

# LIKE WHEAT ARISING GREEN

## How the Church Grows and Thrives

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### I: THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD

The theme for the 1991 Institute of Liturgical Studies is taken from the hymn “Now the Green Blade Rises.” This wonderful Easter hymn, No. 148 in *The Lutheran Book of Worship*, concludes each stanza with the refrain, “Love is come again *like wheat arising green.*” The resurrection of Jesus is portrayed as grain which sprouts from seed. The imagery comes from the Gospel of John, from a saying of Jesus, the whole context of which is instructive.

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, *unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.* Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, “we have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light” (John 12:20-36).<sup>1</sup>

It is significant here that Jesus links his death on the cross with both the nature of his messianic mission and its capacity to bear “much fruit.” “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He also calls to the same kind of messianic mission and gives the same promise to his servants who lose their lives. If the Gospel of John was written after the formal expulsion of Jesus’ disciples from the synagogues, and after the persecution of Christians

during the final years of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (95-96 A.D.),<sup>2</sup> then it would be appropriate to conclude that persecution to the death is the fate of the seed from which the church grows. But that is to anticipate the conclusion of these lectures, not to give them an introduction.

The theme was chosen to focus the attention of the Institute on the relationship between the liturgy of the church and the growth of the Church. For the title, "Like Wheat Arising Green," is intended to introduce the topic, "How the Church Grows and Thrives." The topic is appropriate because the concern for church growth is very much on the minds of Lutherans and other Christians in the United States at this time. One cannot focus on this topic without looking very directly at the "Church Growth Movement" and its proposed Lutheran adaptation, David S. Luecke's volume *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*.

We must make no mistake about the fact that the challenge of the church growth movement to the liturgical movement is direct and explicit. Luecke writes,

From the viewpoint of assessing church styles associated with church growth, the question is whether many potential new church participants can through highly developed liturgical styles find what they are seeking. Although there are many alternative explanations for the following observation, it should be noted anyway: The liturgical renewal movement became especially popular among Lutheran churches in the 1960s, and that was the decade when the numerical decline in the membership in those church bodies began.<sup>3</sup>

Luecke is quite aware of the logical fallacy he is committing. Every beginning student of logic learns to recognize that *post hoc* does not mean *propter hoc*, that the mere sequential appearance of two phenomena is no indication that there is a causal relationship between them. But he makes his observation anyway, and thus fosters the often explicitly-voiced accusation that the concerns and goals of the liturgical movement are regarded as an impediment to church growth.

Luecke wants to distinguish "style" from "substance," and he wants to identify "liturgy" with "style." Obviously borrowing from Donald A. McGavran, the father of the church growth movement,<sup>4</sup> Luecke claims that one can adapt an evangelical style to Lutheran substance. The basic question is to ask what Luecke understands such a project to mean. I want to begin by describing Luecke's proposal of church growth Lutheran style.

## **EVANGELICAL STYLE AND LUTHERAN SUBSTANCE**

Luecke begins by citing John 1:40-49, a narrative he regards as a paradigm for Christian evangelism. In this pericope Andrew brings Simon and Philip brings Nathanael to Jesus. Andrew and Philip, says Luecke, recognize Jesus as Savior. Each shares that good news with another, and the circle of the Church widens. Churches need to do exactly that in order to grow (p. 7).<sup>5</sup>

Old churches, by which Luecke means churches with "memories of a long history of how their community responded to God's call in the past, sometimes

going back centuries” (p.14), are not growing because they have not adapted their styles. Style belongs to the realm of *adiaphora*, matters that are indifferent, matters that are not of the essence of Christianity. Matters of style, according to Luecke, include communication, organization, and worship! Luecke calls our attention to the Southern Baptists who, he says, “have maintained a consistent and impressive rate of growth in recent decades.” Their worship style “is very different from a traditional liturgical service like that of Lutherans” (p. 21).

Pentecostals like the Assemblies of God have characteristic worship and organizational styles that are different in yet other ways, and they have experienced one of the fastest rates of growth of any American church body (p. 22).

One may wonder about the logical connections being made here, but the implication is quite clear. The style of worship that the Southern Baptists and the Assemblies of God employ, different from the Lutheran style of worship, enables them to grow while the Lutheran church seems to decline. Style of worship is not the only factor in seeking to account for the differences in growth, says Luecke, but it is one of the factors. If Lutherans insist that liturgical worship belongs to the substance of the faith, one need only observe that the practice of Lutheran worship has varied considerably over the centuries.

For Lutherans, substance revolves around beliefs, which are readily identified in the Confessions that define Lutheranism. The Confessions recognize considerable latitude in matters of practice and thereby in style (p. 22).

