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Volume 62: Number 3 July 1998

Table of Contents

† Howard Tepker †
(1911-1998)

The Rev. Dr. Howard Tepker, professor emeritus of systematic theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, died Feb. 26, 1998. He served the seminary from 1958 to 1994.

Dr. Tepker graduated from Concordia College, Fort Wayne, in 1932. After attending Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri he helped to organize Concordia Lutheran Church in Wilmington, Delaware. In 1941 he was ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry and called to serve the very congregation he had helped organize. The following year Rev. Tepker accepted a dual call to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Marion and Trinity Lutheran Church, Rutherfordton, both in North Carolina. He served both parishes until 1948 when he was called to Saint John Lutheran Church in Beardstown, Illinois. During that time, Dr. Tepker reentered the St. Louis seminary, from which he received the Bachelor of Divinity (1953), Master of Sacred Theology (1961), and Doctor of Theology (1963) degrees.

Along with his academic pursuits, Dr. Tepker served as a visitor of the Illinois Valley Circuit from 1954 to 1958, sat on the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations, and participated in the Lutheran-Reformed Dialog. His writing dealt with the controversial issues of his day and featured several works concerning the inerrancy of Scripture, as well as the theological deficiencies of the charismatic movement.

Survivors include one son, George Tepker, and two daughters, Anna Carson and Barbara Ann Stapper. His wife, Rosalie, died in 1997. The funeral service was held Monday, March 2 at Saint Peter Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne at 11 a.m. Burial was in Concordia Cemetery Gardens, Fort Wayne.

Speaking on behalf of the Seminary, President Wenthe noted the varied, yet always faithful service of Dr. Tepker. "Beyond his academic and administrative duties, his warmth and personal manner were especially appreciated by students and colleagues. As a young faculty member when the seminary was located in Springfield, Illinois, I recall his spirited love of pinochle at faculty social gatherings. His deep sense of God's grace was evident in the way he confessed Christ through the loss of a home to fire, a child to premature death, and a spouse of more than fifty years. His presence as a person will be missed as much as his expertise. May our Resurrected Lord attend family and friends with His peace."

What Does This Mean?: A Symposium

Introduction

William C. Weinrich

When the hermeneutics of Dr. James Voelz first appeared, the editorial staff of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* recognized that something rather unprecedented had occurred: a theologian from the Missouri Synod had written a monograph that presented hermeneutics as a theological task rather than a merely literary one. Moreover, the Voelz text was a timely and substantial effort to address the meaning of the Biblical text in the context of postmodern denials of an external truth and the relocation of truth in the individual or, as the case may be, in a society. In either case, truth is perspectival. But what does such a hermeneutical environment do to Biblical interpretation. How is the interpretation of the Bible to be thought and to be done. This is the formidable task that Dr. Voelz set for himself in *What Does This Mean?* Clearly this book, whatever its strengths and weaknesses may turn out to be, deserved notice—and it deserved informed response. This little symposium of reviews is an attempt to give, at least in part, such a response. The symposium was intended to be larger than it is. However, for various reasons some invited to participate did not, and Dr. Voelz determined to allow his book to stand as its own defense rather than write a response to these responses. Significant issues are raised by Voelz in his book and by the three reviewers. Hopefully in some small way these reactions, along with an ongoing dialogue with Dr. Voelz, may serve to further the task of hermeneutics within the church.

Despite the friendly interchange between these exegetes, it is clear that there is a gulf of difference in approach and hermeneutical perspective among these authors. It is not simply that there is agreement on some particulars of scriptural prologomena (inspiration and clarity, among others). It is that there is considerable difference in the overall conceptual context for understanding and articulating those particulars. Take the issue of Biblical clarity for example. Voelz locates that clarity within a context: interpretation is done by "a believing Christian

within a Christian community in accordance with the creedal understanding of those Scriptures by the historic Christian church" (228-229). Yet, Lockwood and especially Maier are not convinced that the Bible is kept clear by the hermeneutics of Voelz. They appeal to intention, to the objective priority of text, to *autopistia* in a way which asserts at times that the Bible is its own context, external to the church and receiving its meaning apart from the church. Here Maier is especially vocal about the role of the Holy Spirit. Luther in a church "that held to the historic creeds did not initially have a proper understanding of the Bible." However, Luther "essentially in isolation was led by the Holy Spirit through the Word to interpret properly that Word." But, was Luther truly isolated? Was he in no way guided by the creed of the church, by its liturgy, by its history, by its dogmatic heritage? Or does the notion of inspiration already denote the creed because the inspiring Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity and the Spirit of Christ? Is there a context in which the Bible is to be read and expounded that results in a corporate/ecclesial understanding of the text? If Voelz has not clarified the clarity of Scripture, has Maier explained why the canon exists, or why the very reality of canon should exist? If, on the other hand, there is no context for the exposition of Scripture that brings forth a common, corporate confession of its meaning, what prevents the Bible from merely private and individual understandings ("what the Bible means to me"). At this point, I think Lockwood has a point in reminding us that the hearing of Scripture is more "Biblical" than is its reading. And this points us, does it not, in the direction of a context, one in which the Scripture was in fact read, the liturgy and the administration of the sacraments. Here perhaps Wenthe has his contribution. Is it exclusively true that Biblical interpretation is about interpretation, that is, about extracting meaning from a text whose meaning is not known? Or is there a nexus between text and ecclesial reality so that the meaningful referent of the text is precisely the life of the church, exercised most decisively and densely in her worship? Does meaning therefore derive "from several levels of signifiers," as Voelz says (156)? Or, to put it another way, is the "real" meaning of the text external to the text, in the reality of faith and life created by the Word and

Spirit, that is, by Christ and the Spirit. Or, yet again, is meaning literary and linguistic, or existential and fleshly? Or, finally, will heaven be more like communing at the altar or more like hearing the gospel text read?

I believe Voelz is more open to such probings than others in this little symposium. Nonetheless, they are not his probings; they are mine. In any case, it is clear that if Voelz is interested in reader response criticism (of his book, not the Bible!), here is a slice of it. Whether their response corresponds to his intention, is another question. Since neither side can claim *autopistia* for themselves, the issue is who has *claritas* on their side. This small symposium intends to provide no answer to that, but the discussion between good and thoughtful exegetes will, we hope and intend, advance the dialogue.

A Hermeneutics Text for the Advanced Student

Walter A. Maier III

James Voelz's *What Does This Mean?* is a thought provoking, scholarly work that shows the author's acquaintance with, and grasp of, issues pertaining to the interpretation of Scripture. Voelz is to be commended for tackling the complex subject of hermeneutics, adding his insightful work to the growing list of books dealing with the same topic. As with any other book (except the Bible), the present reviewer had both positive and negative reactions to *What Does This Mean?* The positive will be outlined first.

Positive Reactions

The scope of this study is admirable. Treating both the Old and the New Testaments, Voelz discusses textual criticism, linguistics, and the Lutheran approach to interpreting Scripture. The second part of his work—"Linguistics"—embraces over two-thirds of the book. This part analyzes linguistic theories, Hebrew poetic structure, the canon in hermeneutical

perspective, and the various semantic dimensions of a text; examines pragmatics (the practical purpose and results of linguistic utterances); and considers the application of biblical texts to readers and communities today.

There are other aspects of the book that are commendable. Among these, for example, are Voelz's clear statements, toward the beginning, that he is a "believing Christian," who fully subscribes to the Book of Concord, who has a "high" view of Scripture, and who embraces traditional (conservative) Christian assumptions concerning God and Scripture (19-20). Appreciated is Voelz's emphasis on the Christocentricity of Scripture, the importance of context in interpreting, and the fact that Scripture interprets Scripture. Biblical examples (that is, specific passages) he uses throughout the book to illustrate his explanations are appropriate and interesting. For the most part this reviewer agreed with his handling of textual criticism, though he could have given a bit more weight to external evidence in the making of text critical decisions. His Addendum 7-A, "Language about God/'God Talk,'" is helpful in responding to feminists who want to change some of the language of Scripture. In Addendum 11-A he has a good discussion of inerrancy.[1] Voelz explains well in Addendum 11-B that "in the Christ-event, all was fulfilled *in principle*, but not all was fulfilled without remainder. . . . Or, the new aeon came, but not so exhaustively that the old aeon was totally gone" (251; one may see a somewhat different viewpoint on 255). His last chapter, which explains the Lutheran confessional approach, is one of the best parts of the book.

In addition to these points, several other fine features in *What Does This Mean?* could be presented. However, at this point the review will turn to the present writer's negative reactions to the book.

[1]He might, however, have stated that many conservative interpreters hold to the inerrancy of the *autographs*.

Other Reactions

It must be noted, in the first place, that these negative reactions are recorded for the sake of brotherly, and hopefully beneficial, dialogue. They fall into two basic categories: those concerning a) lack of clarity, and b) points of disagreement.

Lack of Clarity

With regard to this category the comments will pertain to format, individual shorter sections, and longer sections/lengthier discussions. First, the book's format is not the easiest with which to work. Since a person probably will not read the book in one sitting, and since a number of the chapters begin as does chapter 11, with simply the number 11, followed by (after a listing of important resources) the heading "7. Further Critical Issues (Continued)," and then the subheading "c. Valid Interpreters/Interpretations," he may find himself frequently backtracking in the book, trying to pick up the beginning of the discussion of a particular topic. Numerous addenda (which appear as separate chapters) to "main" chapters add to the sense of the book's being somewhat like a labyrinth. The reader could check the table of contents (at the beginning) to try to find out where he is in a discussion, but this is not convenient. A suggestion: include the addenda as subunits in the "main" chapters (perhaps with different formatting) and provide the "main" chapters with summarizing titles.

Another "complaint" concerning format: when a reference is made to a different section of the book, the page number(s) of that section is (are) not always given. This can make the process of locating somewhat tedious. An example is in chapter 8, page 184, which has this reference: "(cf. chapter 5, section 3 c iii (B) (1) (B), above)." Additionally, the lack of an index does not ease the challenge of working with the book's format.

Concerning lack of clarity in individual shorter sections, only two will be cited. In chapter 2 (which deals with New Testament textual criticism), Voelz, describing followers of the "type"-of-text theory, writes in paragraph (B) that "those who adopt this theory will seek to *establish* one recension/text-type which

seems to preserve a 'strict' text. Such a recension is *selected* on the basis of 'the one great rule'" (49, emphasis added). "Establishing" a text-type is not exactly the same as "selecting" one. This passage could prove confusing to certain readers. A little more explanation would be helpful, particularly since Voelz concludes the paragraph by writing, "It is important to note that one *selects* among competing variant readings within the chosen recension by applying 'the one great rule'" (emphasis added). Secondly, Voelz's contention that the "implied" reader of a text, for whom the text's author writes, corresponds to no actual reader of the text, needs further clarification (219).

The following comments pertain to the lack of clarity in longer sections/lengthier discussions.

1) Voelz's language of "signifiers," "conceptual signifieds," "referent," and related terminology (especially in chapter 4, but throughout the book) is highly technical and difficult. The diagram of the communications model in chapter 4 is hard to understand (95). If this book is "to be a basic hermeneutics textbook" (11), it would be advisable for Voelz to communicate in certain sections in a way which is simpler and more readily understood. That would entail less of the following kind of writing: "Therefore, the meaning of the larger whole is the meaning of a matrix of signifiers with interrelated meanings, with the meanings of all signifiers being understood in every respect in relation to the meanings of all other signifiers." It would lead to more of this kind of writing: "In other words, nothing (no word/signifier) has individual meaning apart from context, including the larger context . . . and the entire package itself conveys a total meaning." The preceding quotations stand side-by-side on 102-103!

2) That Voelz at different places in *What Does This Mean?* writes in a general way about interpreting a text, and not with a specifically Lutheran slant, could cause some misunderstanding, as far as this reviewer is concerned. For example, it would have been better for Voelz to have placed the last part of the book ("The Lutheran Confessional Approach"),

which is chapter 14, before chapters 10 and 11. In other words, before the latter two chapters he could have stated in a clear way that the believer, following sound (Lutheran), biblically-sanctioned hermeneutical principles, and guided by the Holy Spirit through the Word, would correctly interpret that Word. Then the reader would have the proper perspective when Voelz in chapter 10 describes the interpreter as a "second text," "against" which the first or "target" text (for example, Galatians) is interpreted (209), and when he states that "because of the presence and activity of the interpreter's own person/self as text . . . there is no possibility of 'objective' textual interpretation" (210). The reader would not conclude, incorrectly, that it is impossible to derive objective truth from Scripture, or that every interpreter's interpretation of Scripture is equally valid.

Likewise, the reader would also have in proper perspective Voelz's assertion in Addendum 12-D that "the very experience one has while reading—which is itself a reaction to the meaning one perceives—can itself be read as a signifier and interpreted for its meaning" (319). Voelz in addition should have stated plainly that one's own reading experience as text is secondary to the biblical text, and that the truth the Holy Spirit intended to convey in a biblical passage remains the same—regardless of a reader's "experience."

In chapter 11 Voelz reaches the general conclusion "that valid interpretation of the sacred Scriptures can be done only by a believing Christian within a Christian community in accordance with the creedal understanding of those Scriptures by the historic Christian church" (228-229). Again, Voelz needs to include the fact that this "believing Christian" must also follow sound (Lutheran) hermeneutical principles. Having added this pertinent information, Voelz undoubtedly would have omitted two footnotes, 17 and 29, which are connected to his general conclusion, and which could be confusing to the reader. Footnote 17 reads, "Ambiguities and difficulties, of course, remain in this position [quoted above]. Who is a Christian, which texts are canonical, which creeds are normative, etc.—all such questions must be explored and are impossible to answer

cleanly" (223). In footnote 29 Voelz refers to "a Roman Catholic interpretation along similar lines" (228-229).

Indeed, a Roman Catholic could agree with Voelz's general conclusion. Yet one recalls that Luther, though he was in a church that held to the historic creeds did not initially have a proper understanding of the Bible. Moreover, Voelz holds that a valid interpreter of the New Testament must be taught to read by the Christian community (chapter 11, 221); yet Luther, essentially in isolation, was led by the Holy Spirit through the Word to interpret that Word properly.

3) In chapter 10, when Voelz explains that the intentional meaning of an author does not exhaust the meaning of his text (213-216), I would urge him to distinguish in a clearer way between the human author of a biblical text, who may see only a limited meaning, and the "actual" author, God the Holy Spirit. While his assertion may be true in some instances for the human author, it is not with regard to the Spirit. Further, in light of this assertion in chapter 10, footnote 19 of chapter 11 (224) could raise a question in the reader's mind. Here Voelz explains that the only one who has absolute competency to interpret a text "can only be the very author of the text."

4) Voelz states that "what happened in the OT . . . happened because of the future . . . what happened in Israel's history was determined by the future" (259; one may see also the following pages). To a certain extent Voelz is correct (but see below for a disagreement with Voelz's expansion upon this point). For the sake of clarity, however, Voelz could have mentioned the parallel consideration, namely, that what happened in the New Testament occurred because of what God had foretold/promised in the Old ("This happened, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet . . .").

Points of Disagreement

The second category of negative reactions involves this reviewer's points of disagreement with parts of *What Does This Mean?* That there are such points of disagreement is not

surprising, of course, for students of Scripture do not all agree on every matter of interpretation.

1) Voelz describes story parables as narratives which are nonliteral and, in effect, extended metaphors (303-304). I would argue that some parables may be accounts of actual historical events, and that a parable is, strictly speaking, an extended simile or an extended hypocatastasis. An allegory is an extended metaphor.[2]

2) Voelz approvingly quotes Brevard Childs (153; 263-264):

> The New Testament is not just an extension of the Old, nor a last chapter in an epic tale. Something totally new has entered in the gospel. Yet the complexity of the problem arises because the New Testament bears its totally new witness in terms of the old, and thereby transforms the Old Testament. Frequently the Old Testament is heard on a different level from its original or literal sense, and in countless figurative ways it reinterprets the Old to testify to Jesus Christ. . . . There is no one overarching hermeneutical theory by which to resolve the tension between the testimony of the Old Testament in its own right and that of the New Testament with its transformed Old Testament.

