But also as pointed out, that characteristic is dependent upon genetics and environment, neither of which is mutually exclusive.

Recognition of those facts of life may be revelatory but they can also lead to despair and hopelessness. Is there a way toward abundant life, freedom, health, and peace in the Hebrew sense of *shalom*?

Buried within the aphorisms one can discern at least three qualities. One is the implication of "trying harder," working toward perfection, discipline, and economics. Second, there is an attending goodness in relation to one's environment that one not only may enjoy but to which one must also contribute. Third, there is a haunting specter of failure, even death, with which one must contend as an alternate view.

Of the three characteristics, the first two create a picture of the "carrot before the nose," that is, one's rewards, both material and spiritual. The third, that there are threatening forces of fate. All together the picture is one of conflict.

The experience of humanity has shown that as creation evolved certain ethics are required for ultimate excellence of human life. The

Hebrews summarized them in the Ten Commandments. They reflect on one hand the code of conduct for humans, one to the other. On the other hand, in their speaking, the laws recognize "the predicate of life that is the power outside of us that guides our destiny and limits us."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the first five commandments establish the code for regarding "God." In addition they acknowledge that our fate is not operating blindly but with a sovereign who limits our unbridled independence and guides our destiny. Call it *divine luck*, if you will.

Through the years I have had a sense of the collision between my desire for independence and the powers outside of me that compel me to be otherwise. Thus, the battle lines are drawn and my defenses against the hostile shaping of my fortunes set me in actual opposition to the will of God. God is my enemy.

No one would dare admit as much, especially in a traditional and usual society. Yet it is obvious that that posture is not restricted just to notorious tyrants and scalawags. It is a classical condition of all the earth, but it is especially scandalous for humans who have the freedom of choice. Actually, the tragedy of our guilt lies in a Creator who allows us to destroy the life within us. Yet it is our own fault for rebelling against the law of God. Like Adam, we humans cannot totally handle the dominion over all creation that God has given us. Our power to create new healing methods and other technologies, while beneficial, are at the same time evidence of our continual fear of death and our desire to build a world without fear. Petty fears of minor and avoidable dangers take concrete form in our personalities. Because we lack the true power to create life we choose to live to ourselves. Now, separated from the Giver of Life, we lose our life because to live means to be created. God continues to create and so to fight against God, to insist on our way, is to die. This, Paul cites as the "wrath" of God (Romans 1:18).

In desperation we sometimes turn to ask the meaning of life and inquire about our true destiny. The awful reality of it is that there is only silence. There is no word from the Giver of Life. There is only judgment and death from God. This kind of silence cries for an invisible God to become visible. It is such an enormous problem that only God can solve it as we go limping along as if given only one shoe.

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<sup>2</sup>Werner Elert; *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*; trans. Chas. M. Jacobs; The United Lutheran Publication House, Phila, PA, 1927; p.24.

Then, one day the shoe on the other foot dropped. For reasons that were mysterious to many, even to me, I found myself in a Lutheran seminary of some renown which was marvelously focused as I had never seen before on the resolution of the God-sized problem.

A spirit came into my life at the seminary and I learned that historically there are two players in the cosmic conflict of God and humanity. There was also another in the courtroom on trial with humanity. He bore the imprint of special excellence in origin and "know-how." To the latter, testimony is given by persons who saw him and thought of him according to what is written about him in the New Testament. The human and historical Jesus was seen and agreed upon as a person of unblemished moral perfection and the instrument that determines the destiny of others, including the restoration of wholeness. But how could he be human as we are, we with all our guilt, anxiety, and rebellion against God?

Jesus had all the human characteristics of emotion, physiology, and even the questions concerning God. But he was also different. For example, he had all the circumstances of human life but it was within the dimension of a life that is of God. He forgave sin. He proposed God's law at its greatest demands, beyond all tradition and compromise. He claimed power over natural order and separated himself from his family, tribal, and national connections. Yet he submitted himself to God's will even to his own death. Thus, he becomes the new Adam. As such, he was human in the image of God and shows us what are God's motives for us, his plan for us, out of the conflict in which we, all humans, engage. God is now revealed not as our enemy, but in Jesus, the Christ of God, God is a healing God who is continually creating anew.

The question now is, "Can we believe that?" Think about it. Humans demanded and caused the death of Jesus in an offense against their enemy, God. Yet God allowed and took the life of a person in an expression of violence against humans, even one as Holy as Jesus. It seems like a stand-off until we remember that a man, Jesus, who was in the form of God, gave himself as a sacrifice to turn God's wrath away from others. Through his death Jesus stepped up, paid the price, and then claimed the appeasement of God's wrath because of his resurrection. When push came to shove, when trial demanded the basics of courage and self-denial, when trust in God was all there was, Jesus responded according to the imprint of his origin. It was the magic of giving--nothing less than his best, his life.

And God recognized and acknowledged the event. Who else but the Creator of heaven and earth, who creates *ex nihilo*, could create anew? Who else could raise Jesus from death to stand before God as the new human being, perfect in all respects? And what does it mean for us? It means that there is no longer a conflict between God and those who trust the sacrifice of Jesus as the Peace Maker. It means that in our will for freedom too often we feel the enmity of God because of his demanding laws. It means that we separate ourselves more and more from God as our anxiety builds, and because of it, there comes an end to it--death as a punishment. Yet, we need to fear it no more. We are saved from God's wrath through our faith in his Holy Son. In him, God is no longer the indignant Judge but the fond Father. Christ has bought us back when we were in hock to God because of the Law. He takes the bad news of our sins and makes a ledger entry of good news to balance. Because of that, even though our sins are still on the books, they will not hurt us. There is an "X" over them that crosses them out. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus we too become children of God as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ who lives in us.