We need to have a willingness to change our style, to make it possible to follow “a mobile and versatile Lord.”<sup>6</sup> Acts 15 is the paradigm for this. Acts 15 provides us with a description of the “planning council that was convened to set a strategy for adjusting to unanticipated change” (p. 20). This council gave primary attention to the question of *adiaphora*, to matters of style. Gentiles do not need circumcision. This council drew the line between substance and style. Acts 15:28-29 reads as follows:

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials (Greek: *epanagkes*, that which is necessary, obligatory): that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

“A rather odd list,” says Luecke. It does not exhaust what the early Christians recognized as substantive, and not all of these requirements concern Christians today. Indeed, “we can observe from this first council ... that the line between church substance and style can and does shift” (p. 25). The council was willing to draw a line between substance and style. Its distinctions and decisions made the growth of the early church possible.

This is, in fact, the meaning of Luther’s “theology of the cross,” according to Luecke. Of course it means that one suffers for the sake of the Gospel. But that does not mean that one continues to do the same old thing and then suffers the consequence of numerical decline for one’s steadfastness. Rather, it means that the Church sacrifices its time-honored traditions, gives them up for the sake of mission, takes the risk of doing new things (pp. 30-32).

Numerical growth, says Luecke, is clearly God's will. "When some churches grow more than others, that has to be God's choice" (p. 32).<sup>8</sup> Hence, we need to be ready to see where God is working. That is the meaning of John 1:35-39, according to Luecke. Jesus said to the two disciples of John, namely the old churches, "What do you seek?" They said, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" He said, "Come and see." The new churches, the growing churches, represent where he is staying (pp. 12-15, 32, 36). If we do not follow to see new and growing churches, we will be allowed by God to die, to be discarded. God "has let other church bodies decline to the point of death. As a mobile and versatile Lord, He does move on" (p. 36). He no longer needs us. Come and see the evangelicals, is Luecke's invitation. "The fact that God is granting visible growth among many of them is reason enough to look at their style" (p. 37).

And what do we find? Luecke uses George Marsden's summary of evangelical substance as his own. It consists of five theological emphases:

1. the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of Scripture;
2. the real historical character of God's saving work recorded in Scripture;
3. eternal salvation only through personal trust in Christ;
4. the importance of evangelism and missions;
5. the importance of a spiritually transformed life (p. 50).

"These pillars of their theology should be very familiar to Lutherans," says Luecke. In other words, we ought to be right at home with that list of substance matters and, therefore, there is really no better place to look if one wants to discover stylistic elements that are effective.

We need to become Lutheran and Evangelical. In order to do that we need to note some important distinctions. The first is that the tabernacle preceded the temple. When a church becomes comfortable with its traditions, it seeks to enshrine them permanently in a "temple." This is the lesson of Stephen's speech in Acts 7 (p. 26). The desert with its tabernacle is to be preferred over the city and its temple because God is on the move. We need a "tabernacle strategy" rather than a "temple strategy" (pp. 27-29).

The second distinction is similar: the distinction between village and camp. We need to adapt to the style of the camp meeting and not the village. The reason is that the camp meeting deals with people who are "on the move" and the village deals with a "settled" people (p. 51). Lutherans brought with them from Europe the ideal of the settled village and its church (pp. 52-53). American Evangelicals, on the other hand, were born on the frontier and have their roots in the camp meeting.

The people who became Evangelicals made up their identity as they went along. They looked mostly to the Bible for guidance, not centuries of tradition. They could not assume a church community that already existed, even if only in memory. Preservation was not their main task. They had to concentrate on initiating fellowship in the Lord (pp. 53-54).

Billy Graham stands in the great Evangelical “camp meeting” tradition. The style of the camp meeting assumes that people are reborn into the church, not born into it (p. 55). The village church “spirituality” assumes that the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace in quiet, predictable ways. The spirituality of the camp meeting looks to the Holy Spirit to effect “new beginnings,” to move people “in spontaneous ways to unexpected decisions” (p. 56). Since our culture is increasingly mobile, the camp meeting style is better suited to our time than the village style (pp. 57-62).

These distinctions call for attention to marketing, not engineering. Lutherans have always had a good “product.” We are the “engineers” of that “product”. We need to package and market it better and differently. So he identifies the style of the camp meeting that he wants to commend (pp. 70-72). Two points are, I think, significant for us.