This reviewer rejects the notion that the New Testament tells "something totally new," "transforms" the Old Testament, and "reinterprets the Old to testify to Jesus Christ." The New Testament builds on and presumes the Old. Frequently the Old Testament in "its original or literal sense" points directly to people and events of the New Testament. There is no "tension between the testimony of the Old Testament in its own right and that of the New Testament."

3) This reviewer disagrees with Voelz's apparent contention that all of Old Testament history is a type: ". . . the entire history of Israel is, in a very real sense, prophetic" (262; one may compare 259-261). Only certain Old Testament people, events,

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[2]One may see, for example, Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 276-277.

offices, and institutions are types, and it is best to look for specific identification of these by Scripture itself. The Old Testament history is salvation history (God working out His plan of salvation); yet not all aspects/parts of that history are typical.

4) While briefly mentioning the rectilinear approach to Old Testament Messianic prophecies (for example, 268, 271), Voelz in essence strongly advocates the typological position (260, n. 17; 268-274). The present reviewer holds to the rectilinear understanding of these prophecies, which is really their only certain interpretation, based on the evidence of Scripture. Voelz uses Psalm 2 as his key example, yet he does not adequately explain why he chooses the typological interpretation for this psalm. This is noteworthy, since previously he has argued forcefully for letting the New Testament guide our interpretation of the Old (the New Testament connects the psalm directly to Christ). Indeed, he notes Peter's denial (Acts 2:25-32) of a typological interpretation of Psalm 16:8-11; Voelz's explanation for this "problem" is unconvincing (273-274, n. 14).

Before leaving the typological-rectilinear debate, this reviewer cites Voelz's proposal that

> It is . . . especially the move from nonliteral meaning to literal—which is quite possibly the key to the OT interpretation which was given by our Lord . . . (Luke 24:45) . . . the essential 'hermeneutical move' when interpreting the OT and finding Christ therein is from nonliteral to literal, from understanding a passage in its historical context nonliterally . . . to an understanding that a literal meaning is also intended by the author. . . (273).

A well-known passage from Luther, with which the present writer agrees, stands in marked contrast:

> The Holy Spirit is the plainest Writer and Speaker in heaven and on earth. Therefore His words can have no more than one, and that the most obvious, sense. This we call the literal or natural sense . . . we should not say that

> Scripture . . . has more than one meaning. . . . Scripture does not . . . have a twofold sense.[3]

While Voelz is, again, to be commended for his scholarly, well-researched study of a complex subject, in my opinion *What Does This Mean?* is a textbook for the advanced hermeneutics student, and not for the beginner, for two principal reasons. First, in parts of the book the language and concepts are too technical and difficult for the beginning student. Second, for this to have been a basic hermeneutics textbook, Voelz ought to have discussed in an orderly manner additional basic hermeneutical principles and other matters of biblical interpretation (for example, figures of speech, dreams, symbolic language, allegories, quotations in Scripture, and other subjects). In fact, one could argue that his book is more a text on linguistics, rather than hermeneutics.

In conclusion, *What Does This Mean?* presents the advanced student of hermeneutics with new insights, challenges him to reexamine various aspects of the interpretation process, and encourages him to continue "wrestling" with the biblical text.

A Valuable Service in Addressing Hermeneutical Issues of the 1990s

Gregory J. Lockwood

This reading of Dr Voelz's Hermeneutics has inevitably been influenced by the reviewer's own "baggage." What Voelz says of the Scriptures will certainly apply to his own book: None of us will be able to approach it with total objectivity; each reviewer will bring to the interpretive task his own "horizon," his own set of "prejudgments, prior constructs, etc." (343).

To begin to sketch one's own exegetical background and presuppositions, however, would be a complex undertaking,

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[3] *What Luther Says*, edited by Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959) , 91-92.

and consume more space than is warranted here. Suffice it to say that part of what attracted this reviewer to LCMS hermeneutics was the esteem in which Martin Franzmann was held by my New Testament professors in South Australia, an esteem shared by the Old Testament professor, Erich Renner, who deeply appreciated Franzmann's treatment of Romans 9-11. Then, in the 1970s, the Roehrs/Franzmann *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* appeared, a volume to which Franzmann contributed comments on the Minor Prophets and the whole New Testament. Again I found myself reading Franzmann with delight, and trying to absorb his approach to exegesis and hermeneutical issues.

Having drunk deeply of the old wine, one does not immediately take to the new. It is inevitable that we measure new approaches by what we have found tried and true. New times and challenges, however, demand new responses. The last couple of decades have seen so many new books on hermeneutics from post-modern and other perspectives that we urgently need scholars who are willing to engage contemporary issues. To that task Dr Voelz, with his long experience in New Testament teaching and his close acquaintance with recent scholarship, has given much needed attention.

I must say I found most of the reading a pleasant experience. The book itself is attractively bound and presented. Its first major section (Part 1) offers a useful overview of the "state of the art" in modern textual criticism. Part 2 leads the reader through the difficult terrain of linguistics and its relevance for Biblical interpretation. Concepts like "signifier" and "conceptual signified," "meaning" and "referent," "external entailment" and many others are clearly and helpfully explained. There are useful and balanced discussions of issues like the hazards of an uncritical appeal to etymology, and the importance of taxonomic hierarchies of meaning. Some of the discussion may be difficult for the average first-year seminary student, but it will not be beyond more gifted beginners, upper level, and graduate students.

Gradually Part 2 opens out onto more familiar theological terrain. From the importance of extensive reading of Scripture in order to appreciate "the meaning of the larger whole" (136), we come to fine sections like those on Hebrew poetry, the canon, literal and non-literal language, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, its harmony and efficacy, its Christocentric nature, its great themes ("Kingdom of God," "justification"), the role of creeds, confessions and the believing community, the nature of parables, and prophecy and fulfilment.

The author's addendum on prophecy, with its use of terminology like "double entendre," may be controversial. But our debate on the issue should at least recognize (1) that Voelz sees "double entendre" as part of the literal sense, expressly disavowing any multiple-sense interpretation; (2) his approach seeks to do justice both to the immediate and the wider context; (3) in setting forth his own approach to "prophecies with two foci," he warns that the term "typology is not always the most helpful because of abuses in the past" (271). His discussion at this point deserves careful reading.

This may be the place to observe that what at first seems to be a "double entendre" sometimes, on closer inspection, turns out not to be so. For example, consider Voelz's illustration from John 1:5 (186-87), where he says the verb κατέλαβεν may mean both "overcome" and "comprehend." To this reader it seems evident from the only other significant parallel in John (12:35, where the same "light/darkness" terminology is used, and it makes no sense to translate καταλαμβάνω as "comprehend") that the verb also means "overcome" in 1:5. Another interesting example (not used by Voelz) is the use of ἄνωθεν in 3:3,5, often understood to mean both "again" and "from above." It may be asked, however, whether this assessment is entirely accurate. John consistently uses ἄνω and ἄνωθεν to mean simply "from above." I suspect that in chapter 3 that is where Jesus' accent falls; however, Nicodemus, with his thinking stuck on the earthly plane, only hears him saying "born again" (δεύτερον - 3:4). This is a case where Voelz's distinction between primary meaning and external entailment may come into play. To some

extent, however, my quibbles about these Johannine passages are peripheral to Voelz's major concern, the interpretation of Christological prophecies.

Apart from the merits of his argument, another welcome feature is the felicitous use of illustrations to clarify complex issues—the analogy of D-Day and V-E Day to clarify Christian eschatology (252); a map to clarify the Confessions' role as a guide to Scripture (358-60); a Saturday morning incident in the (Voelz?) home to clarify the perlocutionary use of language; paintings to illustrate the process of inspiration and the relationship of prophecy to fulfillment (235-6, 266, 269).

My questions to Dr. Voelz concern four closely related areas. First, there is the issue of *objectivity* in the sense of the givenness, the priority, the independence of the Biblical revelation ("in the beginning was the Word"), before it is addressed by any reader. On page 343 we find the interesting footnote derived from Gadamer, "Neither (the text nor the interpreter) exists 'objectively' in and of itself." Is this not, however, only part of the picture, at least when speaking of the Biblical text? Granted that while we reject the anthropocentric view that exegesis is the objective assessment of data, carried out in a cold, scientific manner, is it not still true that the Biblical text possesses an unchanging, unchangeable reality (as witnessed by the extraordinary stability of the Hebrew and Greek texts in comparison with the ever-changing world of our English versions)? Furthermore, granted that no reader comes to the text without some baggage, what place is there in this scheme of things for the traditional Lutheran insistence on the absolute priority of "the bare text" of Scripture? Pieper's powerful conclusion to his locus on Scripture speaks of "Luther's oft-repeated admonition never to substitute a human interpretation for the 'text,' i.e., for the words of Scripture themselves."[1] Is that no longer possible, because we all come with our own interpretations? I realize that what Voelz says on this subject is complex (there is much that is valuable

[1]Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, four volumes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950-1957), 1:366

concerning the "ideal reader," among others), and his carefully enunciated approach tries to avoid the subjectivism inherent in extreme reader-response criticism. But the concern about Scripture's "objectivity" remains.

A second and closely related issue is Scripture's intended sense. On the one hand, Voelz clearly affirms that "texts have meaning which is intended" (213), and that "the meaning of 'Level 1' signifiers is normally intended" (214). A Scriptural text is not a "waxen nose," but can in fact "rise up on its hind legs" (221, note 9). On the other hand, he states that "one can never appeal to it (i.e. the intentionality of the author) as a hermeneutical key to the interpretation of a given text" (213).

Why can we not appeal to the intended sense of the Biblical text? Voelz's answer is that people often do not agree about the author's intentions, and therefore we must look to criteria other than intentionality to determine his meaning. But while it is true that the history of exegesis is replete with examples of conflicting interpretations, it also true that striving to ascertain the author's intentions is the first and most vital part of what we cultivate in exegesis. Certainly in daily life people constantly (and rightly) appeal to the intended sense of all kinds of statements and written documents. The intended sense of the speed warnings on our highways is clear and unmistakable; police officers, for example, are generally not impressed by motorists arguing that the posted restrictions allow the reader a certain latitude.

Voelz would affirm this, of course—and here his excellent treatment of linguistic conventions comes into play. He emphatically rejects the position that you can read anything you like into the text. At the same time, this reader is left with the impression that in trying to steer a course between the subjectivism of much reader-response criticism and the approaches of traditional realism, Voelz has not been able to find a stable middle ground.

It seems to this reviewer that it would be helpful to distinguish more clearly and cleanly between questions that concern linguists and missionaries, and the primary concerns of

an exegete. Missionaries are vitally concerned with the communication process and communication models: "What is the receptor hearing? How well are we communicating what we intend to communicate?" But for the exegete the first and most important question will always be the Biblical author's original meaning. That meaning, ascertained as precisely as possible by careful use of the tools at his disposal, will always have final authority for the exegete; it should, of course, also be the first concern of the missionary and Bible translator before he turns to the communication process.

Admittedly there may sometimes be great difficulties in ascertaining the author's original sense. But we may ask whether our difficulties in reaching the ideal should lead us to abandon the ideal itself. This reviewer is not convinced Voelz has demonstrated that intentionality cannot be used as a hermeneutical key. There are too many passages where the Biblical author's intentions are crystal clear.

Bound up, then, with the issue of Scripture's intentionality is the question of its clarity. Again, Voelz affirms that the meaning of Level 1 signifiers "is often clear" (214). He has some fine observations on the Lutheran attitude to harmonization, including a full citation of Luther's passage on the cleansing of the temple in John 2, a passage often misused in the interests of historical criticism (one may see 238). He also has fine things to say on the "coherence principle" (that Scripture is a coherent whole, with Scripture interpreting Scripture, 356-357) and "Luther's . . . insistence upon the plain meaning of the literal sense of the Biblical text" (358). At the same time, as valid as observations concerning the "deliberate ambiguity" of a portion of Psalm 7 may be (316-319), we need to keep a proper perspective. Lutheran theology has traditionally insisted that Scripture is essentially clear. Voelz's book lacks the ringing affirmation of Scripture's clarity found, for example, in Wilhelm Löhe: "If the Old Testament was called by Peter a lamp shining in a dark place [II Pet. 1:19], what shall we now call the New Testament which drives every shadow out of the Old? If the Old Testament was a moon, the New Testament is the sun; if the

former was a rosy dawn, the latter is the brightness of noonday."[2]

By contrast, Voelz's "Conclusions and Concluding Observations" begin: "Interpretation is an inordinately complex matter. Very little is 'obvious.' The procedure is unbelievably complex, but it can and is done very quickly in actual life. This fact as much as any other testifies to the greatness of *homo sapiens* as God's own crown of creation" (339).

Certainly, the art of exegesis involves the acquisition of skills and experience in reading the Scriptures, and some become more adept than others. But we should be careful not to give the impression that their treasures are accessible above all to the specialist and the highly gifted. As Voelz acknowledges, interpretation "can and is done very quickly in actual life." And does not this testify above all to the greatness of God rather than the greatness of the interpreter, the greatness of God the Spirit who gave us His Word in a form that is essentially clear and accessible? "The Word is near you" was a favorite text of our dogmaticians.

Fourthly, I would ask if enough emphasis has been given to the life-giving power and *autopistia* of the Scriptures. By no means does Voelz overlook this theme—as mentioned above, he has a fine section on the efficacy of Scripture (one may see 288, and the preceding discussion, together with Addendum 12-A on "Performative Speech Acts"). My question is whether the impact of these sections is later weakened by considerations from the field of linguistics, for example, by Gadamer's use of the term "dialog" for the engagement between a text and its interpreter. We may take some comfort from the way the "dialog" is explained (344) "in particular" to lead to "the broadening and modification of the interpreter's present understanding of himself," rather than to the modification of the text (especially when that text is Scripture!). However, the section on Gadamer (Addendum 13-A) sits somewhat

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[2]Wilhelm Löhe, *Three Books About the Church*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 66-67.

awkwardly on the threshold of the final chapter, "The Lutheran Confessional Approach." No doubt the term "dialog" can be appropriately explained and used, and Voelz has shown how the reader does not come to the text as *tabula rasa*, but with his questions and concerns. I would ask, however, whether more emphasis should be given to the reader's passive role, his humble reception of God's gifts leading to passive contrition and passive righteousness (1 Samuel 3:10; Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:2). Voelz does touch on this on at least one occasion (213, note 6), where he refers to Thiselton's distinction between "understanding" and "reading." Does this aspect of his book need further development? More specifically, does more attention need to be given to the (more passive?) biblical concept of "hearing" rather than "reading."[3] When we—and Scripture—speak of "hearing," we mean an attentive focusing on the words of the speaker, rather than what the hearer may be contributing to the equation by his own reflections as "second text."

In this connection, does there need to be more emphasis on the Spirit's role in enabling the hearer/reader of the Scriptures to grasp their true meaning (one may compare Luther's emphasis on *oratio* [for the gift of the Spirit!], *meditatio* [on the Spirit's book!], and *tentatio*)?

In posing these questions, I am well aware that a textbook intended as a beginning hermeneutics cannot provide a full coverage of the doctrine of Scripture. For more comprehensive treatments we must look elsewhere. But Voelz provides a valuable service in addressing hermenutical issues of the 1990s, especially the issues placed before the church by modern linguistic analysis, and so not addressed in the older books. For that service, and his fresh and stimulating presentation, we can be grateful.

[3]It is noteworthy that while "reading" words [ἀναγινώσκω, and others] occur only thirty-two times in the New Testament, "hearing" words [ἀκούω, ἀκουή] occur 454 times.