But there is more. Those for whom that Good News has laid hold are re-born to a new life. However, it must be remembered that it is not by their new life that people are *saved*. They are saved solely through the life and death of Christ. Furthermore, being *saved* is not all there is to being *Christian*. For being *Christian* includes also coming alive in our own living, with the lively Christ who, bearing his cross, shows forth his resurrection. To a Christian the arm of love on the Cross of Life means a union to the loving life of God. It means, too, an inner feeling of connection and family relationship with other members of God's people. And it means a love of all of Creation's things and institutions: spouses, children, animals, plants, earth and sky, air and water, governments and social connections.

In the Christian life the times of rest and leisure, the arm of play, are those that reflect respect for the joy of the Gospel and the life of love. The Christ within us does not triumph at the expense and loss of others, whether on the playing field, in the bedroom, or in the field and stream.

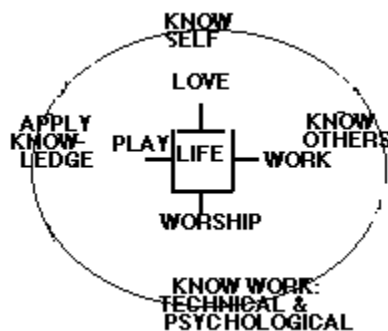
Likewise, our faith shows forth in worship. Our new relationship with God binds us together in a dynamic community of faith and with a spirit that includes us all as saints. We live and work in a time frame on earth and are opposed by those unreconciled to God. Therefore, in our human condition where our faith is fragile and incomplete, we need and

seek to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ spoken to us by the Spirit through those who are especially set aside by the Spirit to speak. We are renewed by such speech and Christ joins us as we worship. Not only is Christ present because of God's transcendence throughout the non-spatial sphere of heaven, such as when we are gathered together, but he is present corporeally in the bread and wine. By priestly invocation and our invitation he comes, therefore, to us, in, through, and under the action of those elements for our renewal and forgiveness of our sin.

Also, in worship the re-creating of the new covenant with God passes horizontally and from generation to generation by means of the act of baptism. Even though baptized, we fall away daily, but by repentance of our sin our membership in the family of God is renewed. True, we still die a temporal death because of our imperfection in keeping God's law, but God has promised and shown by the resurrection of Jesus as the Christ, that temporal death is not a loss but a gain. With Christ as our attorney we awaken from death to a new life unaffected by death, with a body like that of our brother, Jesus Christ. Our Cross of Life will be balanced forever.

Given the reconciliation offered by God for the stated conflict, let us examine our cross further. Perhaps the addition of God's offer of grace to our Cross of Life is the catalyst that will help us when losing our balance, now...and forever.

It is in our calling, our vocation, our work in life that we exhibit the fruits of our faith. Our work as laborers, housewives, mothers and fathers, doctors and teachers, scientists and farmers carves a niche for us in life. If the Holy Spirit undergirds the Cross of Life as we trust in the re-creating power and the sovereignty of Jesus Christ who guides our destiny, how, then, can I apprehend this in my daily work? I look at it like this:



Our work is the circle or the sphere in which we travel in our daily tasks. It surrounds a core of the Cross of Life. If the Cross is in balance the arms are of equal length and the circle is perfected. If any aspect of the cross is, or the components of the circle are over-weighted the entire picture is skewed. Thus, the Circle of Work has at its core the qualities of the Cross of Life. That goes hand in hand with our psychological skills. Instead of the faithless responses to our insecurity and anxiety we can faithfully take positive action.

An inventory of ourselves, in the manner of L.D. Pankey,<sup>3</sup> should ask if we have enough or too much leisure (play); are we happy in our work (work); do our social relationships and our home life reflect Christ (love); are we confident in God's promise in the Gospel (worship)? Are we developed to our highest potential? What are our personality factors? Do we have respect and cooperation of those around us? How is our physical health? Do we seek outside help to make a diagnosis of our problem? Do we have the courage to make the necessary changes?

Our knowledge of others may observe their physical, intellectual, emotional, economic, sociological, ethical/moral, and spiritual levels. They are the sum of all their innate and acquired dispositions. Therefore, we must be aware of the stature, general health, age, sex, attire, hair, eyes, smile, and the whole domain of physiology and anatomy of others. Observe their understanding and insight, their memory, imagination, reasoning, originality, and judgment. Tune into their courage and forcefulness, humor, love, hates, enthusiasm, and self-control. What is their level of tact, adaptability, fairness, urbanity, tolerance, and kindness? Their moral level is their honesty, conscientiousness, value of self, worthiness, and philosophy of life. And their spiritual level is revealed in their reverence for truth, altruism, idealism, goodness, and cosmic insight.

Thus with such knowledge, plus the support and the guidance of the Holy Spirit we prepare and conduct ourselves to react within our own individual potential for the greatest good of those around us as we go about proclaiming the Gospel in our words and deeds and according to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Jesus knew that we are of this world and we are expected to live in it. To those who are his disciples he gives his words and protection to "keep them from the evil one." By his words of truth he sanctifies those who belong to him and he sends them

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

forth into the world (John 17:1-19). Reconciled to God, as we are, does not call for a life that is withdrawn from this world, living as much a slave to medieval piety as those under the Law.

We live in freedom by means of our faith in Christ, secure against death, and endowed with eternal life and salvation. With a freedom born of such faith we overcome the limitations of fate, of society, of competitiveness. It is a life of work, with an inner peace that reflects the glory of God in whose image we are made, and who was revealed to us in Jesus Christ, and in the spirit given to us by the Holying Spirit.

Such a system for life calls for us to "live on the edge." To some it describes another form of legalism and, thus, imprisoning and frustrating. They cry that they have trouble enough trying to keep their balance with their present forms of codes and creeds, piety and provisions. It may sound antithetical to the very thing that Jesus came to destroy. But such is not the case.