First, we need the camp style of *audience* contact. I underline the word “audience” because it will come to our attention again. We need to find and meet the needs of the potential audience for the Sunday event. We need to take our cues from television. Villagers came to the gathering of the church whether it was interesting or not. Campers will come only if they are going to be “happy campers.” We need to appeal beyond the traditional audience, make contact through lots of personal stories, look for audience response, and stay close to the audience. Liturgical worship physically separates the clergy from the audience (presumably with vestments and architecture as well as with liturgical roles), and that is not an appealing style. The clergy must avoid the appearance of elitism. They need to be close to the people, to be “down in there” with the people. Luecke contrasts a democratic style with what he calls a priestly liturgical style which emphasizes the separation between the leader and the audience (pp. 99-110).

The second factor we need in addition to the camp style of audience contact is more personal expression of faith. We need to be able to tell stories of what Jesus means for us, of what God has done for us. In that way, we will be able to turn even casual conversations into conversations about the faith (pp. 111-120).

## CRITIQUE AND RESPONSE

In this description I have tried to use Luecke’s own language as much as possible. I have tried, perhaps not always successfully, to avoid caricature because Luecke’s proposals are easily susceptible to caricature and can thus be dismissed without serious critical attention. However, the very popularity of Luecke’s proposals among Lutherans in both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod requires that they receive both a hearing and a critique. Let me begin with some preliminary critical observations.

My first preliminary observation is that Luecke's use of Scripture is what I would call "dogmatic" rather than "historical." Luecke has an interpretation of the controversies over Scripture which raged in Lutheran churches during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. He thinks that in them, at least the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod "firmly drew a line to preserve its unchangeable theological substance" (p. 36). The distance already afforded us enables me to offer a different perspective on what was really at stake in the controversies over the meaning of Scripture and its authority in the life of the Church.<sup>9</sup> The controversies were not really between liberals who would have betrayed the Church's substance and conservatives who were fighting to preserve that substance. The controversies were between a "dogmatic" and a "historical" approach to understanding the Scriptures.

"Dogmatic exegesis" or a "dogmatic" approach to Scripture means that one knows from the church's prevailing ideology exactly what the Christian Gospel is. In its over-simplified form it is that Jesus died for you, and you need to accept him as your personal Savior in order to have eternal salvation. Such an understanding not only requires a certain kind of Scripture. It is subsequently read back into every pericope and narrative of Scripture. Thus, in Luecke's book, the Jesus in John's Gospel, for example, is actually teaching church evangelism strategies to people who come seeking him out. The gathering in Jerusalem in Acts 15 is a church council devoted to distinguishing between substance and style in order to come up with an evangelism strategy.

This kind of anachronistic reading of one's ideology back into Scripture is actually unhistorical; and it is, therefore, a way of not listening to the Scriptures at all. It becomes a way of imposing something on Scripture rather than submitting to its authority. But the Scriptures themselves require a different approach. It is very instructive, for example, to study the 125 uses of *euangelion* (evangel, gospel) and *euangelizomai* (evangelizing, gospelizing) in the New Testament, to learn how these words are actually used, to discover what Jesus and the apostles actually mean when they use the term "gospel." It is very helpful to read the word study on *euangelion* in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. It is very instructive to discover and understand both the Jewish matrix and the eschatological character of the Gospel. The biblical materials cited by Luecke look much different if one understands that the "good news" of the New Testament has to do with the proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah, that with his resurrection death no longer has dominion over him, that the Kingdom of God has come, that the messianic age has begun.<sup>10</sup> Jesus' first disciples were a "messianic movement" within Judaism. Both Stephen's speech (Acts 7) and the apostolic "council" in Jerusalem (Acts 15) are instances of how these first disciples began confronting the implications for Gentiles if it is really true that the messianic age has begun.

My second preliminary observation is that, despite efforts to avoid it, the Gospel becomes a product to be marketed. In an address to the 1989 Institute

for Liturgical Studies I quoted this delightful but devastating little piece by Jack Cashill, an advertising executive from Kansas City, who was writing about church growth for the Wall Street Journal. It still applies.

My strategy is to consolidate the various name brands, even the strong flagship brands like Southern Baptist, into one identifiable Exxon-like entity. The target audience is Mom, Dad, Butch and Sis—solid suburban Americans who want a little God in their life and a place to go before brunch. After test marketing various possibilities, I have decided upon the name *Middle American Christian Church* or *MacChurch* for ad purposes. I will not be sure of MacChurch's theology until focus groups are run, but I plan on following the promotional path blazed so successfully by Holiday Inn. In other words, this will be your "no surprises" church. When Dad brings the family here, he can be sure they will not be asked to speak in tongues, handle snakes, or give money to the Sandinistas.<sup>11</sup>

Cashill proposes a market segmentation for Roman Catholicism: RC Lite for post-Vatican II liberals, RC Classic for traditionalists, and RC Free for those more interested in Liberation Theology than in papal bulls.