A Strikingly Theological Hermeneutics

Dean O. Wenthe

The extraordinary state of affairs in current Biblical hermeneutics is an expression of the larger epistemological and philosophical landscape of Western culture. The distance from the academy's assumptions and interests to the exegetical guild is frequently short and direct. Whether it be feminism, deconstructionism, or other movements, what is fashionable in universities and divinity schools soon can become the direction of seminary writing and research. One of the more balanced efforts to describe the connections between the broader thought of the academy and Biblical interpretation is the trilogy by Anthony C. Thiselton: *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Eerdmans, 1980); *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Zondervan, 1992); and *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self* (Eerdmans, 1995). So vast is the literature and so diverse the approaches that a recent study is entitled *Disciplining Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Christian Perspective,* edited by Roger Lundin (Eerdmans, 1997).

In such a setting, Dr. James Voelz's *What Does This Mean?* (Concordia, 1995) is a welcome engagement of current questions. His subtitle, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modem World," indicates such a focus. By using the catechetical formula "What does this mean?" Voelz particularly invites the Lutheran community to explore the question of how the biblical text renders its claim and meaning.

An initial accolade must be offered to Voelz for taking up such a task. It is striking that his is the first *book-length* hermeneutics to be produced by a professor at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, in a number of decades. While biblical authority and interpretation have been at the center of the Missouri Synod's theological agenda and many articles and papers have been written on them, it is refreshing to have a rigorous and coherent treatment of this breadth and depth.

A second cause for commendation is Voelz's clear commitment to engage in critical evaluation of the contemporary hermeneutical scene. The positions that he describes and the bibliographies he provides attest the author's familiarity with the literature. His balance and accuracy in representing those perspectives is commendable. The reader will not find simplistic formulas or tidy repetition of traditional answers in this hermeneutics. Rather, there is a fresh engagement of complex questions. This means that this text asks more of the reader. However, it thereby delivers more, for Voelz clearly articulates how the details of exegesis entail larger interpretive moves, which themselves require analysis and exposition. The way in which worship or primary theology shapes the understanding of scared Scripture (*lectio continua*), with its convictions about the Incarnation as present in the Eucharist and baptismal union with Christ, is an expression of Voelz's attentiveness to a context that is broader than vocabulary and grammar.

Voelz titles Part 1 "Textual Criticism" (23-82). Here his years of teaching are transparent in the aptness of his examples and the concise character of his descriptions. If a pastor were asked to explain "textual criticism" to his adult Bible class, he could hardly do better than draw on Voelz's treatment. Also welcome is the concluding accent on variants as the first *commentary* on the text for, as the author indicates, the variants are some of the earliest expressions of what the tradents or the community regarded as its *real* meaning.

Part 2, the substance of this study, is entitled simply "Linguistics." Again, it must be noted that the author is adept at drawing upon classic categories of biblical interpretation and placing them in conversation with newer terminology as he advances his description and analysis. The dense character of this section with distinctions such a "Words/Signifiers" and "Meanings/Conceptual Signified" should not discourage the reader for the text is punctuated with helpful and often biblical examples. Even the semantic charts (95, 107, 212) which at first appear abstract and technical will reward the student who follows the argument. Among many jewels that might be

recommended are the sections on "controlling metaphors" (179-182) and "prophecy and fulfillment" (267-274).

If there are future editions (and hopefully so), the author might consider placing addenda 11 A-D at the beginning of Part 2. Experience suggests that many seminarians move more easily through the "Linguistics" section if these addenda are positioned as a gateway. While the *logic* of the present order is compelling, the *pedagogical purpose* suggests consideration of the alternative—particularly since many students come to seminary with minimal backgrounds in linguistics. The author might also prevail on the publisher to provide several indices—scriptural, topical, and authorial. This simple process would make the text much more accessible for reference and review.

Two aspects of Voelz's analysis invite further conversation. The appeal to "double entendre" (273) may be a promising way to expound prophecies with "two foci." At the same time, to weight the linguistic dimension of the text so heavily may not permit the sort of incarnational unity of God's promise to receive its full expression. For example, Abraham's seed entails the Messiah's birth not by virtue of a double referent, but by the organic unity of the blood which flowed—in the Biblical claim—from Abraham to Jesus of Nazareth. This "in, with, and under" character of Israel's history provides a fleshly continuity that deserves attention in a fuller fashion.

A second query concerns the compatibility of post-modem hermeneutics with confessional, biblical interpretation. While it is certainly true that post-modernism has shed light on the way texts are never interpreted apart from a group of assumptions and communal and social positions, this is not quite the same as saying that "only believers can truly interpret the sacred books of God" (12). The deconstructionist context in which "all truth is tribal" is the very opposite of the radical scriptural claim to an inclusive narrative, namely, that it is true for all times, for all places, and for all people. Voelz would be the first to agree with the inclusiveness of Scripture's vision, so perhaps a more critical description of "postmodern" compatibility would be in order.

To conclude, Dr. Voelz is to be congratulated on a major achievement. The guild of exegetes within the Missouri-Synod and beyond must engage a rigorous and informed reflection as they position themselves along the road that Voelz has constructed. More than even its academic eminence, a debt is owed to the author for not separating technical material from theological inferences. This is a strikingly theological hermeneutics that remains grounded in the actual data and detail of the texts. As one who has benefitted from years of dialogue and debate on these very topics, it is a pleasure to recommend Dr. Voelz's work to every reader who seeks to know *"What Does This Mean?"*

1 Corinthians 11:17-34 Revisited

A. Andrew Das

Recent scholarship on 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 has emphasized the social and relational problems that stand behind Corinth's celebration of the Lord's Supper. While most Lutheran treatments of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 have emphasized the sacramental aspects of the text, especially verses 17-22, Jeffrey Gibbs recognized the increasing focus in the scholarly literature on the "horizontal" dimension of the passage, the relationship between believers at the eucharistic gathering.[1] This passage is difficult because Paul is actually addressing two problems at the same time, the relationship between believers as well as their relationship to the Lord and His sacramental body.

Does the current emphasis on the "horizontal" aspect of the text jeopardize its "vertical" features? Because 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 is crucial to a sacramental understanding of the Lord's Supper, this paper explores the relationship between these two poles in the text. The first section investigates the available evidence to reconstruct the situation at the Corinthians ' eucharistic gatherings. Gibbs had left unresolved the exact nature of the situation at Corinth. We will see that the very structure of the Corinthians' eucharistic proceedings demonstrates the importance of believers' relationships to one another. The second section examines afresh whether the text's horizontal emphasis compromises the sacramental understanding of the word "body" in verse 29. In other words, when we "discern the body" are we discerning a sacramental presence or are we discerning, perhaps, the presence of the church, our fellow believers in Christ? Do the horizontal relationships take precedence in the passage or is there a balance with the vertical aspects? The third section buttresses Gibbs' usage of 1 Corinthians 10:17, where Paul actually makes

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[1]Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "An Exegetical Case for Close(d) Communion: 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; 11:17-34," *Concordia Journal* 21 (April 1995):148-163.

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the connection between the sacramental body and the churchly body, as a means of balancing the vertical and horizontal aspects in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. The final section emphasizes the seriousness of both these issues, even as Paul did. Lutherans tend to focus on the warning of judgment in verse 29 for not discerning the sacramental presence. However, verse 34 sounds the same note of "judgment" when we neglect our relationships with one another.

When a congregation comes together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is a serious matter into which they are entering, a situation fraught with spiritual peril and the potential of "judgment" if handled in a cavalier or improper manner. Lest we repeat the same mistakes in our own congregations, it would be well for us as pastors and teachers to review this passage and its problems.

The Situation in the Corinthian Celebration of the Lord's Supper

One cannot read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 without noticing right away that there was conflict in the congregation. The community was split on an economic basis. The rich humiliated and discriminated against the poor (verse 22). Further, this conflict was taking place during a community or fellowship meal. Today the average Christian is raised in a church where the sacramental bread and wine are distributed together. There is no longer a congregational meal as part of the worship service. The very idea of a congregational or fellowship meal in the midst of the service may seem novel to most. Yet to the Corinthian congregation, the idea of a Sacrament without a community meal might have seemed equally strange. If the Corinthian congregation practiced this meal between the bread and the wine, in the presence of the entire community, then the implications would be profound. It would mean that the early Christians, Corinth notwithstanding, had a much stronger appreciation in their liturgical practice of the horizontal aspects of worship, that coming together in the Lord's body and blood meant becoming united to one another.

Two issues, though, remain unresolved. First, were the rich congregational members eating in advance of the poor's arrival,

leaving only the remains for the "community" meal? Or were the poor members, who had less, being slighted during the community meal in the very presence of the rich who were feasting? Second, what is the relationship between the community meal and the Lord's Supper? Did the community meal take place before the Lord's Supper, that is, prior to the sacramental bread? Or did it take place in between the distribution of the sacramental bread and wine?

With regard to the first problem, the New International Version's (NIV) translation clearly supports the position that the rich congregational members were already eating prior to the arrival of the poor. Note especially its translation of verses 21 and 33: ". . . for as you eat, each of you *goes ahead without waiting for anybody, else*. . . . So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, *wait for* each other" (emphasis added).

What the NIV renders "goes ahead without waiting for anybody else" may also be translated: "eats beforehand his own meal." Thus some of the Corinthians were eating without waiting for the rest. And it is exactly this that Paul confronts: they are to wait for the arrival of the whole congregation before beginning the festivities.

This translation and understanding ultimately rests upon two words in the Greek. In verse 21, the word for "eats beforehand" is προλαμβάνω. The word in verse 33 for "wait for each other" is ἐκδέχομαι. The NIV's translation is a perfectly legitimate possibility. Mark 14:8 is a good example of προλαμβάνω carrying the sense of "beforehand": "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial" (NIV). Acts 17:16 uses ἐκδέχομαι in the sense of "wait for": "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols" (NIV).[2]

[2]ἐκδέχομαι occurs at least five times outside of 1 Corinthians 11:33 in the New Testament: Acts 17:16; 1 Corinthians 16:11; Hebrews 10:13; 11:13; James 5:7. Some ancient manuscripts include the word in John 5:3. All of the New Testament occurrences of ἐκδέχομαι apart from 1 Corinthians 11:33 mean "wait for, expect."

The problem is that there are other possible meanings for these two words and, as we shall see, a different translation would lead to a very different understanding of the situation at Corinth. To begin with, προλαμβάνω is often used without any temporal sense at all. Thus Galatians 6:1: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (NIV). The word προλαμβάνω may be used in the sense of simply "to eat" with no indication that the meal was "beforehand" relative to anything else. The word is used several times in this sense in a stele from the Asklepius Temple of Epidaurus: "After I had come to the Temple, he [the god] commanded me . . . to eat cheese and bread [τυρὸν καὶ ἄρτον προλαβεῖν], . . . to eat lemon peels [κιτρίου προλαμβάνειν τὰ ἄκρα], . . . to eat/consume milk with honey [γάλα μετὰ μέλιτος προλαβεῖν]."[3] προλαμβάνω may mean "eat beforehand" or just simply "to eat." The word itself is inconclusive. The decision must rest on the context.

While ἐκδέχομαι may be translated "wait," it may also be translated "receive" or "welcome." In 3 Maccabees 5:26: "The rays of the sun were not yet widely dispersed and the king was receiving [ἐκδεχομένου] his friends when Hermon presented himself and invited him to go forth, explaining that his wishes were now ready to be granted."[4] "Receiving his friends" refers to the king's morning reception of courtiers who came to pay their respects. Hermon and the king had already spoken earlier and the king had, at that time, issued Hermon a command to carry out. Hermon used the morning reception as an opportunity to catch the king to tell him about the plan to carry out the king's orders. When Hermon invites the king to go forth to talk, the king is taken completely by surprise by the invitation. He was certainly not "awaiting" or "expecting" this invitation. In fact, by divine intervention the king had

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[3]Asklepius-Epidaurus 1170, 7.9-10.15 in Wilhelm Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum,* four volumes (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1960), 3: 328-29.

[4]As translated by H. Anderson, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* two volumes, edited by James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:424. For the original Greek text see *Maccabaeorum liber III,* edited by Robert Hanhart (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 58.

completely forgotten about his previous orders. In this context, ἐκδέχομαι means "receive" or "welcome."

Josephus often uses ἐκδέχομαι in the sense of "receive" or "welcome." In *Jewish Wars* III, 32, Josephus writes: ". . . and now they offered a cordial welcome [ἐκδεξάμενοι] to the commander-in-chief and promised him their active support against their countrymen."[5] In this instance, there is absolutely no indication of any waiting or expecting. The same may be said of VI, 140: "But the Jews, constantly scattering and alike attacking and retreating at random, were frequently taken by each other for enemies: each man in the darkness receiving [ἐξεδέχετο] a returning comrade as if he were an advancing Roman."[6] In VII, 74, the people of Rome receive general Vespasian with great excitement and enthusiasm: "And, indeed, the city of Rome, after this cordial reception [ἐκδεξαμένη] of Vespasian, rapidly advanced to great prosperity."[7] Once again, there is no sense of "await" in the word here. Rather, it means to "welcome" or "receive."[8]

Nor is this usage limited to Josephus or 3 Maccabees. In Sirach 32:14: "The man who fears the Lord will accept [ἐκδέξεται] his discipline, and the diligent man will receive his approval" (New English Bible). In the Letter of Aristeas (205): "After a short pause the guest who received [ἐκδεχόμενος] the question said. . ."[9]

It is clear from these examples that προλαμβάνω may be translated as "eat" and ἐκδέχομαι may be translated as "receive" or "welcome."[10] This results in an entirely different

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[5]Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Books I-III (LCL), H, translated by St. J. Thackeray, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 2:585.

[6]Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Books IV-VII (LCL), H, translated by St. John Thackeray, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 3:416.

[7]Josephus, *Jewish War*, 3:526; see also VII, 70.

[8]One may also see Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* VII, 351; XI, 340; XII, 138.

[9]R. J. H. Shutt, translator, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, two volumes, edited by James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:26. The original Greek text is in Andre Pelletier, *Lettre D'Aristee a Philocrate*, Sources Chretiennes 89 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1962).

[10]Paul prefers the prefixed ἀπεκδέχομαι for "await" or "wait for" (Romans 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 3:20).

translation of 1 Corinthians 11:21 and 33 than the NIV. The NIV had translated the verses: ". . . for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. . . . So, then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other." Given the semantic range of the two words, the following translation is equally possible: ". . . for as you eat, each one eats his own meal. . . . So, then, my brothers, when you come together, welcome [or, receive] one another." The latter translation would clearly support a different scenario, that the rich and the poor were eating the community meal together. The problem would have been as they were sitting alongside each other.

One must conclude that the linguistic data is totally indecisive in discerning between the two possibilities. Only context can decide the matter and there are, indeed, contextual indications. The very issue in 1 Corinthians 11 is that the poor were actually present at the meal while the rich were eating. 1 Corinthians 11:21 says: "One remains hungry, another gets drunk. . . . Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?" The poor who had nothing were being humiliated right there on the spot. First, note the deliberate contrast in the text between the rich who have plenty even to drink while the poor do not even have enough to eat. Second, verse 20 is explicit that this is all happening not while the Corinthians were apart but when they "came together."[11] Third, the language of verse 20, ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, indicates one event and not two or more. Finally, Paul's corrective instructions to "eat at home beforehand" in verse 33 would make no sense if the rich were already eating in private prior to the congregational gathering. On the other hand, if Paul were urging the rich to "welcome" or "receive" the poor at the meal, the text would make perfect sense. The poor were being despised in the same community meal alongside the rich.[12]

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[11]"Gather together" [συνέρχομαι] is repeated five times in verses 17-20 and verses 33-34. The problem occurred once they gathered together.