*That which is born of God overcomes the world* (1 John 5:4). "With these words the author admonishes the Christians that those who believe should remember that they should give proof of the power and practice of their faith in their lives and their deeds. For he wrote this epistle mainly in order to reprove the false Christians, who like to listen when we teach that we are saved through Christ alone, and that our works and deeds merit no salvation, and then think when they have heard it that they, too, are now Christians and that they need not work or join in the fight. They do not perceive that through and out of such faith new men are born, who overcome the world and the devil...Thus, if you do not overcome the world, but are overcome by it, you may well glory in your faith and in Christ, but your own deeds witness against you, that you are not a child of God."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, one's "faith," then, is not truly faith.

And from Romans 8:32, "How should God not give us all things with his Son?" When persons have Christ as the foundation and the chief blessing for their salvation, "then the other part follows: that you take him as your example, giving yourself in service to your neighbor just as you see that Christ has given himself for you. See, there faith and love move forward, God's commandment is fulfilled, and a person is happy and

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<sup>4</sup>Martin Luther; "Sermon on 1 John 5:4-12"; W.A. 21.280; *Day by Day We Magnify Thee*; trans. Steiner, Margaret and Scott, Percy; Fortress Press, Phila., 1982; p 181.

fearless to do and to suffer all things....Christ as a gift nourishes your faith...Christ as an example exercises your works...They come forth from you because you have already been made a Christian."<sup>5</sup> Thus, the glory, the Kingdom, of God is not seen in great human successes but in the cross of Jesus that calls us to equivalent service. Thus, in trusting God, as did Jesus, I escape from losing life and can, in consequence, adopt an attitude of benevolence toward my neighbor.

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<sup>5</sup>Martin Luther; "What to Look for and Expect from the Gospels"; *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*; Lull, Timothy, ed.; Augsburg Fortress; Minneapolis; 1989; p 107.

I could end with this poem, but notice the "ifs" that are so bold.

**"If** your life is unselfish, **if** for others you live,  
For not what you get, but how much you can give;  
**If** you live close to God in his infinite grace..  
You don't have to tell it, it shows in your face."

It's a poignant poem by an author unknown to me. But, hear the Good News when we change the Grammar of Law--"If you do..., then it will be..."--to the Grammar of the Gospel:

"Since in Christ you live close to God in his infinite  
grace,  
You don't have to tell it, it shows in your face."



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***Each of Us in Our Own Way.*** *Not everything important in our lives is for public consumption. Robin Morgan provides a voice for the more private messages to Ed.*

The first time I took a Crossings class was kind of a fluke. I wasn't looking for a Bible class. We had just moved to St. Louis and I didn't know a soul, so I succumbed to a salesman on the phone and ended up at a strange church in a strange town wondering why I was spending my Sunday evenings this way.

I didn't even "get it" in that first class. He diagrammed and lectured and cajoled, but the D's and P's didn't really sink in. I had nothing in common with the other students and the room was crowded with hymnals and sheet music, but when he asked which of us wanted to take another class after Christmas I raised my hand.

If you'd asked me then why I raised my hand, I would probably have mumbled something about intelligent and interesting discussions, but I would have been thinking about sitting in Schroeder's kitchen crying and talking with Ed about how I ached inside.

No doubt, there are some of you who have been reading this book and wishing that you could have offered words here about the impact of Ed's ministry on your life, but the words you have are not public words.

Many of us have sat in Schroeders' kitchen. It seems to be one of the Holying Spirit's favorite places.

This space is dedicated for you.



**Revelation.** *Who is the student and who is the teacher? Robert Bertram, Ed's mentor and colleague, **reveals** to us that in being **reconciled** through the Holy-ing Spirit, we are **all** messengers of Christ, sent forth to study, teach and live the Good News with others.*

*To Ed, Pax et Gaudium*

*theses on*

## **REVELATION**

*Crossing a Modern Theme with its Biblical Original*

### **I. Retrieving "Revelation"**

1. Theologians since the Enlightenment have so overused the biblical theme, revelation, and often in such sub-biblical ways, that the term has become "inflated." It has increased in currency but depreciated in value.
2. So much so that critics seriously suggest declaring a moratorium on the term. That is unlikely to happen soon. The bolder course would be to regain for the concept of revelation its original biblical force, notably as it was employed by Paul.

### **II. Does Revelation Save?**

3. Today's revelationist theologies assume that the only thing the world has ever needed in order to be "saved" is to be *shown* that it already *is* saved. If so, we really must not need all that much saving, just a recognition of a salvation which obtains anyway, whether we believe it or not.
4. What we need, presumably, is not that God will love us-- that, it is assumed, God does in any case -- but only that God would *reveal* that love to us, persuading us how well loved we already are.

5. If that were true, then, whether we are convinced of God's love or not, whether we accept it or reject it, loved we still are. It is as if the world were unconditionally elected and that grace were irresistible, no matter how resistive the world may appear to the contrary.
6. Beginning from that dubious premise, revelationists are left to busy themselves with only one change, a change of human hearts and minds, an attitudinal change in *our* relationship to *God*.
7. Still, within revelationism even that change makes little difference in the end. For in revelationist theologies the only decisive relation is not our relationship to God but *God's* to *us*, which allegedly has never needed changing in the first place. That relationship is assumed to be fixed -- by definition gracious.
8. Thus the "revealing" of divine grace seems to be the only project left to promote, though even that makes little difference ultimately. That is why the idea of revelation, though currently it abounds in theologies everywhere, has drastically lost its original cash value. It has become an inflationary concept.

### III. Getting Loved

9. What this revelationist half-truth forgets is how *inter*-personal the biblical love is. Inseparable from *God's* loving is the part *we* play in it, precisely as the beloved.
10. Consider this biblical view. Just negatively, if those whom God promises to love should disbelieve the Promiser, then they are not in fact "getting" loved. What they *are* getting -- and from God! -- is the opposite.
11. Conversely, it is exactly in their trusting the Promiser that the promised love comes true. Of course, they do not *make* it come true. The love is always of God's making. But neither does God love without the loved ones' receiving it, without their *getting* loved -- which is what faith is.