The problem with reducing the Gospel to a product and asking that the Church become more market-conscious is that in all marketing it is the buyer who is in control. The buyer does not change, at least not the smart buyer. The smart buyer goes looking for bargains. The smart buyer buys what he/she wants. The marketers, in fact, need to change. If they do not change, if they do not adapt to the buyer, they lose the sale. One quickly notes that all attempts to talk about church growth and evangelism as a form of marketing strategy require the Church to change in order to meet the expectations of the "customer." Any need for change on the part of the buyer of the Gospel occurs as an afterthought. Notice that in George Marsden's description of evangelical substance, cited earlier, the importance of spiritually transformed life comes last, after one has already been granted "eternal salvation through personal trust in Christ." D. James Kennedy, in the evangelism marketing plan, *Evangelism Explosion*, which was very popular during the 1973 "Key 73" evangelism emphasis, gets the "prospect" all the way through to accepting Christ as Savior; and then, as an afterthought, after the angels have rejoiced, after one has congratulated the new Christian on his/her new ability to answer God correctly on Judgment Day, after all of this, the "prospect" must now be reminded that Christ is also, among other things, Lord in one's life. One must "invite" Christ to sit on the throne of one's heart. But the "prospect" knows that he/she has already closed the deal; and there is no way any change is going to take place.<sup>12</sup>

## MODELS OF THE CHURCH

Perhaps the most important concern that needs to be addressed to Luecke's proposals is one which asks about the ecclesiology implied in this understanding of evangelism, this way of attempting to deal with the growth of the Church. By dealing with the implied ecclesiology I hope to lay the groundwork for the relationship between the Word of God and the growth of the Church which I want to develop in the concluding section of this lecture.

In 1974 Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles published his book, *Models of the Church*, one of the most important and helpful books on ecclesiology written in the last half of this century. In this volume Dulles identified five models of the Church attendant upon the ecclesiological discussions and decisions of the Second Vatican Council. He identified these models of the church as institution, as mystical communion, as sacrament or sign, as herald or proclaimer, and as servant. In 1977 Daniel Brockopp, then director of the Institute of Liturgical Studies, asked me to present a paper on “Models of the Church and Styles of Liturgy.”<sup>13</sup> In retrospect, it now seems to me that I did not fully grasp Dulles’ intention at the time. I hate to admit anything like that in public, especially since some of you were probably in attendance in 1977; but I am glad to have the opportunity to rectify the error, or at least point to a fuller understanding.<sup>14</sup>

It was relatively easy to read the volume as similar to *Christ and Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr’s analysis of the five types of relationship between Christianity and culture, and to treat Dulles’ five models as if they were a typology like Niebuhr’s, a more or less exhaustive spectrum of ecclesiological types. But such a reading was to misunderstand Dulles’ intention. His “models” were really descriptions of proposals, advanced by various contemporary theologians to help the Church identify more authentically its calling and its mission, to challenge the Church to express its calling and its mission more faithfully. Dulles himself was engaged in an argument with all five of the models, with all five groups of theologians, seeking to discern what was valid in each proposal and, in the end, integrating what was valid into a sixth model, his own proposal, the description of which concluded the volume. His own model drew heavily on the eschatological perspective of the writings of the New Testament.

Largely missing from Dulles’ book (though this is not intended as a criticism, because it was not a part of Dulles’ purpose in writing) was attention to the sociological realities which describe how the Church actually functions in a given culture. Attention to those sociological realities is essential for understanding the context in which a proposal like church growth can take root. There are two primary models of the Church sociologically operative in western societies.

### **CHURCH AS “SALVATION INSTITUTION”**

The first model is rooted in medieval and pre-enlightenment arrangements. I call it the Church as “Salvation Institution.” You will notice that it has some similarities to Dulles’ first model, Church as Institution. The second model, which is basically post-enlightenment and very American, I call the Church as “Service Institution,” a term I have borrowed from Johann Baptist Metz. You will notice that it has a superficial similarity to Dulles’ final model, Church as Servant.