[12]Otfried Hofius ("Herrenmahl und Herrenmahlsparadosis," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 85 [1988]: 385) points out that in each instance where Paul uses the word "each" [ἕκαστος] with the word "his own" [ἴδιον] as he does in verse 21, the words are being used inclusively. He cites Romans 14:5;

Peter Lampe has highlighted ancient architectural evidence that sheds light on the Corinthian situation. The Corinthian congregation was gathering in the homes of individual members who were the wealthiest in the congregation. These homes were built with two main rooms, the *triclinium*, a dining room which seated up to ten people, and the *atrium*, a courtyard which could seat up to forty. The host would seat the most important guests at the meal in the smaller room and the rest of the people in the larger *atrium*. This was the typical situation at cultic meals in general. It would also explain much of what is happening in 1 Corinthians 11. The poor, most probably seated in the *atrium* of the host's house, had less available to them to eat while the more important guests in the *triclinium* not only had enough to eat, but too much even to drink![13]

This situation may strike our modern ears as more than a little demeaning. Surely Christians should not so treat their brothers and sisters. However, in the ancient world, class distinctions were simply assumed. That the poor should be received alongside the rich, as sensible and fair as it may be to our ears, would actually have been radical in Paul's own society. Yet for Paul, this sort of sociological division, as accepted as it may have been, was a division that was contrary to the nature of being "in Christ" (note the sociological categories that Paul uses in Galatians 3:28).

This leaves the second problem. Was the congregational meal celebrated between the bread and the wine, or prior to the sacramental bread and wine? Jeremias argues that the community meal was already being "taken less seriously." Paul's instruction to eat at home first prior to coming together

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1 Corinthians 3:8; 7:2, 7; 12:11; 15:23, 28; Galatians 6:5.

[13]Peter Lampe, "The Corinthian Eucharistic Dinner Party: Exegesis of a Cultural Context (*1 Cor. 11:17-34*)," *Affirmation* 4 (1991): 1-16, especially 1-6. A much more detailed and comprehensive discussion of Greco-Roman meal settings may be found in Lampe's source: Dennis Edwin Smith, "Social Obligation in the Context of the Communal Meals: A Study of the Christian Meal in 1 Corinthians in Comparison with Graeco-Roman Communal Meals," unpublished Th.D. diss., Harvard University, 1980.

for worship would make better sense if the meal were already preceding the Lord's Supper.[14] In other words, it was no longer an essential part of the celebration of the Sacrament and so may be simply removed to the private domain prior to the congregational gathering. However, this argument is not very compelling. One could argue the same even if the Corinthians ate the community meal in between the sacramental bread and wine. Paul did not see it as essential to the Sacrament, and so, since it was causing problems, removed the practice entirely from the sacramental context.

There is another way of arguing that the bread and the wine were taken together. Jesus instituted the Sacrament in a Passover context (Luke 22:7-8, 15). Jesus' institution of the eucharistic bread was separated by the Passover meal from His institution of the sacramental wine. The Corinthian Christians, on the other hand, were not celebrating a Jewish Passover meal.[15] Some have argued that if the early Christian Eucharist was no longer celebrated in connection with the Jewish Passover, then the bread and the wine would no longer be separated by a Passover meal. The bread and wine would have been celebrated together. It is to this original Passover meal setting that "the cup after the supper" refers, without any indication that such a meal was still being celebrated.

This line of reasoning is not decisive either. It only means that the Corinthians were not celebrating a Passover meal between the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine. On the other hand, the passage shows that they were indeed celebrating a meal and, as Jewish and Gentile Christians (1 Corinthians 7:8; 12:2), they would be accustomed to celebrating a community meal between two ritual acts. The Jews began their meals with the breaking of bread and closed with

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[14]Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Word of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 121.

[15]Paul draws upon traditional language, language that centers upon the eating and drinking of the bread and wine. It is the bread and the wine that are the important elements. Perhaps Paul might have argued similarly with regard to the Corinthians' own community meal. Note, though, the reference to the cup "after the meal."

the partaking of wine. Likewise, pagan Gentiles, once assembled, would offer a sacrifice to the pagan god and then, after the meal, offer a toast to the good spirit of the house and sing. It is only natural that the Passover meal would give way to the Corinthian community dinner.[16]

Further, the Corinthian Christians might have been encouraged in this practice by the traditional language. As it stands, the beginning of verse 25 reads: ὡσαύτως καὶ [ἔλαβη] τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι. Is μετά τὸ δειπνῆσαι("after the supper") in verse 25 attributive in usage, modifying ποτήριον (the cup), or adverbial, modifying the understood ἔλαβε ("he took")? In other words, does the phrase "after the supper" answer "which cup?" (attributive) or does it answer "when did he take the cup?" (adverbial)? The attributive understanding would indicate a particular "cup," the third of the four Passover cups at Jesus' original institution of the Eucharist. However, the attributive usage of the prepositional phrase normally requires the article—that the phrase be in attributive position. The text would have to read τὸ ποτήριον τὸ μετά τὸ δειπνῆσαι or τὸ μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι ποτήριον.[17] Since this is not the case, the prepositional phrase must be adverbial answering "when": Jesus took the cup right after the meal. In other words, the wording of verse 25 does not emphasize a Passover context but rather that the cup followed the meal.

Far from being a technical term for the Passover, the wording in verse 25 parallels Rabbinic language for an ordinary meal. Thus Berakoth 6:5: "If he said the Benediction over the wine before the meal he need not say it over *the wine after the meal.*"[18] If one wanted to argue Jewish antecedents, "he took bread and after having given thanks broke it" corresponds much better with the typical Jewish table blessing before a meal.

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[16]Lampe, 2.

[17]Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *1 Corinthians,* International Critical Commentary, second edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 246; Hofius, 377-78.

[18]*The Mishah,* edited by Herbert Danby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 7.

The blessing of the cup "after the meal" corresponds to what would happen after an ordinary Jewish meal.[19]

Note also that in Berakoth 6.5 "after the meal" and "before the meal" are being used attributively. Hebrew indicates the attributive usage of the prepositional phrase with a relative particle even as Greek does by placing the phrase in attributive position. In Berakoth 6.5, the Hebrew relative particle is present. Unlike 1 Corinthians 11:25, Berakoth 6.5 is clearly attributive, indicating a particular cup. Berakoth 8.8, on the other hand, is an instance of the adverbial use of the preposition: "If wine is brought after the food . . ." Here the phrase is not specifying "which wine?" (as in Berakoth 6.5) but rather "when was the wine brought?" The Hebrew, as expected, lacks the relative particle. This adverbial usage corresponds to the Greek usage in 1 Corinthians 11:25.[20] Again, the adverbial usage in 1 Corinthians 11:25 emphasizes the timing of the cup after the meal and not the Passover context.

The "cup of blessing" was a Jewish term for the blessing pronounced with the wine after meals. That is how the phrase is used in Joseph and Asenath 8:9 and 19:5; so also Leviticus Rabbah 9.3 and the Palestinian Talmud (Berakoth 7.11b,73 and following; Berakoth 8:12a.52 and following). In a Passover meal that would happen to be the third cup. There is nothing technical about the phrase. The early Christians, in this respect, would simply be following the Jewish custom of placing the sacramental cup of blessing after their meal even as the breaking of sacramental bread opened the meal.

What about the words ὡσαύτως καὶ ("likewise also")? Do these words modify the adverbial μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι("after the meal")? If so, the cup would be "likewise also after the supper." It would be, like the bread, also after the supper. The bread and the wine would both be celebrated together after the meal. However, if that were the case, μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι and not τὸ ποτήριον would immediately follow ὡσαύτως καί.[21] The text

[19]See Hofius' examples from the Rabbinic literature, 379, notes 47, 48.
[20]Hofius, 82-83.
[21]Hofius, 382-383.

would read: "ὡσαύτως καί μετὰ τὸ δειπῆσαι τὸ ποτήριον." As it stands, the text is clear that the bread and wine were separated by a meal.[22]

Peter Lampe points out that "supper" [δεῖπνον] in the Greek normally implies a full meal (including meat or fish). That indicates that the congregational dinner (with its meat or fish) preceded the cup.[23] Even more compelling is the fact that μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι could not refer to the sacramental bread. Biblical Greek does not phrase "to eat bread" as ἄρτον δειπνεῖν. Rather, the language used for eating bread is either ἄρτον ἐσθιεῖν or ἄρτον φαγεῖν. Again, this indicates that it was the meal and not the sacramental bread that immediately preceded the wine.

There is good reason, then, to place the Corinthians' congregational meal between the sacramental bread and wine. The Corinthian practice would correspond to both the Jewish and Hellenistic practice of opening a meal with the breaking of bread or sacrifice and closing it with the cup of blessing or toast to the god. Thus the following picture emerges from the data: After the congregation had assembled a divisive situation ensued between the sacramental bread and wine during the community meal. Yet it is precisely the placement of the community meal between the bread and the wine that makes the problems at Corinth so heinous. The early church apparently viewed oneness within the body of believers equally or almost as important as oneness with the Lord. The community enjoyed their fellowship with each other in the midst of and in the context of their fellowship with their Lord.

"Body" in 1 Corinthians 11:29: The Church or the Sacrament?

Modern interpreters have gone so far as to argue that the horizontal aspects of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 actually

[22]ὡσαύτως μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι καὶ τὸ ποτήριον or καὶ τὸ ποτήριον ὡσαύτως μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι would be more ambiguous. In these two formulations one could understand the language as referring to the bread and wine together or as separated by the meal. Verse 25, though, is not ambiguous.

[23]Lampe, 7-8 and Hofius, 383.

predominate in the text. Given this emphasis in the context, when Paul speaks of "discerning the body," they argue that he must be referring to the ecclesiastical body, the body of believers.[24] Gibbs disagreed, arguing that the "body" of verse 29 is the sacramental body. What is at issue is the traditional, Lutheran understanding of the passage. Permit me, then, to make two additional observations in support of Gibbs' position. First, when debating the meaning of "body" in Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:27, 29; 12:12-31, one has to let the context determine the meaning of the words. Paul can use "body" to refer to the sacramental body, as he clearly does in 1 Corinthians 11:27, as well as to the ecclesiastical body, as he does in 1 Corinthians 10:17 and in 12:12-31. So both usages are possible. However, whenever Paul uses "body" in the above texts, it is always clear from the immediate context which sense he has in mind. For example, note again the exact wording of 1 Corinthians 10:16: "Is not the *cup* of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the *blood of Christ?* And is not the *bread* that we break a participation in the *body of Christ?*" (emphasis added). In this verse, Paul understands the "body" in relation to the sacramental bread. This is confirmed in the context by the sacramental cup standing in relation to Christ's blood.

Now consider the wording of 1 Corinthians 10:17: "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." The words "we, who are many" and "we all" clearly indicate that Paul is talking about the people who have come together in the Sacrament. He is shifting the discussion from the Sacrament, the one loaf, to its effects in the body, the church (the "we who are many"). The same contextual indicators are used also in 1 Corinthians 12 (for example, 12:27: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it").

The problem with identifying 1 Corinthians 11:29 as a reference to the body of believers, the church, is that the

[24]One may see, for instance, Charles Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 125-126, and Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 79.

contextual indicators one finds in 1 Corinthians 10:17 and 12:12-31 are entirely lacking in the verse and its context. Yet it is precisely such indicators that allow the reader to determine whether Paul is talking about the ecclesiastical body or not. Otherwise, Paul's meaning would be unintelligible. What one finds, instead, are references to the sacramental body in verses 27- 28.

This leads to a second point. Not only are the contextual pointers for the churchly body lacking in 1 Corinthians 11:29, interpreters who see this as a reference to discerning the body of believers have failed to take into account the logic and rhetorical structure of the passage. With regard to the rhetorical structure of the text, Paul begins verse 29 with a γάρ demanding that this verse be understood in the light of what immediately preceded. So also, verse 28 is linked to verse 27 by the connective δέ. When Paul uses "body" in this verse, he is building on an already developed argument, which he has introduced in the immediately preceding verses. The key is his consistent use of the term "body." Thus the meaning of the word must be the same, since it is all part of the same argument.

The following chart clarifies the logic and rhetoric of the text:

v. 27		eat/ drink	bread/ cup	unworthy/ guilty	body/blood
v. 28	examine	eat/ drink	bread/ cup		
v. 29	recognize	eat/ drink		judgment	body

Not only does Paul link verse 29 to verses 27-28 by the use of connectives, he carefully weaves the verses together through parallel language. Verses 27-29 are a tight unit of thought. Paul uses the same sort of language to advance his argument from one verse to the next. So, when Paul uses the word "recognizing" in verse 29, he means that the individual Christian must "examine himself" (verse 28) with respect to the sacramental bread and cup before eating and drinking.

Otherwise, the "judgment" upon the individual will be guilty (verse 29), that is, "guilty" and "unworthy" of Christ's sacramental body and blood (verse 27, where body and blood are held in relation to the bread and the wine). Throughout these verses, Paul remains riveted on the issue of the sacramental body. Interpreters who have argued for an ecclesiastical body in verse 29 have failed to take into account the rhetorical structure of these verses.

There is one area where the parallelism between verses 27-28 and verse 29 breaks down. Verse 29 uses "discerning the body" whereas verses 27 and 28 speak in terms of examining and not being guilty of the "the body and blood." Gibbs recognized this problem and suggested that Paul is alluding to 1 Corinthians 10:17: "Once again, this is a bit of a guess. But it is plausible, indeed likely, that Paul is content to refer to "the body," because of the logical connection he has already made between sin against the brother, and sin against the Sacrament."[25]

I both agree and I disagree. First, Paul has clearly placed the "body" in verse 29 in a tight parallel with the sacramental body and blood of verses 27, 28, both by terminology and by the use of connectives. The reader should know what sort of body Paul is talking about in verse 29. There is nothing to indicate a change in meaning. The Apostle's failure to mention the blood in verse 29 is probably stylistic and nothing more. He had used "body and blood" already and did not want to bore his readers with wooden repetitions. Second, Paul has referred to the Sacrament in an abbreviated way before. In 1 Corinthians 10:17 Paul speaks of the benefits of the "one loaf," even as he uses "body" here.[26]

Gibbs' argument from 1 Corinthians 10:17 works much better as one struggles to understand the relation of these verses to

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[25]Gibbs, 159-160.

[26]For example, many have argued that "breaking the bread" in Acts 2:42 is an abbreviated reference to the Sacrament, using the part for the whole, the bread for the bread and wine. Even if Acts 2:42 were not a sacramental reference, it would still refer to the celebration of an entire meal under the initial act of the breaking of bread (one may compare verse 46; 20:7, 11; 27:35-36).

their surrounding context, verses 17-22 and 33-34. The next section will show that there is good reason to see 1 Corinthians 10:17 standing behind the logic of the passage as a whole. If one wants to see a sort of subtle allusion to the horizontal aspect of the Sacrament in the abbreviated "body" of verse 29, one may do so provided that one has fully appreciated the primary meaning of the word in verse 29, as a reference to the Lord's sacramental body.[27]

The Relationship Between 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 and 11:17-22, 33-34

The problem at Corinth was that the rich members of the congregation were humiliating those "who had not" by eating "their own" meal (verses 20-21). They were not sharing of their bounty with the less fortunate in their own midst. While they had too much even to drink, the rest did not have enough to eat. There was also a second issue in verses 17-22. The rich were busy with "their own meal" (verse 21) and were losing sight of the fact that they had come together to celebrate "the Lord's Supper" (verse 20). What makes this passage difficult is that Paul is dealing on two planes at once, the horizontal and the vertical, the relationship between believer and believer, as well as the relationship between the believer and the Lord in His Supper.

The first section developed the social situation at Corinth and stressed that the very order of the festivities highlighted the importance, at least theoretically, of their relationships with one another. Nevertheless, the social focus of verses 17-22 recedes in verses 23-32 where Paul's focus is fixed upon the sacramental body. So there was a problem in recognizing the sacramental presence in the midst of all the feasting, and there was a problem with ignoring the poorer brethren. What is the precise relation between these two issues? What is their connection? We need to explore that issue, as well as Gibbs' suggestion.