12. Note the analogy to human promising. A bride promises to love her husband. But suppose he distrusts her. Then, not only is he deprived of her love. Her love itself shrivels to a private feeling, a solipsism. *Her* conscience may be clear. But is *he being* loved? If so, only in a way that discredits him. Is that love?
13. Grace is like kissing. God does not do it alone. Unilaterally? Yes. Even passionately. But not ineffectually, not without the beneficiaries' receiving it. The kiss is not thrown or forced or slept through. In one measure or another, sooner or later, it is accepted, enjoyed. If not, whatever "kiss" there was becomes instead a reproach.

#### IV. Two Prior Questions

14. There are at least two prior questions about revelation which revelationists neglect, though Paul did not. First, *as what* is God revealed? Only as gracious? Not also as wrathful? Second, is it *only God* who is revealed? Aren't we as well?
15. As to the first question, as Paul knew well, there is also a revealing of God which is anything but saving, namely, the revealing of divine condemnation. That revelation, too, must be faced. Yet it cannot be faced except on pain of death.
16. As to the second question, Paul reminds us that it isn't only God who is being revealed, whether in wrath or in mercy, but so -- in both cases -- are we: either as infuriating or as endearing. Indeed, it is only as we heed God's revelation of *us* that God's *self*-revelation occurs.

#### V. Divine Wrath

17. On the first point, that God is revealed also as wrathful, Paul leaves no doubt. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against... the wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth." (Rom. 1:18)
18. In fact -- literally, in actual, observable fact -- that *is* the divine wrath, that God *lets* them "by their wickedness suppress the truth."

19. What is observable, empirically so, is at least the fact of "wickedness" and even perhaps the fact that that wickedness functions to "suppress the truth." What Paul discerns in that fact, and that is what is "wrathful," is that God lets us do it. "God gave them up." (v. 24)
20. Human, truth-suppressing wickedness implies not just an absence of God but an absenting of God.
21. That is the hard point, however, which is so incredible, most of all to revelationists, namely, that our suppressing the truth by our wickedness has the active acquiescence of the Creator, who indignantly abandons us to our untruth.
22. That is why, because it is so offensive to piety, that the bitter, suppressed truth about God's wrath has to be "revealed," literally unveiled. Without that revelation we moralize our sin, arrogating it exclusively to ourselves, denying any thought of God's angrily letting us have our way.

## **VI. Contradiction in God?**

23. The starkest theological antithesis is not, as we often pretend, between "sin and grace," namely, between something *we* do (sin) and something *God* does (grace.) True, that antithesis would be stark enough.
24. But no, starker still is the corresponding antithesis, as Paul puts it, between divine law and divine promise, between God's cursing and blessing.
25. Notice, that antithesis between God's wrath and God's mercy is real, not merely apparent. It isn't as if God only seems to be wrathful but really is only loving, or as if wrath is just a temporary disguise until it is unmasked, disclosing the kindly God behind it. What *is* revealed is judgment no less real than its opposite, mercy.
26. Nor is it a matter of two gods, a demonic one who accuses and a pitying one who forgives. Both actions are the doings of one and the same righteous God.

27. But then doesn't this revealed antithesis of wrath versus mercy, law versus gospel, imply a contradiction within God? Perhaps it does.
28. Still, need that be offensive? Might it not be Good News? Isn't it a marvel of the divine mercy that out of *love* for us God is willing even to incur contradiction? After all, God *could* have avoided such inner conflict by sticking just to the law and being done with us.
29. And isn't the greater marvel this, that God finds a way, as Paul says, to "reconcile" the contradiction (2 Cor. 5:18-19), and at immense personal cost, even if that entails being triune in the process?

### **VII. Understandable Denial**

30. Revelationists typically evade Paul's antithesis by construing "wrath" not as God's real self, which for them can only be love, but rather as a passing -- stern, yes, but passing -- "form of grace."
31. Once the divine wrath has thus been domesticated, it becomes instead a kind of interim "tough love," a merely tactical means for bringing sinners to mercy -- and never anything but such a means.
32. Would that The Critical Process were that benign or always that temporary.
33. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the divine wrath is seldom manifest in all its force and fury -- and finality. So it is understandable, just on empirical grounds, why revelationists might shrug off Paul's and other biblical writers' depiction of God's anger as exaggerated.

### **VIII. Moses' Face Veiled**

34. Paul senses how extreme his claims about divine wrath must seem, especially to the religious establishment. And he accepts the burden of proof. He appeals to the establishment's own Writings, to the story in the Book of Exodus where Moses descended from Sinai to present his people with the newly revealed law. (2 Cor. 3:7-18)

35. So blinding was the brightness of Moses' face, having just come down from his encounter with the Lord, that Moses had to don a veil in order to spare his people the withering glow of the law's "glory." ("Glory" might better be spelled glow-ry.)
36. With that allegory Paul dramatizes a universal condition that still prevails: the law always comes to us "veiled." Its fierce "condemnation" of us has to be muted, actually belied, in the process of transmission. Else we in our weakness could not tolerate the law's mortifying truth even minimally.
37. Moreover, this veiling of the law, a concession to human weakness, is a compromise to which the law's own Author is party. God colludes with our veiled minds and deliberately conceals the full truth of our condemnation.
38. The only alternative, it seems, would be for God to lift the veil from the law, as a bullfighter lifts his red cape from the path of the charging bull. But then the price of truth would be the goring of the crowd downfield. Instead, for the moment, the veil stays between and the people's fate remains hidden from them.