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[27]Such an allusion to the horizontal relationship between believers in a section riveted on the vertical fellowship between believers and their Lord in the Sacrament in verse 29 would parallel the brief reference to the Lord's Supper in verse 20, which appears in a section riveted on the horizontal issues.

Paul resolves the issue of the Lord's Supper in verses 23-32. He then returns to the social problems in verses 33-34. In the latter verses he urges the people to eat first at home before coming together. This would eliminate the social problems. It would also allow the focus of the congregation to remain on the Lord's Supper as opposed to everyone's own meal. After all, if the matter were strictly a social inequity, the proper advice would have been for the rich to share.

The Corinthians were losing sight of the fact that they had really come together to celebrate the Lord's meal (verse 20): "When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat." By itself, this verse would indicate that there was no celebration of the Lord's Supper in Corinth at all. That is certainly how the NEB takes it: "When you come together as a congregation, it is impossible for you to eat the Lord's Supper." One gets the impression that the congregation's activities were somehow preventing any real celebration of the Sacrament from taking place. The NIV is simply categoric: "When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat." However, verse 30 indicates that the Corinthian church is suffering weakness and sickness by "not recognizing" what they are in fact doing in their sacramental eating and drinking. They are not recognizing the sacramental body (verse 29). So did they or did they not celebrate the Lord's Supper when they came together? How are we to understand verse 20?

There are two clues to verse 20. First, the verse more literally reads: "when you come together ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό it is not in order to eat [φαγεῖν] the Lord's Supper." In other words, φαγεῖν is an infinitive of purpose, expressing the Corinthians' intent when they gather. The second clue is that verse 20 falls in the context of the verses on the community dinner. The people's "own meal" (verse 21) stands in contrast to the "Lord's meal" (verse 20). The Corinthians were so absorbed in coming together for "their own meal" that they were overlooking their real reason for coming together, the Lord's Supper. The repetition of "eating and drinking" is quite deliberate (verses 22, 27, 28, 29; one may also compare 15:32). One could thus translate verse 20: "When you come together ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό it is not with the

intended purpose of eating the Lord's Supper." They have come together more intent on their own festivities, "their own meal," rather than the Lord's Supper. Paul is concerned that the community meal has diverted the Corinthians' attention away from their real reason for coming together.

Nevertheless, despite the brief mention of the "Lord's Supper" in verse 20, the emphasis in verses 17-22 is on a social problem, the division between rich and poor at a community meal and not the Lord's Supper. So also in verses 33-34 the solution has more to do with resolving the social issue than it does the Lord's Supper. Indeed, the passage presents a certain problem in this respect. One could easily pass from verses 17-22 right to verse 33 omitting the intervening verses on the Lord's Supper. The main problem in verses 17-22 is resolved in verses 33-34. Why does Paul sandwich a discussion of the Lord's Supper in the middle of passages treating the social situation at Corinth? How do Paul's instructions on the Lord's Supper relate to the congregation's social problems?

To begin with, the discussion of the Lord's Supper does at least address the problem in verse 20, that the people were too busy with their own festivities to recognize the sacramental bread and wine. For this reason, Paul somberly recites the traditional Lord's Supper language, language that he knows is familiar to his audience. Paul wants to remind the Corinthians of the real reason that they gathered, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and not their own feasting. They are endangering their souls and are liable to God's judgment when they do not recognize Jesus' body and blood in the Sacrament. There is a real spiritual danger here that goes beyond just spiting the poorer brethren.

While that is a partial explanation, verse 20 is the only reference to the Lord's Supper in verses 17-22, 33-34. The remainder of the verses deal with the problems between believers. It is at this point that Gibbs' solution begins to make sense. It is not just recognizing the sacramental presence at issue. It is also a matter of recognizing what that sacramental presence is intended to nurture, the unity of believers with one another.

Gibbs tentatively suggested that Paul had 1 Corinthians 10:17 in mind as he wrote 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Already in 1 Corinthians 10:17 Paul was clear that the one loaf of Christ's sacramental body fosters and represents the unity of believers in the congregational "body." This need not be only a tentative suggestion. There is good reason to make the connection. First, it explains the relationship between the sacramental verses 23-32 and the relationship of believers to one another in verses 17-22, 33-34. The relationship is simply that recognizing the Lord's body and blood will also entail recognizing the reality that it is meant to nourish and represent the unity among believers. 1 Corinthians 10:17 makes that relationship between the vertical and horizontal planes explicit: the many are one body as they share of the one loaf.

There is another reason that warrants understanding verses 23-32 and 17-23, 33-34 in light of 1 Corinthians 10:17. Paul was already anticipating his argument in 1 Corinthians 11 in 1 Corinthians 10:17. In fact, he was getting ahead of himself. This verse could easily be omitted from 1 Corinthians 10 without affecting the structure of Paul's argument.[28] It is a *prolepsis*. In other words, it would be a mistake to read 1 Corinthians 11 apart from 1 Corinthians 10:17.

To appreciate how ill-fitted 10:17 is to its context, we need to back up and review Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 10. Paul mentions Israel's falling prey to idolatry in the wilderness (verse 7) as a sort of negative example for the Corinthians (verse 11). This is an important warning in the context since the Corinthian Christians were enjoying meat sacrificed to idols and even participating in pagan, idolatrous rituals. So Paul warns in verse 12 against spiritual overconfidence. Rather, when tempted one should take advantage of the opportunity the Lord provides to flee (verses 13-14).

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[28]That 1 Corinthians 10:17 is ill-fitted to its context has been noted by numerous scholars. See Johannes Weiss, *Der Erste Korintherbrief*, 9 Auflage (Gottingen, 1910), 258; Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 469, 564. Fee, though, misinterprets 1 Corinthians 11:29 as the churchly body.

The Corinthians were going to the pagan sacrifices apparently thinking that, since they were Christians and that the idol is just a piece of dead wood or stone unlike the true and living God, they could do so without any harm to themselves (for example, verse 19). Paul, however, disputes this assumption, and he argues from a point that both he and the Corinthians would have agreed upon: There is an objective reality in the Lord's Supper. The Lord is present whether the believer realizes this or not. What may seem like mere bread and wine belie a hidden, but nevertheless objective, reality. So it is, Paul asserts, with the food sacrificed to the pagan idol. The objective reality in that case is the presence of demons. Whether the Corinthian Christians realize it or not, there is a hidden reality present with the food sacrificed to pagan idols. The believers need to flee this evil arena.

1 Corinthians 10:14-16, 18-22 revolved around two vertical realities, the objective reality of the union between the believer and the Lord in the Sacrament (verse 16) as opposed to the objective reality of a union with demons (verses 18-22). These spiritual realities exist whether the individual recognizes them or not. It is this focus on competing vertical realities that renders 1 Corinthians 10:17 ill-fitted to its context. The verse invokes an additional reality, a horizontal reality, the oneness between believers. In other words, Paul does not need verse 17 to make his argument. The relationship between believers was not at issue in 1 Corinthians 10. But it would be in 1 Corinthians 11. Paul seems to be anticipating the argument. He is outlining already the unity among believers that fellowship with Christ in the Sacrament is intended to create.

Having already made this point, Paul does not mention it again in 11:17-34. Rather he assumes the connection. Paul had already explained his rationale for positing a discussion of the Lord's Supper in the midst of the social divisions in the congregation. By mistreating the poor brethren in their midst, the Corinthians are, in effect, profaning what the Lord's Supper is intended to represent, the unity among believers.

While 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 deals with two different issues, the recognition of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper,

and the division between believers, these two issues are related. By enjoying "their own meal," the rich at Corinth had effectively failed to recognize the presence of Christ in the Sacrament (verses 20, 23-32), as well as what that Sacrament was intended to effect and symbolize, the church's unity (verses 17-22, 33-34).

The Somber Note of "Judgment" in Verse 34

Finally, Paul takes both the horizontal and the vertical problems at Corinth very seriously. When a Christian congregation fails to resolve its internal divisions prior to coming to the Sacrament, the congregation is placing itself in grave spiritual danger. Paul opens his discussion of the Corinthian eucharistic gathering by censuring the Corinthians for their practice (1 Corinthians 11:17). Verse 18 then begins to explain exactly what is displeasing Paul: The congregation is divided when they come together for the Lord's Supper.

Before Paul develops the matter further he parenthetically adds in verse 19 that "there must be divisions that those which are approved may become manifest among you." Paul does not elaborate on what these necessary divisions might be. In a passage stressing church unity in the Sacrament, this verse is a surprising qualification. Certainly, given the passage as a whole, the division between rich and poor was not what Paul had in mind as a "necessary" division. The only division that Paul ever identifies as necessary elsewhere involve departures from the apostolic teaching and gospel.[29] Given this broader Pauline context, as unnecessary sociological divisions disrupt the unity of the body (see especially Galatians 3:28), so also there can be a sinful and unhealthy unity, a unity created where it was "necessary" that there be division. As the one errs against the Sacrament, so also would the other. Indeed, if Paul could take a division that was so natural and customary in his day as contrary to the gospel (a division to be eliminated), how much

[29]See Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:6-9; 4:30; 5:9 and as well as Paul's attitude toward errorists in 2 Corinthians (for example 11:13-15) and the Pastorals. Against Gibbs (157, note 22), there is reason to see the issue of church fellowship lurking behind this passage. The allusion would stand in verse 19 and not verse 26.

more seriously would Paul view departures from that gospel itself (a division worth maintaining)?

The seriousness of maintaining certain "necessary divisions" is underscored by how carefully verse 19 ties in to its context. What follows in verses 29, 31, and 34 is a warning that God's eschatological "judgment" has already begun within the confines of the church's own assembly. For that reason, Christians must judge already among themselves that they not be judged at the Last Day. Part of this is certainly the eschatological manifestation in the present of "those which are approved." When Christians judge in their own midst and recognize not only the divisions which must be resolved but also, when divisions are "necessary," they avert the spiritual danger and condemnation of which this text warns.

Paul thus demands that the divisions in the Corinthian church body be resolved prior to their coming together in the Sacrament. He takes this horizontal relationship very seriously It is important that Paul uses the word "judgment" both in verses 29 and 31 as well as in the concluding section (verse 34). As the "judgment" in verses 29 and 31 consists of not recognizing Christ's sacramental presence with the bread and the wine, the "judgment" in verse 34 arises when the intended result of the Sacrament is neglected, the unity of believers. The same word is used in both cases. That means that one must take the issues that unite or divide as seriously as we do the Lord's Supper itself. When Christians do not resolve their divisions prior to coming together for eucharistic worship, they are effectively profaning the Sacrament in the same way as if they had not recognized the sacramental body and blood to begin with. One must take both the horizontal and the vertical issues seriously. Divisions are to be resolved.

Paul's advice, therefore, is to discern the Lord's body and blood. First, this means recognizing the objective reality, that Christ's body and blood are truly present. This should create a sense of reverence instead of a party spirit when the church comes together for worship. Second, Christians must equally recognize what the Sacrament is intended to nurture and represent, the oneness of believers in unity (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Divisions among believers hinder their reception of the Sacrament and bring about the Lord's judgment.

Lutherans emphasize the danger of the "judgment" mentioned in verses 29, 31. But there is also the second warning of "judgment" in verse 34. As a Christian people, we must take our relationships with one another as seriously as recognizing the body and the blood in the Sacrament. That means resolving sinful divisions that undermine our oneness in Christ (while at the same time recognizing when divisions are "necessary"). When a Christian people fail to take seriously their relationships with one another, they fail to honor what the sacramental body was meant to foster and nourish. In the words of our Lord, we need to leave our gift behind at the altar and go be reconciled with our brother (Matthew 5:23-25).

Finding Better Ways to Clergy Competence Than Mandatory Continuing Education

David Zersen

If church judicatories are inclined to mandate continuing (read "lifelong") professional education (MCE or CPE) for clergy, does that imply that there is a wide-spread assumption that clergy are always on the verge of incompetence? It is a new world! My two clergy grandfathers attended many conferences which provided learning experiences for them. They were also avid readers (and writers) of books. No one "required" them to maintain their credentials through continuing education. Within the last three years, however, at least one denominational head and one seminary president have voiced their support for MCE.[1] Research shows that clergy themselves are in favor of MCE.[2] Encouraged by a developing MCE movement in the professions, a number of denominations now either "expect" or "require" their clergy to participate in continuing education.[3] Will all denominations move in this direction—and what does this say about current clergy competence? Perhaps, more importantly, whose incompetence is in question here, that of the judicatory official who merely assumes that clergy do not learn, or the so-called "laggards" who have not cracked a book since seminary days? Also, from a practical standpoint, given the polities of many denominations which do not allow removal of

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[1]Alvin Barry, unpublished address to LCMS continuing education representatives, 1994; John Johnson, unpublished address to LCMS continuing education representatives, 1994.

[2]J. P. O'Hara, *Continuing Education Survey* (St. Louis: LCMS Department of Planning and Research, 1990).

[3]B. LeGrand, "A Change of Heart: Continuing Professional Education Should Be Mandatory," *Confronting Controversies in Challenging Times: A Call for Action*, 95-103, edited by M. W. Galbraith and B. R. Sisco (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992); W. Behrens, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Art Gafke, United Methodist Church, personal communications, November 13, 1995.

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certification for failure to participate in continuing education, how would the *mandatum* be enforced? Finally, are there alternatives to MCE that address the concern for effective performance but are better suited to the context of the professional church worker?

Changes in Entry Level Ministerial Education

Before issues related to in-service education are addressed, it should be acknowledged that a number of changes are taking place that may question existing definitions of seminary education and, thereby, alter perceptions about what constitutes continuing education. For example, although most religious groups in the United States do not have an internship as part of their seminary education, most Lutheran groups are committed to this experiential learning component and Presbyterians are considering it.[4] Also, new understandings of how adults learn have emphasized the inevitability of learning in relationship to experience, task, and role across the life span.[5] This has caused seminary education experts to concede that certain content areas are more appropriately explored once one is already in ministry. Additionally, considering all that a pastor has to learn in order to be a "general practitioner" today the temptation is to extend the term of seminary residency—which is impractical given that the average seminary student, nationwide, is married, working, in the late 30s, and can ill afford to prolong seminary education, or continue the seminary's formal entry-level education into the early years of ministry.[6]

Some denominations have had long experience with this latter prospect, and others are beginning to experiment with it. The United Methodist Church uses the ancient diaconate concept as a staged approach to pastoral ordination.[7] Seminary graduates continue to learn during their post-seminary diaconate,

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[4]Michael Gilligan, Association of Theological schools, personal communication, Friday, January 5, 1996.; Dennis Maher, personal communication, November 13, 1995.

[5]G. Darkenwald and S. Merriam, *Adult Education: Foundations of Practice* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), 87.

[6]Gilligan, January 5, 1996.

[7]Gafke, November 13, 1995.

receiving ordination as elders only upon successful completion of their diaconate. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has fifty of its sixty-five synods implementing a mandated post-seminary three-year curriculum during which time candidates will continue their preparation for entry-level roles in ministry.[8] As valuable as such new approaches may be, this article differentiates them from what has come to be called continuing education. The continuing education in the discussion of MCE involves post-entry-level learning, the learning with which a professional is involved at the completion of a prescribed period of study (even a three-year post-seminary mandated study) and which continues throughout one's professional life.

Changes in Society that Require Ongoing Learning

Continuing education for clergy is more important today than ever. In our society, in which changes in technology, mores, social systems, and occupations take place at a dizzying pace, clergy on the one hand tend to remain on the job over the course of a professional lifetime. On the other hand, they are confronted over the years with issues about which their seminary professors knew nothing during those early years of entry-level formation. Today's fifty-year-old graduated from a seminary whose notable scholars did not understand family systems therapy, end of life decision making, narrative preaching, adult learning theory, substance abuse, how to access religious categories on the world wide web or the subtle effects of deconstructionism on the *textus receptus*. Assuming that the pace of change will accelerate, a congregation of astute Christians will quickly know whether their albeit caring pastor is in touch with current knowledge or is hopelessly out-of-date.