### **IX. Divine Quandary**

39. God, so to speak, is in a quandary. On the one hand, by keeping the lethal truth of the law veiled, the Creator in the short run spares sinners from immediate nihilation.
40. But on the other hand, that very veiledness only deludes them into imagining that the law is survivable and, worse yet, that it is viable, a way to life rather than what it truly is, a "ministry of death." (v. 7)
41. Sinners are still doomed to death. But in spite of that they live under the illusion of a wrath-less, fulfillable law. Can God be part to that deception and still be honest, "righteous?"
42. On the other hand, can God be "open" with us (4:2), unveiled, without destroying us?

## X. Christ the Unveiler

43. It is in Jesus the Christ, Paul declares, that the law's veil has at last been lifted (3:14-15) but not in the way the bullfighter's red flag is lifted to let the bull come charging through.
44. Rather, Christ lifts the veil by interposing himself in the law's line of fire. He absorbs its scorching blast for those who stand downwind of it as a heat-shield absorbs the lethal radiation.
45. In his death, where "one died for all," sinners now confront the fatal "glow-ry" which was directed against them but from which they have now been spared. In him, their stand-in, "the ministry of death" is executed and, only then, revealed.
46. But simultaneously with this consuming wrath there is revealed the diametric opposite of wrath, the far "greater glory." In the same Christ "who for their sake died and was raised" there glows God's surpassing, wrath-absorbing *mercy*. Indeed, that *is* the mercy happening, Christ extinguishing our death in his.
47. In one and the same action, as God's "blessing" overcomes God's "curse," *both* are revealed for what they are: real curse which in Christ, as in none other, succumbs to real blessing.

## XI. What is Not Revealed

48. Notice what the unveiling in Christ does *not* reveal. It does not reveal that the divine condemnation never was real in the first place, that all along it was merely a scowling "mask over God's smiling face," a tactical fiction. Nor is that what Luther intended by that metaphor.
49. That revelationist fallacy trivializes not only divine wrath but Christ as well. It reduces him to *only* a revealer, merely a messenger of a foregone conclusion, as if God's mercy toward us would be in effect with or without Christ's revealing, except that now we *know* about it. This is the Christ of the gnostics.

50. And not only does that revelationist fallacy under-employ Christ. It disemploys the Holying Spirit. To put all our christological eggs in the one basket of "Christ the Revealer" evades a prior question, Doesn't Christ himself need revealing quite as much as God does? If his death is Good News self-evidently, then what need of the Spirit?

## **XII. Reconciled**

51. What Christ's lifting the veil does reveal is how mortally real the law's "ministry of death" is -- and apart from him still is -- and, moreover, how altogether "new" therefore must be God's "reconciling to himself" such two utter opposites. (5:17-19)
52. The opposites are, on the one hand, "the world" which in all honesty God finds infuriating versus, on the other hand, God "himself" who, though he yearns to love this world, yearns to love it not cheaply or permissively but in all honesty.
53. Among revelationists the verb "reconcile" in 2 Corinthians is usually subjectivized. We misinterpret God's "*reconciling* the world to himself" as if God were merely getting the world to like him, improving *our* attitude toward *God* -- as in marriage counseling, "reconciling" the alienated spouse (us) to once again feel love.
54. A more apt analogy from modern life, a more objective one, would be the reconciling done by an accountant, "reconciling" two sets of books which do not jibe, or balancing a frustrating checkbook. Or an investigative journalist tries to "reconcile" -- to square, to harmonize -- the claims people make with the actual facts.
55. In 2 Corinthians it is God who is reconciling "the world" -- an utterly unacceptable, dishonest world -- "to himself," an utterly honest God, who longs to square these two polar incommensurables, yet in all honesty.
56. It is in the history of Jesus the Christ, says Paul, that this infuriating world at last becomes honestly plausible to God, "a new creation." How so? By God's "not counting [sinners'] trespasses against them" but instead "for our sake" making Christ "to be sin who knew no sin." (5:17, 19, 21)

### XIII. Revelation Begs Reconciliation

57. Though this whole change happens "in Christ," it is exactly *to God* that it happens. Whatever conflict there is in God is here reconciled, again, *in God*. What occurs in Christ occurs not outside of God. For it is "*God* [who] was *in Christ*, reconciling... to *himself*."
58. More pointedly, whose honesty is it which is here at stake? Whose "righteousness" is here in the making -- not only which is being revealed but which here and now is in process of coming into being? Whose righteousness? Paul's answer: not merely ours but the very "righteousness of God."
59. Indeed, what *we* are coming to be -- we in Christ -- is not just righteous ourselves. That is another language, the language of our "justification." But here the talk is about the reconciling of God. So what we are to become, extravagant as that seems, is God's *own* "righteousness."
60. Theodicies ask, Where in the world is *God* being righteous -- notice, not merely being *revealed* as righteous but himself *developing, acquiring, gaining in* righteousness? Where? Paul's answer: in Christ and his believers. In that worldly process, as we are becoming, the inner-worldly righteousness of God is becoming.
61. It is only when and as the divine opposites, curse and blessing, wrath and mercy, are in Christ historically *reconciled* that there is any *revelation* of mercy. Indeed, only then is there any actualized mercy to *be* revealed. Apart from that and prior to that historic reconciliation, the revelation is at best anticipatory.

### XIV. *Being Reconciled*

62. But God's reconciliation "in Christ" does not conclude with the death and resurrection of Jesus. True, it was then and there (past tense) that "God was reconciling the world to himself." But what still remains is for the world, us, to suffer ourselves to *be* reconciled -- or not.

63. And true, as of God's reconciling in Christ, "everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new." But our *seeing* that newness is intrinsic to our being included in it. That is why Paul says, "If anyone is *in Christ*, there is a new creation." (5:17)
64. To accept that in Christ we are honestly made plausible to God or instead not to accept that and thus to forfeit such plausibility -- both possibilities persist. In the one case the God-world reconciliation succeeds and is so revealed. In the other case, there is no reconciliation to be revealed, seeing it is spurned. Effectively so.