For the most part, clergy will pursue competence as the challenges of daily ministry point them toward books, mentors, workshops and certificate programs. A small percentage, however, will be intrigued by a topic because of an intellectual or ministerial challenge and will pursue graduate education. This also is continuing education, although a more formal approach to it. Masters degrees in counseling or administration,

[8]Behrens, November 13, 1995

D. Mins with generic or more specific foci, and even Th.Ds and Ph.Ds in practical or esoteric areas will grow in popularity as graduate-level education becomes more self understood. This is not to imply that this is necessary or even advisable. Education for education's sake may not serve the cause of ministry. It stands to reason, however, that bright clergy will take advantage of opportunities.

The Value of Requiring Continuing Education

Given the accelerating pace of change in our society and the need to provide a competent, effective, joy-filled ministry, it might be assumed that all clergy would participate in some form of continuing education. Why, then, should there be any need to mandate it? It is one thing to encourage, recommend, advise, invite, propose, suggest, invite—but mandate? What concern underlies such a proposal?

The professions in which MCE is accepted involve forms of service to people in which there are physical, economic, and ethical risks. The fields of medicine, accounting, pharmacy, nursing, psychiatry, law and, even real estate, are examples. With time, the professionals in many of these fields have come to take it for granted that continuing education should be required. For example, in the forty-six states that have MCE legislation for certain professions, pharmacists must complete fifteen hours of continuing education annually. Pharmacists understand and accept this requirement.[9] Why would clergy not accept a similar requirement?

In order to protect the standards of professional groups, training programs, examinations, and re-certification processes, among others, are mandated. When individuals protest that such requirements are impositions on personal freedom, the expected retort is that professionals waive some of their freedom in order to pursue their work.[10] Some research indicates that in every profession there are twenty-five to thirty

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[9]LeGrand.

[10]K. J. Mattran, "Mandatory Education Increases Professional Competence," in B. W. Kreitlow and Associates, *Examining Controversies in Adult Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981).

percent of "laggards" who do little more than the minimum to remain competent.[11] In order to protect the clientele served by such, MCE is assumed to be necessary. Should it not be clear that clergy who have not stayed on top of changes in pastoral practice, law or counseling techniques could misadvise and misdirect their parishioners? Does it not seem reasonable that preachers who do not read widely, ultimately say the same things over and over—and thus cease to provide creative nourishment for spiritually-hungry seekers? Is it not possible that if one's ethics notes from the seminary are not regularly tested and refined by real-life case studies, the pastor at the hospice bedside or pediatric crib might just exude pure nonsense? For many clergy, judicatory officials, and parishioners, anything less than MCE may seem irresponsible.

MCE May Bring More Problems Than Solutions

Before all religious denominations jump on the MCE bandwagon, however—and my opening remarks suggested that this is a trend, it is well to consider at least four issues: 1) Aspects of the adult as learner that MCE advocates tend not to understand; 2) the inability of MCE to ensure effective performance; 3) the problems associated with ecclesial polity in many Christian denominations; and 4) the exchange of gospel for law which MCE inevitably introduces.

There are two dimensions to the MCE issue involving poor understanding of the adult as learner. One has to do with the importance of independent learning for the adult and the other deals with the importance of recognizing adult learning styles. Research of the last twenty years by people like Allen Tough, Patrick Penland and Stephen Brookfield indicates that adults address major issues in their personal and professional lives with independent learning projects.[12] Tough indicates that adults are typically involved with five and more learning projects annually each of which can consume up to one hundred

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[11]LeGrand.

[12]S. Brookfield, "How Adults Learn," in *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986).

hours and more.[13] My own research in recent years has shown that clergy also have extensive involvement in personal projects that seek to address challenges and increase competencies.[14] The research shows that the intellectual turning points in clergy careers result largely from self-directed initiatives imposed because of personally identified learning needs. Such conclusions are very important in the MCE argument. Any discussion about what clergy need to be doing in clergy continuing education must take into account what clergy are already doing—and both judicatory officials and clergy themselves tend not to regard the largely unrecorded independent learning as "learning." The reasons for this require another article. It is important to note, however, that those who are not attending conferences and workshops need not be branded as "laggards." It is actually questionable, given the challenges clergy regularly face in daily ministry, whether there are many, apart from the dysfunctional, who pursue no learning at all.

Another important issue with respect to adult learning involves the way in which adults learn most effectively. Those insisting on MCE for clergy are often those who lament the loss of the church's tradition and who insist that clergy should revisit, via some means of re-indoctrination, data and content regarding everything from the articles of faith to the principles of interpretation. The lecture-style teaching strategies typically employed by these committed incubators show that even though they may be riding a good horse in revisiting and redefining fundamentals, their approach will keep the students in the barn. If one is to ride free as a learner, those responsible for clergy continuing education need to learn more about the roots of continuing education in adult learning theory and the appropriate communication/learning techniques that arise from such theory.[15]

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[13]A. Tough, "Major Learning Efforts: Recent Research and Future Directions," *Adult Education* 28 (1978):250-273.

[14]D. Zersen, "Independent Learning among Lutheran Clergy," unpublished dissertation proposal, Columbia University, New York, 1995.

[15]Darkenwald.

The second major concern regarding MCE, as mentioned above, questions whether MCE can ensure effective performance when it does not address the areas of individual incompetence and because it creates a punitive environment that stifles personal initiative. The first concern is related to the uniqueness of each pastor. Whether from heredity or educational formation, some clergy are good communicators, some able administrators, come clear thinkers, some compassionate listeners. And each have their counterparts. Which required continuing education programs can cover all these issues? What order of prioritization would be best for most clergy? Would an experiential approach work best? What amount of formation would effect the needed competence? The results of MCE research are very mixed on whether increasing competency actually results from MCE. Studies in 1990 comparing MCE in law and medicine showed that, although MCE requirements have not detracted from the quality of continuing education for these professionals, MCE does not guarantee professional competence because "the overall impact of continuing education cannot be proved conclusively."[16]

A second reason why MCE cannot ensure performance relates to the punitive environment created by MCE. If, in fact, most clergy are involved in some form of continuing education, then imposing MCE is like establishing sanctions for activities that are already taking place.[17] Why should the majority of clergy who are already addressing their needs for personal and professional learning in an independent way be expected to comply with some generic standards in order to address a judicatory's concern for a "laggard" minority?

The third major issue concerns problems relating to the polity of most Christian denominations. Most denominational

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[16]S. J. Frye, "Mandatory Continuing Education for Professional Relicensure: A Comparative Analysis of Its Impact in Law and Medicine," *Journal of Continuing Higher Education* 38 (1990): 16-25.

[17]R. G. Brockett, "Do We Really Need Mandatory Continuing Education?" in *Confronting Controversies in Challenging Times: A Call to Action*, 87-93, edited by M. W. Galbraith and B. R. Sisco (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992).

judicatories have no authority to remove licensing from clergy who do not participate in continuing education.[18] Additionally, some denominations reserve disciplinary intervention of any kind with clergy for the congregation (for example, congregations of the Southern Baptist Convention). What sense does it make to talk about "requiring" or "expecting" twenty-five CEU annually from clergy if there are no means to enforce such standards? Furthermore, when some denominations talk about changing their polity to permit removing a license for failure to demonstrate that a presence was placed in a classroom for the required amount of time, have they not in doing this failed to appreciate the existence of independent learning and the dead-end street of expecting innovative learning to take place in sanctioned environments with angry, resentful occupiers of chairs?

Finally, an issue which should be a matter of concern for evangelical churches, MCE replaces gospel with law as the driving force of personal growth, and thus frees us from growing. An example, for me, became clear as I listened to the President's address on racial issues in Austin, Texas.[19] When Mr. Clinton set up a straw-man to make his point, the crowd cheered. As if talking to someone in the audience, he said, "If you have children not living with you, you need to pay their child-support money, and, if you don't, we're going to catch you!" Wild applause followed. Humans like to hear the law preached to "others." Even clergy like to hear it said that the "laggards" are going to be made to comply! No more Mr. Nice Guy! Incompetent preaching and misguided counseling will disappear! "You" are going to be expected to improve. When we do not hear the law speaking to us personally, it makes us cheer!

Were the gospel to be heart and center in all of this, we would be hearing more and more encouragement to sense a loving God claim and sustain us, and to experience Jesus, siren-like, summon us to the full-stature spirituality of redeemed sons and

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[18]Zersen, personal communication with eight spokespersons for U.S. denominations, 1995.

[19]Bill Clinton, Address at University of Texas as Austin, October 16, 1995.

daughters of God. It is true that we hold δύναμις (Romans 1:16) in our hands, and that it is dangerous to be flippant or capricious or downright sloppy with the words of life and death—with techniques in the counseling room—with ethics at the beds of the dying. Only the Spirit of God presses us toward greater competence, however, and we, Barnabas-like, with our words of encouragement, dare spare no creative impulse in reminding one another to hear and respond to the love of God claiming us in Jesus, the Christ.

What's This Thing Called "Competence"?

Gospel-affirmed Christ-bearers do not need to do anything to become acceptable to God. We have all we need through faith in the grace which saves us. Day by day, however, we strive to find the ways through which God can use us powerfully to touch hurting people. Practically speaking, denominational judicatories would be more faithful to their evangelical moorings if instead of following the secular professions' headlong commitment to MCE, they would 1) develop new means of sharing the value of excellence in ministry; 2) provide performance evaluations for clergy that both affirm competence as well as provide helpful directions for mutual ministry; and 3) seek grass-roots input from the church on those general qualities most valued among ministers today.

More valuable than insisting that all pastors "put in time" would be to help pastors realize a vision of the possibilities of continuing education: Capture deeper insights in the gospel stories; have some sense of the real conflicts in a marriage relationship; be better at sharing a vision for the congregation's place in the community; communicate to young people what Jesus has done for them; facilitate worship that engages more rather than fewer in reception of God's gifts and a collective response of raise. Making such ideas visual, personal and compelling would be a great challenge—and the result could be a desire for the kind of education that could make it happen.

Of equal importance is the matter of shifting the emphasis from continuing education itself to the outcomes of ministry, a

matter of exchanging the means for the ends.[20] The important issue is not participating in learning events, but satisfying parishioners' ministerial needs. Instead of counting required continuing education hours, it would be more helpful to have parishioners do ministerial performance audits annually. While many clergy seem terrified of this—and may suggest that it is theologically inappropriate—such fears are unnecessary. Properly used, the basic function of audits is to affirm the person and the performance—something that happens all too infrequently for clergy. When there are shortcomings—and no pastor is so arrogant as to think there is nothing to be learned—this gentle and focused interview can put the congregational finger on those kinds of growth which would benefit all—clergy and parishioners alike.

Finally, the best way to strengthen the relationship between continuing education and professional competence is to seek ongoing grass roots input from both clergy and laity on the kinds of learning experiences that contribute to mutual ministry. Seminaries and graduate theological institutions may not have all the answers for ministry in the trenches. Annual conferences involving clergy, laity, and some outside experts (change theorists, futurists, sociologists, theologians, community leaders, and business people, among others) might provide invaluable resources for the next year's preaching, Bible classes, community outreach programs, and continuing education for the pastor. In any case, without the MCE albatross hanging over the head, clergy might be freed to explore, together with their parishioners, the real issues—including fresh and innovative avenues with which to address them. My hunch is that, were all to seek a full measure of the Spirit and a generous dose of human creativity, some of the wisest and wildest continuing education experiences might be devised—many of which might not qualify as MCE, and some of which would not be capable of being measured by CEU! But they would fill a stagnant phrase like continuing education with ozone-like possibilities—like the perfume that fills the air after a rainstorm—and learners might find it difficult to contain their appetites.

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[20]Brockett.

The Image of the Wheat Stalk and the Vine Twig in the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus of Lyons

William C. Weinrich

At the end of Book III, Irenaeus asserts that the error of the Gnostics is their rejection of divine providence.[1] They refuse to believe that the God who creates our bodies and who nourishes us daily by means of the creation is the God of power who will also bestow the eternal goods of immortality and incorruptibility. Holding the Creator to be "of small account," the Gnostics "dream of a non-existent being" above the Creator and believe him to be 'the great god' who holds no communication with the human race and administers no earthly things. The Gnostics, however, have merely discovered the *deus otiosus* of Epicurus, who does nothing beneficial either for himself or for others, that is, who exercises no providence at all (*AH,* 3.24.2).

However, some Gentiles, being slightly moved by God's providence, do regard the Maker of this world to be the one God who exercises a providence over all things and arranges the affairs of this world. Such, for example, was Plato who thought the goodness of God was the cause of the world's formation and did not attribute the earth's existence to ignorance or to a defect (*AH,* 3.25.5). In this the church agrees with Plato, for it too proclaims that the Creator of the world is the one and only God who benevolently causes His sun to rise and His rain to fall upon the just and the unjust and who judges those who,

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[1]The English text of *Against Heresies* may be found in volume one of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D.* 325, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans), as well as in *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies,* translated and annotated by Dominic J. Unber, with further revisions by John J. Dillon, Ancient Christian Writers volume 55 (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).

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perceiving the impartiality of God's goodness, yet live in wantonness and luxuriousness (*AH,* 3.25.4).

Moreover, the Creator of the world is the God of whom the entire Scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, testify. Known in the creation itself, the Creator spoke to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, was proclaimed by the apostles, and is now confessed by the church. Indeed, the Word, through whom the Father created and now governs the world, was made man as Jesus of Nazareth. This Jesus also testified in the gospel books that there is no God and Father other than the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Disparaging the creation and noting the differences between the Old Testament and New Testament, however, the Gnostics conclude that there are two gods, one the Creator of the world, who spoke through Moses and the prophets, and the other the God of the gospel and the Father of Jesus Christ.

In view of Gnostic deprecation of the Creator and of the Old Testament Irenaeus integrated the Old Testament history of Israel into the larger, more encompassing story of God's providential care of humankind from the creation of the world to its consummation in the Kingdom of God. Gnostic failure to recognize that the writings of Moses are the words of Christ made them like the rich man to whom Abraham said "if they do not believe Moses and the prophets, neither were one to rise from the dead and go to them will they believe him." To believe the testimony of Moses and the prophets that the one God is the Creator (one may see *AH,* 4.2.1,2) also implies also belief in Christ who rose from the dead and gives life to us (*AH,* 4.2.4). However, rejecting the Creator and the Old Testament witness to Him, the Gnostics fail to recognize the life-giving work of Christ and are like the self-same rich man who disregarded Lazarus but lived a luxurious life of pleasures and feastings, and forgot God (*AH,* 4.2.4).[2]

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[2]Isaiah already had spoken about persons like the rich man who disregard the needy in the midst of their own luxury: "They drink wine with harps and drums, with psalters and flutes; but they do not regard the works of God nor do they consider the works of His hands" (*AH,* 4.2.4; Isaiah 5:12). Irenaeus no doubt understood Isaiah's words, "the works of His hands," to

The story of Lazarus and the rich man allows Irenaeus to introduce a major point. Gnostic refusal to recognize in the law of Moses and the preaching of the prophets a witness to the Christ who was to come in the flesh, to die in the flesh, and to rise incorruptible in the flesh goes hand in hand with their refusal to recognize that the Creator's providential giving and sustaining of life through created things is a typological foreshadowing of the final bestowal of incorruptibility upon the flesh through the Holy Spirit. The economy of God is one. It has one beginning, the creation of all things, and it has one end, the giving of eternal life and immortality to humankind. What God creates, whether the things of creation or the institutions and ordinances of the Old Testament, He creates in order to serve that final *telos.* For, says Irenaeus, "God is one and the same, . . . who made the things of time for man in order that, maturing in them, man might produce the fruit of immortality" (*AH,* 4.5.1).[3]

When, therefore, in Book IV Irenaeus begins his demonstration that the Old Testament precepts had an organic unity with the precepts of the gospel because they were "prophecies of future things," he selects the image of the wheat stalk and the vine twig, which illustrates both the organic unity between the old and new covenants and the extension and increase that characterizes the movement from the old covenantal law to the gospel realities. However, the image of the wheat stalk and the vine twig, drawn as it is from the realm of providence, is suitable also to indicate the organic unity and increase of God's work of creation from its beginning until its

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refer to "man," who was created by God's "hands," the Son and the Holy Spirit (*AH,* 4. pref. 4). Irenaeus' discussion of Lazarus and the rich man renews the theme of *AH,* 3.25.4 and prepares for the discussion of the Eucharist in *AH,* 4.17.1-4.

[3] *AH* 4.5.1*: Unus igitur et idem Deus: qui plicat caelum quemadmodum librum, et renovat faciem terrae; qui temporalia fecit propter hominem, uti maturescens in eis fructificet immortalitatem* (SC 100.424). Concerning the precepts of the Old Testament, Irenaeus writes similarly. God was calling Israel *per ea quae erant secunda ad prima, hoc est per typica ad vera et per temporalia ad aeterna et per carnalia ad spiritalia et per terrena ad caelestia* (*AH* 4.14.3; SC 100.546).

consummation in the gift of eternal life and incorruptibility. The image integrally connects the life on earth, which the Creator sustains through food and drink, both with the life of the church nourished by the body and blood of Christ given in and with the bread and wine (*AH,* 4.18.5-6; 5.2.2-3) and with the millennial Kingdom of the Son in which the Father Himself will serve table at the feasting of the righteous who are being accustomed to partake of the glory of God the Father (see *AH,* 4. 1& 1; 5.33.2; 5.34.2 [Luke 12:37 and following.]; 5.34.3).

Commenting upon Jesus' words, "Swear not by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is God's footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king" (Matthew 5:34), the Gnostics argued that if heaven and earth are to pass away, then the God who sits above similarly must pass away. Likewise, they maintained, if Jerusalem were in fact "the city of the great king," then it would not have been deserted. However, Irenaeus rejoins, such conclusions are like saying that if a stalk of wheat were the creation of God, it would never be separated from the mature grains of wheat, or that if a vine twig were made by God, it would never be cut away from the ripe clusters of grapes (*AH,* 4.4.1). The wheat stalk and the vine twig were not made for their own sakes but for the sake of the fruit growing upon them. Once the wheat and the grape are mature and ripe, they are harvested, and the stalk and the twig, having served their purpose, cease to have further significance. Such is the case with Jerusalem. It had its beginning with David and served the pedagogy of Israel until the "fruit of liberty" (namely, Christ) should come. That "fruit of liberty" having now come with the revelation of the New Testament, Jerusalem has fulfilled its own times and was "rightly forsaken" when the apostles were scattered throughout all the world (*AH,* 4.4.1). This fate of Jerusalem was foreseen already by Isaiah who prophesied that "the daughter of Zion shall be left as a cottage in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers" (Isaiah 1:8). And when, asks Irenaeus, shall these things be left behind? Is it not, he answers, when the fruit is taken away, and the leaves alone are left which have no power to produce fruit (*AH,* 4.4.2)?

However, it is not only Jerusalem that has fulfilled the time of its usefulness and no longer serves the final purpose of God's salvific economy. "The fashion of the whole world must also pass away when the time of its own passing comes, in order that the fruit may be gathered into the barn and the chaff left behind consumed by fire" (*AH,* 4.4.3).

Whether then Irenaeus has the Old Testament pedagogy of Israel or the more encompassing pedagogy of the providential order in view, the image of the wheat stalk and the vine twig serves to illustrate the organic extension and increase that God gives to His economy for the salvation of humankind. It serves to illustrate a fundamental point of Irenaeus. The distinguishing difference between God and man is that "God creates, but man is created" and that everything God creates has a beginning, a middle, an addition, and a maturity (*AH,* 4.11.2).[4] And, introduced as it is by Irenaeus at the beginning of his argument in Book IV, it may be regarded as the chief hermeneutical image for the argument of Book IV that the precepts of the Creator given in the Old Testament possess an inherent unity with the gospel but have in the gospel received their fulfillment by extension and augmentation.

However, the image of the wheat stalk and the vine twig is not merely illustrative. It clearly intimates both the Eucharist of the church and the fecundity of the millennial kingdom, which in their own way are extensions and fulfillments of Old Testament promises and precepts, and which also are occasions in which the Creator, through means of His providential care,

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[4] *AH,* 4.11.2: *Et hoc Deus ab homine differt, quoniam Deus quidem facit, homo autem fit. Et quidem qui facit semper idem est, quod autem fit et initium et medietatem et adjectionem et augmentum accipere debet* (SC 100.500). Adelin Rousseau is undoubtedly correct in arguing that *augmentum* renders the Greek word ἀυκή and therefore should be translated "maturity" (SC 100.228). One may also see Philippe Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle Alliance selon S. Irénée* (Paris: Editions Lethielleux, 1978), 96 n.2, who refers to Quintillian as a contemporary witness to the view that growth possessed three stages: *exordium, incrementum, summa* (ἀυκή). One may compare *AH,* 3.25.5, which quotes Plato to the same effect: God as "ancient Word" possesses the beginning *(initium),* the end *(finem)* and the middle stages *(medietates)* of all existing things.

intimates and presages the goal of His creating work, namely, the giving of eternal life and incorruptibility to the flesh.

Irenaeus discusses the Eucharist of the church at considerable length. The Eucharist is the "new oblation of the new covenant" and the "pure sacrifice" which God through the prophets had enjoined upon Israel when He noticed the people "neglecting righteousness . . . and imagining that God was to be satisfied by sacrifices and other figurative observances" (*AH,* 4.17.1; 4.17.5). Through the repeated exhortations of the prophets that the people should "desire mercy more than sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings" (Hosea 6:6; *AH, 4.17.4),* God was both teaching them what He desires and prophesying the new covenant that was to come (*AH,* 4.17.1). With the arrival of the new oblation of the Eucharist, Malachi's prophecy is fulfilled: "the former people shall cease to make offerings to God, but that in every place sacrifice shall be offered to Him, and that a pure one" (*AH,* 4.175).

But the Eucharist of bread and wine is also a communion with the body and blood of Christ, and therefore a means by which the Creator prepares our bodies for the reception of eternal life. It is this that the Gnostics cannot accept, for they do not believe that He who creates the bread and the wine and providentially nourishes our bodies with them is the Father of Him who offered the bread and wine and gave thanks over them (*AH,* 4.18.4). By doubting the capacity of the flesh to receive incorruption the Gnostics "despise the entire dispensation of God" and call into question our redemption through Christ's body and blood and our communion with them in the eucharistic bread and cup (*AH,* 5.2.2). However, says Irenaeus, "our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our opinion" (*AH,* 4.18.5). The Eucharist is testimony that the Creator is also the One who shall give incorruptibility and eternal life to the flesh, for the bread and wine of the Eucharist, which nourishes and gives growth to our bodies, is the body and blood of Christ who is risen from the dead and has received the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer "common bread" but consists of two realities, an earthly

one and a heavenly one; "so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible but have the hope of the resurrection" (*AH,* 4.18.5; also 5.2.3). How then, asks Irenaeus, can the Gnostics say that the flesh is incapable of receiving life eternal when it is nourished from the body and blood of the Lord and is a member of Him? (AH, 5.2.3).

Irenaeus completes his discussion of the Eucharist by introducing again the figure of the wheat and the vine. In doing so he explicitly relates God's providential care of humankind to the Eucharist and to His final bestowal of immortality:

> Just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as a grain of wheat falling into the earth and decomposing rises with much increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things, and then through the Wisdom of God serves for the use of men, and having received the Word of God becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ; so also our bodies, being nourished by it and deposited in the earth and decomposing there, shall rise at their appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God, even the Father, who freely gives immortality to that which is mortal and incorruptibility to that which is corruptible (*AH,* 5.2.3; one may compare 2.28.1).

The Eucharist itself is prophetic of the millennial kingdom and its joyous feasting. Giving thanks over the cup and offering it to His disciples, Christ had indicated that He would not again drink of the fruit of the vine until "that day when I will drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:27). In saying this Christ indicated both the inheritance of the earth in which the new fruit of the vine shall be drunk and the resurrection of the flesh, for the flesh which rises again is the same which received the new cup (*AH,* 5.33.1). The millennial kingdom of the Son is the "true Sabbath" when the righteous shall have no earthly work but shall "have a table prepared for them by God which offers them for food all kinds of dishes" (*AH,* 5.33.2; one may also see 4.16.1; 5.34.2, 3).

This regal banquet served by God Himself was indicated already when Isaac blessed Jacob and prayed that God give to him "of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, plenty of wheat and wine" (Genesis 27:28-29; *AH,* 5.33.3). However, Jacob had never in this life received much wheat and wine but had rather been required to go to Egypt because of famine in the land. The promised blessing, therefore, argues Irenaeus, refers to the "times of the kingdom" when "the creation has been renewed and set free and gives forth an abundance of every kind of food" (*AH,* 5.33.3). As additional witness to this hope Irenaeus adduces the famous words of the elders that a tradition arising from the Lord teaches that a time shall come when vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, each branch having ten thousand twigs, each twig having ten thousand shoots, each shoot ten thousand clusters, and every cluster ten thousand grapes each of which will be capable of providing twenty-five metretes of wine. Similarly, each grain of wheat will produce ten thousand ears, each ear ten thousand grains, and every grain will make ten pounds of clear, pure flour (*AH,* 5.33.3).

Here again the image of the wheat stalk and the vine twig, this time mediated through the tradition of the presbyters, serves to demonstrate the unity between the prophetic Old Testament and the words of Christ and the New Testament. For the Kingdom of the Son, when "the whole creation shall, according to [God's] will, receive increase and augmentation," is both the fulfillment of the promise to Jacob that God will "feed you with the inheritance of Jacob your father" (Isaiah 58:14) and the realization of Christ's words in the gospel of Luke that God will "gird Himself and make [the righteous] to sit down, and will come and serve them" (Luke 12:37-38; *AH, 5.34.2).* However, the image of the wheat stalk and the vine twig indicates in addition the argument of Irenaeus against the Gnostics that the Creator who cares providentially for us through the daily giving of food and drink is none other than the Father of Christ who will give eternal life to the body. For while the Kingdom of the Son is the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy that redeemed Jacob shall come into "a land of wheat and wine, and fruits and animals and sheep; . . and they shall hunger no more" (Jeremiah

31:10 and following), it is also "the commencement of incorruption" in which those who are worthy "are accustomed gradually to partake of God" (*AH,* 5.32.1).

At the beginning of Book IV Irenaeus states that all the arguments of the Gnostic heretics finally result in this, that they blaspheme our Creator and Sustainer and disparage the salvation of humankind (*AH,* 4, pref., 4). The image of the wheat stalk and of the vine twig helps Irenaeus to advance his more unified vision. It portrays the organic development needed to counter the disjunctive hermeneutics of Gnostic interpretation and indicates the unity of Him who gives us our daily food for the sustenance and growth of the body and Him who in the Eucharist provides food unto eternal life and in the Kingdom of the Son a banquet for the righteous who have been raised from the dead.

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Theological Observer

Gold, Silver, and Bronze—And Close Communion

The famous Olympic prize metals may serve as handy historical markers. One might say, for instance, that the sixteenth century, culminating in the Book of Concord, was the Lutheran Reformation's golden age. The seventeenth century would then represent its silver age. After that comes bronze, which then inspires various efforts to return to former glories. Applying this to the Missouri Synod, the time of Walther might be taken as its golden age, and Pieper's as the silver age. The "bronze age" would then describe more mediocre times, marked partly by complacent self-satisfaction, partly by zeal for inherited cliches (the full meaning of which is no longer grasped), and partly by rebellion against the perceived mindlessness or callousness of the "tradition."

A typical Bronze Age trait is the idea that whatever I personally am accustomed to is "what has always been done." For example: "Pastor, why can't we sing good old hymns like 'The Old Rugged Cross' instead of these newfangled ones like 'We All Believe in One True God'?" One can sympathize with the perception and the sentiment, but one should be under no illusions about what is really old and what new here.

Or take the matter of Close Communion. First of all, is it "close" or "closed"? Actually "close" is simply an older form of "closed"—as in "close carriage." So, despite the touching stories that have been made up about "close" communion—and why that is so much better than the "exclusive," and therefore politically incorrect "closed" communion—the fact is that "close communion and "closed communion" mean exactly the same thing. The opposite of both is "open communion," not something like "distant communion"!

But which is the original practice and which the deviation—open or closed communion? There can be no doubt that during Missouri's "golden" and "silver" ages, that is, under Walther and Pieper's leadership, Close Communion was the single standard, drawn from Scripture and Confession. There was a clean break between confession and denial, truth and error, church and sect. Then, with the sudden switch to English after World War I, came the onslaught of the ways of "American Evangelical Protestantism." One prominent feature of this was the pervasive sense of the various

"denominations" as friendly rivals, their differences "man-made." This is how Billy Graham put it in his 1953 book *Peace with God:*

> The New Testament teaches that while there is actually only one church there can be any number of local churches formed into various denominations and societies or councils. These local churches and denominational groups may be divided along national and theological lines, or according to the temperament of their members. . . . I am always tempted to point out how many different styles of hats have come to be designed for both American men and women. We all belong to the same human race, but we all have enough physical differences to make it impossible for us to wear the same style of hat with equal satisfaction (175, 177).

A sea-change in the Missouri Synod came with the "Statement of the Forty-Four" in 1945—belatedly now endorsed by a former president of the Missouri Synod.[1] The inner logic here led to a collapse of orthodox and heterodox churches as viable categories in the practice of fellowship. After all, if only a congregation, but not "the synodical organization," is really "church," then the whole notion of a confessional *church,* as all Lutheran fathers including Walther and Pieper knew it, dissolves into a rickety patch-work of "man-made" regulations, puffed up perhaps as contracts or "covenants of love" freely entered into, and the like. What came now to the fore instead of the category of churches was the notion of individuals (that is, "Christians who differ from us" or "Christians of different denominations," among others). And why should man-made "denominations" get in the way of "fellowship" with "other Christians"?

This Bronze Age confusion of tongues naturally drained much of the conviction out of Close Communion. That practice came to be seen by many as a quaint Synodical "policy"—on a level perhaps with the old Roman Catholic regulation against eating meat on Fridays!

All this lies behind the recent Florida-Georgia polemic against "a denominational or synodical requirement" on would-be

[1]Ralph A. Bohlmann, "Missouri Lutheranism, 1945 and 1995," *Lutheran Forum,* 30 (February 1996): 12-17.

communicants at our altars *(Celebrate!* Pentecost 1996). Substitute "confessional" for "denominational or synodical," and the case is perfectly clear: "Neither Scriptures nor the Confessions impose a confessional requirement on baptized Christians who desire to confess the Real Presence and receive the body and blood of Christ offered in the Eucharist." The sentence is clearly false in light of just Acts 2:42 and Romans 16:17 for starters, not to mention Galatians 1:8-9 and all other texts which forbid complicity with false teachings and with those who support them.

Unlike that weasel-word "denomination," the word "confession" is very biblical indeed (Matthew 10:32), and it embraces the entire life-giving truth the Lord has entrusted to His church (John 8:31-32). Does it include the central truth about justification by grace alone? Or the truth that Baptism actually works regeneration? Or that the Lord gives His very body and blood under bread and wine, and not just "spiritually by faith," but bodily, and into the mouth of every communicant, regardless of faith? To deny that issues like these irreducibly define the gospel is to reject the whole Bible as understood in the Lutheran Confessions. Yet it is just such issues over which the various "denominations" traditionally differ-not to mention the modern horrors of casting to the winds any Word of God which inconveniences anybody!