### **XV. One Aroma, Two Scents**

65. What prompts some to allow themselves to "be reconciled," that is to believe, and others not? Paul is frank to admit that the difference lies not in themselves alone but also in the revelation itself. The very idea of God's unveiling the law in Christ, to his hurt and to our advantage, strikes people differently.
66. To some people, as Paul says, the God-world reconciliation in the cross reeks of death and morbidity, hence is obnoxious, and for understandable reasons right within the Christ event itself. Such a reaction, though understandable, reveals the reactionaries -- if not to themselves, at least to believers -- as "perishing."
67. To others, however, the same original odor, "the aroma of Christ," comes across as joyous and vivifying, "a fragrance from life to life." They thereby, in view of their quite different response of faith, are revealed as "those who are being saved."

### **XVI. Revealing Us**

68. Hence it isn't only God who is revealed. So are God's believers. Or as Paul says to the Galatians, "*faith* [is] revealed" -- revealed for what it is, namely, as justifying, as the birthmark of junior deities. (3:23-26)
69. This revealing of faith -- notice, not just a revealing *to* faith but *of* faith, disclosing its wondrous clout -- recalls how in the Synoptics the compliments which Jesus pays to faith sound almost idolatrous: "great," "has made you well," "has saved you."

70. In 2 Corinthians, faith is revealed as our "accepting" of the world's having been reconciled to God in Christ. (6:1) And therewith, with our accepting, that part of the world which is we is in fact "*being* reconciled." (5:20)

### **XVII. Ministry of Reconciliation**

71. We have saved until last the crucial missing link, what Paul calls "the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:18) Between God's "reconciling the world to himself in Christ," on one hand, and believers' suffering themselves to "be reconciled," on the other, there intervenes that link of love, a "means of grace," the apostolic ministry.
72. Like the incarnate "God in Christ," the apostolic ministry is likewise divine-human. Though it is obviously "we," the all too human Paul, who here and now "entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God," it is no less "God [who] is making his appeal through us." (5:20) So vulnerably does God submit to human mediation.
73. The divine plea, "Accept your reconciledness," though that may be rebuffed by many, is meant for everyone. So the apostolic messenger "from now on... regard(s) *no one* from a human ["fleshly"] point of view." (5:16) In Christ everyone is eligible. Where there is faith there is hope.

### **XVIII. An Open Ministry**

74. Apostolic ministers, as the name "apostle" suggests, are messengers. Though they are personally chosen for this messengership, their authority inheres in the Message they bring. Paul's "ministry of reconciliation" is "the message of reconciliation." (5:18, 19) The Message makes the messenger, not vice versa.
75. "We are engaged in *this* ministry," says Paul, as opposed to what other ministry? The opposite ministry -- and there is such -- is "the ministry of death," "the ministry of condemnation." The apostolic ministry, by contrast, is "the ministry of the Spirit," "the ministry of justification." (4:1, 3:7-9)

76. However, it is not as though "the ministry of death" has simply been by-passed. It has been fulfilled, remember, in the cross of Christ and only thus superseded. Indeed, the very thing which distinguishes the apostolic ministry, namely, its sheer openness, its unveiledness, lies in its frontal and free dealing with sin, law, death.

### **XIX. A Readable Bodily Letter**

77. Moreover, the death and rising of Christ not only marks the Message the messenger brings but even marks those who receive the Message. "*We* are afflicted in every way but not crushed, ... always carrying in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be *made visible* in our bodies." (4:8, 10) A quite bodily revelation!

78. Thus Paul can picture his readers, the believers, as themselves a revealing message -- to the world. "You yourselves are our letter." The content of the letter is "Christ." Its verbalizer is the apostle. The One who inscribes it, not on tablets of stone but on the believers' hearts is the Spirit.

79. This "letter," which is the believers themselves and whose content is their crucified and risen Lord now bodying forth in their own mundane crosses and easters, renders them legible. To whom? "To be known and read by all humanity." (3:2)

80. It is into believers' "hearts" that "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" has "shone." Thanks to the mediating ministry of messengership, the original "glow-ry" of God's "reconciling the world to himself" in Christ now radiates into that same dark world through the cruciform and paschal lives of the reconciled ones. (4:6)

Robert W. Bertram

September, 1993

## *AFTERWORD*

As stated in the Foreword to this volume, this book is not a conventional Festschrift because Crossings and Ed Schroeder are far from ordinary.

However, it would be remiss of us not to mention some biographical and bibliographical notes.

It would be hard to imagine that anyone in the Crossings Community does not know that Ed is the first-born of seven children in an Illinois farm family. A fascinating history lies between his roots and Crossings, which includes attending Valparaiso University and Tübingen University before teaching at Valparaiso, Concordia Seminary, and then eventually at Seminex. But the focus of this volume is on Ed's Crossings years, not his entire life's work.

On the other hand, there is a strong case that much of Ed's life was preparing him to acquire the peculiar skills and talents required to make Crossings ministry possible: how to listen to pupils/parishioners; how to discern their thoughts and feelings in the midst of their struggles; how to convey his, their and our failure in each of our relationships with God; and finally to proclaim how God responds to our failure in the death of God's Son, Jesus the Christ, our Lord and Savior. Perhaps most important, he learned how to cross the Good News of God's action almost two millenia ago with our lives today through the Holy Spirit so that we can go out into the world and be part of God's grand reclamation project.

By all logic, he and Crossings as a non-profit organization should not have financially succeeded in bringing the Good News to the frontlines of the Christian church or laity. But the core of Crossings and Ed is the Gospel and the Gospel defies our logic. God's logic is truly Good News! How blessed are we!