Are members of other "denominations," who regularly (or irregularly!) attend the sacramental rites of their own (officially heterodox) churches, to be willy-nilly admitted also to the altars of the orthodox church simply on their own say-so? if yes, as *Celebrate!* argues, then it is profoundly untrue that "Lutheran Christians do not disagree in their doctrinal understanding of the Lord's Supper. The primary area of disagreement concerns practice, about those who are to be welcomed as guests when a congregation celebrates the Eucharist" (*Celebrate!* Lent 1998). There is something very wrong with any "doctrinal understanding of the Lord's Supper" which can so cavalierly tear that holy Sacrament loose from its natural setting in the fullness of the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42), and from what that means for church, gospel, confession, ministry, and fellowship.

The Lent 1998 *Celebrate!,* which has just been sent to us, and I assume to all Missouri Synod pastors, presents itself as a "Bible Study." It is in fact a very slanted piece of advocacy, which claims to cover the Words of Institution and the "only passages in the

remainder of the New Testament that deal with the Eucharist," but never mentions Acts 2:42 or the clearly eucharistic Romans 16:17 (see the "kiss of peace" in verse 16)!

One can fully sympathize with the plight of ministers of a certain age, who had been trained in the warm and fuzzy ways flowing from the "Statement of the Forty-Four," and who feel like fish out of water as the Synod tries to reclaim its older, sounder confessional heritage. They were wronged by those who misled them. But with all the human sympathy in the world we dare not lose sight of what really is biblical and confessional and what is not; what is old and what is new; what is standard and what is eccentric. The best book on the subject is still Werner Elert's *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries.* Here is a sample: "Since a man cannot at the same time hold two differing confessions, he cannot communicate in two churches of differing confessions. If anyone does this nevertheless, he denies his own confession or has none at all" (182).

Kurt E. Marquart

Book Reviews

ANTHOLOGY OF THE WRITINGS OF J. MICHAEL REU. Edited and with an Introduction by Paul I. Johnston. Texts and Studies in Religion Volume 71. Lewiston, Queenstown, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997. v + 357 pages. $99.95.

Readers of *CTQ* will likely be most familiar with J. Michael Reu's magisterial work, *The Augsburg Confession* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930), in which he gathers together in one volume the most important documents that surrounded the production of the *Grundbekenntnis* of Lutheranism. But this all-too-frequently overlooked theologian also produced numerous other helpful works that have been inaccessible due to language barriers: Much of Reu's most penetrating work was published only in German.

Johnston and the team of translators he has assembled begin the process of overcoming this deficiency. This volume is a collection of several of Reu's significant writings, primarily drawn from *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, which he edited from 1904 to 1943.

Reu was born in Diebach, Bavaria. After coming to America, he was ordained in the Iowa Synod in 1889. In 1899 he was called to Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, which he served until his death in 1943. He received the Th.D. degree from Erlangen in 1910. His better known works include *Catechetics* (1918), *Homiletics* (1922), and *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* (1929). But it was in the *Zeitschrift* that Reu contributed some of his most significant work, which, until now, has languished in obscurity. It is for this reason that the current volume is particularly valuable. Reu now has the opportunity to speak to the broader Lutheran community of the late twentieth century. Of special interest in this collection are "Concerning the Difference in Theology and Church Practice between German and American Lutheranism (77-87), "Review of Dr. Elert's *The Structure of Lutheranism*" (121-129), "The Disintegration of the Confession through Pietism" (131-138), and "Must the Discussion with Missouri Now Cease" (161-179).

The book does, however, have a number of liabilities. In the first place, Johnston has made the unfortunate editorial decision not to include secondary citations made by Reu in the body of the articles. From the writings contained in this collection it quickly becomes apparent that Reu often opened his articles with a lengthy quotation from a source he then engaged critically. For some reason the editor has chosen to omit these significant references. Thus, one is left to reconstruct the substance of these quotations from Reu's comments

reconstruct the substance of these quotations from Reu's comments on them. The most egregious example of this occurs in the first article where one is not sufficiently able to fabricate Schmauk's remarks from Reu's criticisms, and so is forced to the library to track down the references in the original. This should not have happened and hinders the usability of the book. The reader has no opportunity to judge or consider the accuracy of Reu's interpretation of the primary source. The problem could easily have been remedied and should have been. Already priced beyond the means of the parish pastor and theological student, the addition of a few more pages would not have had a consequential impact on the price. And if length was the supreme consideration, several of the book reviews could have been omitted toward the end. As it stands, one's reading of the text is consistently interrupted. To get a sense of just how disruptive this is, the reader might imagine reading through the book of Romans, and whenever Paul cites an Old Testament text the editor would insert a bracketed comment to the effect: "Paul has a lengthy quotation here from the book of Isaiah." It simply makes for cumbersome reading.

Secondly, the book lacks a significant historical introduction and anything approaching a critical apparatus. What we have instead are Reu's words very nearly without, as the American Bible Society would approve, note or comment. Reu is simply not well enough known to justify the omission of explanatory features in the book, particularly since the only significant source for Reu materials is the out of print *Johann Michael Reu: A Book of Remembrance: Kirchliche Zeitschrift 1876-1843* (Columbus, Ohio: 1945).

Yet, I believe the volume is ultimately of great value. Johnston has done American Lutheranism a great service in furnishing this volume. Let us hope that Johnston's allusion to the appearance for further volumes being published materializes (page 2). Confessional Lutheran pastors would be well served to familiarize themselves with this insightful and careful confessional Lutheran thinker. If only Mellen Press would lower its prices so that pastors could afford to purchase its books.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

CAESARIUS OF ARLES: THE MAKING OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN LATE ANTIQUE GAUL. By William E. Klingshirn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 317 pages.

Caesarius of Arles is well-known to students of historical theology for his role in the Synod of Orange (529). In this study, William Klingshirn paints a more complete portrait of Caesarius by investigating his activities as bishop and placing him firmly in the political and social setting of late antique Provence. Two principle difficulties confronted Caesarius: a population that did not necessarily agree with his definition of the Christian life, thus necessitating his reform efforts, and a dangerously fluid political situation that continually threatened his institutional foundations. He dealt with the first primarily through preaching, both his own and that of his priests and deacons. In his own sermons, Caesarius tirelessly condemned both those in his own congregation who perpetuated customs of pagan origin and those who openly maintained the old ways. He also ensured that the preaching task did not fall entirely on his shoulders. In legislation that was often copied, he authorized the preaching of priests and proposed that even deacons could read the sermons of the fathers. Politically, Caesarius survived through shrewd action as patron of the Christian community in Arles and by courting the appropriate authorities, whether his Gothic overlords or the Bishop of Rome. Ironically, although Caesarius's authority as bishop waned with the Frankish conquest of Provence, his influence was felt centuries later in the reform legislation of the Carolingian church.

Klingshirn deftly weaves together the strands of Caesarius's story. His treatment of the political situation in Provence, the social setting of Arles, and Caesarius's monastic career all help to illuminate the career of a bishop of late antiquity. Along the way the reader discovers some fascinating details about lay piety in the south of France in the sixth century, noting, for example, that it became customary to bathe in rivers or the ocean on the eve of St. John the Baptist's Day. One of the difficulties with this book, however, is that the author's sympathy lies too clearly with such practices. He chides Caesarius for attempting to impose monastic piety in his diocese and praises the peasantry for creating a form of Christian piety sensitive to community needs. In spite of this politically correct bias, Klingshirn's study remains extremely valuable for the student of

church history by shedding light on an individual and an era all too often overlooked.

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CHARACTER IN CRISIS: A FRESH APPROACH TO THE WISDOM LITERATURE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. By William P. Brown. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996. 179 pages. Paper.

Political campaigns and the cultural debate have brought character and virtue to the attention of the American public in recent years. William P. Brown looks to the Old Testament wisdom literature for an ancient voice to address the contemporary discussion. Brown sees the previously neglected books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes as more than a collection of profundities. Brown interprets this wisdom literature as an integrated narrative. The reader moves with the literature through various stages of maturity. The goal, according to Brown, is to grow from a self-centered awareness to communal, even global consciousness. Through this growing process, the reader struggles along with the literature to apprehend the breadth of human wisdom and its relation to the divine. Brown's interpretation of the maturing process in the ancient wisdom literature is a fresh commentary to a generation besieged by questions of character and virtue.

Proverbs is the starting point of Brown's interpretation of the wisdom literature. A book that at first glance looks like little more than a collection of sayings is shown to be a complex narrative that draws the reader to the feet of lady wisdom herself. The narrative of Proverbs invites the reader to take the place of the silent son, listening to the advice of his parents as they instruct him in virtuous living. Brown sees genius in this approach because "of all social domains, the family provides the strongest appeal and basis for shaping and reorienting the praxis of the community" (page 45). Set in the midst of intellectual values, literary expressions of wisdom, and instrumental virtues are the moral, communal virtues (page 25). Brown sees the integration of sayings that would be considered mundane with the more profound virtues in a sapiential corpus. The silent son who is instructed in the home is being prepared to take his

place as a responsible member of the community. The opening chapters of Proverbs have the silent son learning from his parents and hearing the call of both lady wisdom and the strange woman. Brown notes that by the time the reader arrives at the end of the book, the silent son has become the wise sage sitting in the city gates praising wisdom, his intimate friend and spouse (page 48).

Job picks up where Proverbs ended. Brown points out that Job is the wise sage who sits in the gates. Brown sees the story of Job as the next step in sapiential maturity. The mere acceptance of the tenets of wisdom is not yet the mark of a sage. Job is comfortable in his place among the wise ones. His story puts wisdom to the test. According to Brown, Job is a story of transition in which the fear of God moves one from simple acceptance to communion with wisdom. The story places the reader in contact with Job who learns that wisdom is found in neither ease of life, nor length of days, nor the accumulation of tradition. Job questions conventional wisdom and finds that those who do not blindly accept it become despised in the community. This is the contemporary problem for those who suspect the "traditional" as the unquestioned solution to modern problems. Job matures beyond the "traditional" rejecting the notion that wisdom is an accumulated quantity stored for later use. Job is suspect of the wisdom of his friends who claim to have answers to his crisis. Brown shows that the poem in chapter 28 is a "veiled judgment on the dialogues" (page 70). True wisdom is not a commodity distributed as needed. Instead, Job likens it to a precious metal which must be mined, its course known only to God.

Brown sees Job 28 as the crux of sapiential maturity. Once the "inaccessibility" of wisdom is realized, Job (and the reader) can concentrate on personal integrity as the hinge upon which all communal responsibility swings. Job is indefatigable in his defense of the questioning of conventional wisdom and his desire to probe the depths of divine wisdom. This brings forth the audience with God. Job attains an understanding that the divine wisdom is above all other wisdom in its creativity and non-intrusive approach toward creation. Divine wisdom allows the free development and vivaciousness of all creation. Through Job's sapiential journey, the reader, whom the corpus of traditional wisdom has instructed, is now challenged to perceive the Divine wisdom in a global and transcendent way. In breaking away from the confines of conventional wisdom, the Joban story invites the reader to see God's

creative and non-intrusive wisdom as a mighty blessing rather than a capricious curse. Job's transition is complete when his new perspective on wisdom produces the high virtue of compassion. The crux of Job's restoration is not so much the replacement of his properties and health as it is his prayer for his friends and the giving of his inheritance to his daughters. Job invites the reader to participate in the divine wisdom through communion with God and acts of compassion toward neighbors.

Brown finally turns to Ecclesiastes and the plight of Qoheleth to complete the life journey of the sage. If Proverbs is basic narrative in wisdom for the young that they may mature into wise ones, and Job is the story of the sage in his prime struggling to a higher wisdom, then Qoheleth is the story of the elderly sage speaking to a new generation with the experience of one who has walked the path of wisdom. Brown characterizes Ecclesiastes as a narrative of life and a warning to those who would seek the wise life. True wisdom recognizes the transitory nature of life. Qoheleth recommends the savoring of one's youth when life can be enjoyed for its own sake before the cynicism of old age sets in. Brown sees that Qoheleth pays a price for sapiential maturity. Like Moses whom God allowed to see the promised land, but never enter it, Qoheleth has reached a level of maturity in wisdom where he can discern the boundaries of virtue and vice, but not transcend them (pages 140 and following). Within this framework, the familiar "fear of God" becomes a reverence toward the One who gives us the ability to see our limitations. Humanity is unique in its ability to step back from its own situation and take account of its limitations. According to Brown, this is both a blessing and a curse for Qoheleth. Where Job questioned the conventional wisdom, Qoheleth rejects it out of hand. Brown puts a heavy emphasis on translating הבל (vanity) with the connotation of "absurd."

Brown asserts that in Qoheleth's discernment of the limitations of virtue, he concludes that human existence is absurd and meaningless (pages 130 and following). This assertion is not in keeping with the flow of Brown's thinking. The wise sage has thus far been engaged by wisdom and a struggle to understand. Brown's Qoheleth now reaches the end of the road, no longer engaged by wisdom, but vexed by it. Brown's Qoheleth can only retreat to a *carpe diem* simplicity and enjoyment of life, giving reverence to God in a sort of "thanks for the adventure" spirit. This is an unfortunate point of

departure for Brown. Although more difficult, it may have been better for the author to have explored the possibility that Qoheleth was exhorting the young to find wisdom in monotony and in the mystery of living rather than in something outside or transcendent of life. Brown is correct in interpreting Qoheleth's warning to avoid the trap of self-reliance (pages 146 and following). However, he should not interpret this too broadly and take it to be a surrender to one's limitations. Brown does well to point out that the wise sage of Job who has risen to a level of sapiential maturity must now deal with self-consciousness. His resolution of Qoheleth's struggle is less than satisfying.

As the "culture wars" rage on in postmodern America, the Old Testament wisdom literature may indeed be one of the best places to turn for foundational work in the area of character and virtues. William P. Brown brings the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes into the dialog as ancient books with a contemporary message. If Qoheleth is right in any regard, it is that there is nothing new in human existence. The same questions concerning virtue and character are still being asked in a milieu that is not so far removed from Old Testament Israel. The literature is seen as a grand narrative that engages the reader. Brown is able to weave a thread throughout the stories that gives them an integrated interpretation. The reader is challenged to grow from simple instruction in the relationship between prudent living and wisdom to a struggle to understand the very nature of divine wisdom. Although in the end, Brown's interpretation of Qoheleth fails to reach the depths of understanding that is available in Ecclesiastes, *Character in Crisis* is no less a worthwhile journey into the heart of wisdom.

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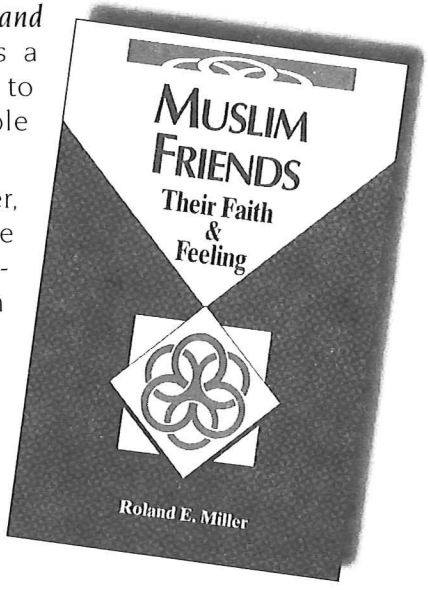
Reach Out to Your Muslim Neighbors

Muslim Friends: Their Faith and Feeling by Roland E. Miller offers a perceptive and unique introduction to the Islamic faith and the people who follow it.



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Miller draws on decades of personal experience with Muslim friends in India to present this authentic portrayal of the Muslim and his beliefs.

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