So, rather than listing all of Ed's published works throughout his career, we close this unconventional volume honoring him with what is most distinctively and memorably "Ed": the Crossings Curriculum plus a chronology of all the Crossings workshops as of early 1993.

Ed Schroeder: teacher and pastor, evangelist and proclaimer. We thank you for all your gifts to us and look forward to the next celebration volume compiling your work and impact in the next chapter of your life.

## CROSSINGS WORKSHOPS 1983-1993

### 1983

**St. Louis, MO** Bethel Lutheran Church  
**Orland Park, IL** Christ Lutheran Church  
**Clayton, MO** SS. Michael and George Episcopal Church  
**Belleville, IL** St. Mark Lutheran and St. George Episcopal Churches

### 1984

**Oklahoma City, OK** OKC Lutheran Ministerium  
**Oklahoma City, OK** Lutheran Laity of OKC  
**Manchester, MO** Trinity Lutheran Church  
**Sunset Hills, MO** St. Thomas/Holy Spirit Lutheran Church  
**Evansville, IN** Grace and St. Matthew Lutheran Churches  
**Minneapolis, MN** Christ Lutheran Church  
**Portland, OR** Lutheran Church of the Resurrection  
**Berkeley, CA** Lutheran & Episcopal Seminaries of the GTU  
**Virginia Beach, VA** Unity & Good Shepherd Lutheran Churches  
**St. Louis, MO** Christ Memorial Lutheran Church  
**Ft. Wayne, IN** Epiphany, Gethsemane & St. Andrew Lutheran  
**Oak Park, IL** The Chicago Presbytery

### 1985

**Ballwin, MO** St. Mark's Presbyterian Church  
**Milwaukee, WI** Faith, Ascension, Immanuel, Redeemer & Epiphany Lutheran Churches  
**Denver, CO** Auroria Colleges Campus Ministry  
**St. Louis, MO** Bethel Lutheran Church  
**Cupertino, CA** Bethel Lutheran Church  
**Cleveland Heights, OH** Grace Lutheran Church  
**Kirkwood, MO** Concordia Lutheran Church  
**Florissant, MO** Christ the King Lutheran Church  
**Elmhurst, IL** Elmhurst College  
**Evanston, IL** The Chicago Presbytery  
**Boston, MA** Evangelical Lutheran Bethlehem Church  
**Boston, MA** Korean (Presbyterian) Church of Boston  
**Ft. Rucker, AL** Post Chaplains' Retreat  
**Winter Haven, FL** Grace Lutheran Church  
**Holden Village, WA** Three weeks of retreat teaching  
**Roseville, MN** Lutheran Church of the Resurrection  
**St. Louis, MO** Lutheran Church of the Living Christ

### 1986

**St. Louis, MO** Bethel Lutheran Church  
**Columbus, OH** Trinity Lutheran Seminary  
**Columbus, OH** Gethsemane Lutheran Church  
**New York, NY** Lutheran Churches of Metro New York  
**Minneapolis, MN** Mt. Zion Lutheran Church  
**Bell Nor, MO** Unity Lutheran Church  
**Livonia, MI** Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
**Manchester, MO** Trinity Lutheran Church  
**Appleton, WI** Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
**St. Louis, MO** Mercy Retreat Center  
**Minot, ND** Zion Lutheran Church  
**Medora, ND** Western North Dakota Pastors' Conference (ALC)  
**Shively, KY** St. Paul Lutheran Church  
**Belleville, IL** St. Mark Lutheran Church  
**Grand Rapids, MI** Peace Lutheran Church  
**St. Louis, MO** Lutheran Professional Church Workers' Conference  
**Chicago, IL** Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago  
**Florissant, MO** Lutheran Church of the Living Christ

### 1987

**Florissant, MO** Church of the Living Christ  
**Florissant, MO** Atonement Lutheran Church  
**Edwardsville, IL** St. John United Methodist Church  
**Belleville, IL** Peace Lutheran Church

**Rochester, NY** Interfaith Center, Rochester Institute of Technology  
**Chicago, IL** Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
**Belleville, IL** St. George Episcopal & St. Mark Lutheran Churches  
**Meriden, CT** Immanuel Lutheran Church  
**Edwardsville, IL** Eden United Church of Christ  
**Goleta, CA** Lutheran Campus Ministry, University of California, Santa Barbara  
**St. Louis, MO** Grace United Methodist Church  
**Richmond, Heights, MO** Richmond Heights Presbyterian Church  
**St. Louis, MO** Methodist Metro Ministry  
**Winter Haven, FL** Grace Lutheran Church  
**Bellevue, KY** Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
**Richmond Heights, MO** Second Baptist Church  
**Liberty, MO** William Jewell College  
**Columbus, OH** United Church of Christ Area Conference  
**Hammond, IN** First United Lutheran Church  
**Chicago, IL** Lutheran School of Theology  
**Lake Tahoe, NV** St. Paul's Lutheran Family

### 1988

**MacDill AFB, FL** Base Chaplains & Laity Workshops  
**Belleville, IL** St. Mark Lutheran Church  
**Florissant, MO** Church of the Living Christ  
**Waterloo, Ontario** Waterloo Lutheran Seminary Consultation  
**Guelph, Ontario** Jesuit Center of Spirituality  
**New York, NY** Trinity Lower East Side Lutheran Parish  
**New York, NY** Governors Island Coast Guard Station  
**Dover, DE** St. Andrew's Lutheran and Christ Episcopal Churches  
**St. Louis, MO** Pallottine Retreat Center  
**Tokyo, Japan** St. Paul's International Lutheran Church  
**Seoul, Korea** International Lutheran Church  
**Hong Kong** Church of All Nations  
**Irving, TX** Texas Academe for Lutheran Laity  
**Cary, NC** Resurrection Lutheran Church  
**St. Paul, MN** Luther-Northwestern Seminary  
**Englewood, CO** Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church  
**Chicago, IL** LSTC Christ the King Practicum  
**St. Louis, MO** St. Louis Crossings

### 1989

**St. Louis, MO** Christ Memorial Lutheran Church  
**Minneapolis, MN** Mt. Olive Lutheran Church  
**Hanover, NH** Dartmouth Lutheran Campus Ministry  
**Marion, IA** Faith Lutheran Church  
**Pittsburgh, PA** Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
**Marlton, NJ** Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
**LaCrosse, WI** SW Wisconsin Synod (ELCA)  
**Indianapolis, IN** Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
**St. Louis, MO** Crossings Community  
**Saskatoon, SK** Lutheran Theological Seminary  
**Chicago, IL** LSTC Summer School  
**Lindsborg, KS** LSTC/Wartburg Seminary Summer School  
**Portland, OR** Lay Assistant Program, NW District, LC-MS  
**Portland, OR** Resurrection Lutheran Church  
**Oregon City, OR** Prince of Life Lutheran Church  
**Gresham, OR** Fairlawn Towne Lutheran Home  
**Gresham, OR** Trinity Lutheran Church  
**Valier, MT** ELCA Montana Synod Cluster (2x)  
**Lutherridge, NC** ELCA Clergy Continuing Education  
**St. Louis, MO** St. Mark's Lutheran Church  
**Cheektowaga, NY** St. Luke Lutheran Church  
**Great Bend, KS** Trinity Lutheran Church  
**Hammond, IN** St. John's Lutheran Church  
**Chicago, IL** Christ the King Crossings Practicum

## CROSSINGS WORKSHOPS 1983-1993

### 1990

**Shawnee, KS** Redeemer Lutheran Church  
**Michigan City, IN** St. Paul Lutheran Church  
**Southington, CT** Zion Lutheran Church  
**Jacksonville, FL** St. Matthew Lutheran Church  
**Waco, TX** St. Matthew Lutheran Church  
**Guadalajara, MEXICO** All Saints Lutheran Church  
**Atlanta, GA** St. Michael's Lutheran Church  
**Camrose, Alberta** Bethel Lutheran Church  
**Edmonton, Alberta** Hosanna Lutheran Church (2x)  
**Victoria, British Columbia** Lutheran-Anglican Dialogue (2x)  
**St. Louis, MO** ELCA Synod Convention (Missouri-Kansas)  
**Springfield, OH** Association of Lutheran Church Musicians  
**St. Charles, MO** Crossings Community Summer Retreat  
**Fort Riley, KS** Chaplains' Seminar, Weekend Laity Retreat  
**Collingswood, NJ** St. Paul Lutheran Church  
**Temple Terrace, FL** Christ Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
**Colorado Springs, CO** First Lutheran Church & AF Academy  
**Boulder, CO** Lutheran Campus Ministry at University of Colorado  
**Columbia, IL** St. Paul's United Church of Christ  
**Dayton, OH** St. Matthew Lutheran Church  
**Battle Creek, MI** St. Mark Lutheran Church  
**Omaha, NE** Area Lutheran Churches  
**Minneapolis, MN** Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church  
**Grapevine, TX** Living Word Lutheran Church  
**Chicago, IL** Christ the King Crossings Practicum

**Johnson City, TN** Emmanuel School of Religion  
**Tonawanda, NY** Niagara/Buffalo Clergy Conference  
**Valparaiso, IN** Immanuel Lutheran Church  
**Spokane, WA** East Washington-Idaho Synod ELCA

### 1991

**Gainesville, FL** University Lutheran Church  
**Lake City, FL** Catholic, Episcopal and Three Lutheran Churches  
**Lake Tahoe, NV** St. Paul's Lutheran (Carson City)  
**Russellville, AR** Central Presbyterian Church  
**Valparaiso, IN** Valparaiso University Chapel Ministry  
**Brookfield, WI** Brookfield Lutheran Church  
**Salt Lake City, UT** Salt Lake Ministerial Association  
**Dallas, TX** Bethany Lutheran Church  
**Bolingbrook, IL** New Life Lutheran Church  
**North Easton, MA** Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
**Long Beach, CA** Our Savior Lutheran/ USS Missouri  
**Mobile, AL** St. Paul Lutheran Church (ELCA/LCMS)  
**Columbia, IL** Lutheran-Episcopal Clergy Retreat  
**Chicago, IL** Christ the King Crossings Practicum

### 1992

**Caldwell, ID** Faith Lutheran Church  
**Orion, IL** Area Church Association  
**Milledgeville, GA** Hope Lutheran Church  
**La Fayette, CA** Our Saviour's Lutheran Church  
**Kalamazoo, MI** Zion Lutheran Church  
**Willingen, Germany** European Lutheran Lay Retreat  
**Springfield, IL** ELCA Central & Southern Illinois Synod LMM  
**Chandler, AZ** Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
**Poughkeepsie, NY** Redeemer Lutheran Church  
**Harlan, IN** Three Lutheran Congregations  
**Belleville, IL** St. George Episcopal/St. Mark Lutheran Churches  
**Sidney, MT** Pella Lutheran Church  
**Seoul, KOREA**  
**Hong Kong**  
**Beijing, CHINA** Far East Workshop Series (16 events)  
**Taipei, TAIWAN**  
**Tokyo & Osaka, JAPAN**  
**Valparaiso, IN** University Conference for High School Religious Teachers  
**Chelan, WA** Holden Village  
**Bloomington, IN** St. Thomas Lutheran Church  
**Chicago, IL** SW Conference Metro Chicago Synod - ELCA

### 1993

**Kalamazoo, MI** Zion Lutheran Church



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*You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts,  
to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a  
letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but  
with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but  
on tablets of human hearts*

(2 Cor 3:2,3 - NRSV)

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