The basic orientation of the Church as Salvation Institution is the salvation of individuals. “Salvation” is understood in terms that are predominantly, if



not exclusively, other-worldly: the avoidance of damnation in hell, the achievement of bliss in heaven after death. The Church defines the minimum conditions necessary to achieve that goal, to achieve salvation. Indeed, it is characteristic of this model that it deals in minimums. Baptism is, of course, necessary for such salvation; but in emergencies, the most minimal amount of water (“A little dab will do you”) administered in connection with the most minimal Trinitarian of formulas is regarded as sufficient. The Church could define what sins were mortal and had to be confessed and absolved in order for the penitent to be restored to a state of baptismal grace. The Church defined how late one could arrive and how early one could leave the mass in order to derive the benefit from it. In Roman Catholicism, one had to arrive before the *sanctus* and leave after the consecration; in Protestantism, one had to arrive before the sermon and leave after the collection. Finance committees have been more appreciative of the Protestant minimum. The Church defined how frequently one had to receive communion. And so on.

This model emerged in the wake of the Constantinian establishment of the Church. Since everyone in the civil community could be presumed to be Christian, a division of responsibilities could be effected. Those Christians who gave leadership to the institutions of society, to its government, its economy, etc., could take Christian responsibility for the welfare of people in the temporal world. Those Christians who gave leadership to the institutional Church could take Christian responsibility for the welfare of people in the world to come. Leadership in the institutional church legitimated its validity by claiming that it was instituted by Christ and was descendant through the succession of laying on of hands from the original apostles. Only those clergy who were ordained by bishops in this so-called “apostolic succession” had the power to administer valid, that is, saving sacraments. Only those parish clergy who were in communion with bishops who were themselves in communion with the bishop of Rome could exercise that power to saving effect. Hence a primary concern for this model is the concern for valid sacramental ordination.

It could be argued that the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century was not a repudiation of this basic model but rather a change in the condition of salvation. Salvation was given through faith in the Word of God’s justifying grace. Hence later generations of Protestants first fixed their attention on the orthodoxy of doctrinal formulations, on what *doctrine* had to be believed in order to be saved. Ordination then presupposed intensive theological education and came to be regarded as a kind of “certification” of the ordinand’s orthodoxy. The reaction against this excessive intellectualization of Christianity caused Protestant pietists to focus their attention on the quality of the act of believing, on the *fides qua creditur*, the subjective faith which does the believing, rather than the *fides quae creditur*, the objective content which is believed. In the various pietist traditions ordination was, therefore, less important than the sincerity of one’s faith. In American “frontier religion,” clergy were authenti-

cated neither by “Catholic” nor by “Protestant” ordinations, but by the credibility which they could convey to members whom they could gather.

This model of the Church is still present and operative in American society, mostly among Christians who could be characterized as “conservative” or “evangelical.” For the larger culture, its power was broken by the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.

### CHURCH AS “SERVICE INSTITUTION”

The other sociologically operative model, the Church as Service Institution, although it is the most popular in the United States, has roots that go back to the Reformation itself and to a feature of the Reformation shared by all the establishment reforms, Anglicans, Lutherans, and the Reformed Church in Scotland, Holland, and Switzerland. Richard Norris identified it as “the fact of royal as opposed to papal supremacy.” In England and in countries on the continent the traditional pattern of ecclesial government and ministry was maintained. But that was the decision of the godly prince who had responsibility for the spiritual as well as the temporal welfare of his/her subjects. In all of the Reformation churches the clergy functioned on the basis of civil authorization, whether that was by royal appointment or some form of democratic election. The clergy were the purveyors of religious services to the citizens of the realm.

In this model the Church is oriented to serving individuals, groups, or societies and their needs. The needs are determined by those who belong to, or seek out, the Church. This model came into its own in the United States. Martin Marty describes it.

In the new local church system the minister took on a new status. In effect, he was hired by a clientele. He remained effective if he was acceptable and popular. If he stepped too far ahead or too far out of line, the people who had joined his as the church of their choice could withhold contributions or make life unpleasant or run him out of town. ... The local congregation was exceptionally expressive of the racial, ethnic, and economic interests and needs of the people gathered in one place through one style of ministry. Rarely could it transcend those interests and limits.<sup>15</sup>

Clergy could continue to offer sacraments and traditional rituals (baptism, confirmation, marriage, burial), but they functioned as cultural “rites of passage.” Clergy could function as counselors for persons who came with problems but the more effective counselors were non-directive and non-judgmental. Clients no longer expected divinely authorized guidance or judgment. Older clergy discovered that there was a decreasing market for the wisdom that comes with age and experience. “Worship experiences” came to be evaluated on the basis of their ability to be “meaningful.”

The formal disestablishment of religion in the United States provided the opportunity for this model’s development and effectiveness. The offering of religious services could be successfully competitive in an entrepreneurial culture. Lyle Schaller devoted one of his issues of *The Parish Paper* to the “New Wave of Consumerism.” Schaller says that churches are discovering that “it’s a competitive world out there.” People, especially the young, are shopping for

a church, insisting on designating where their financial contributions will go, and looking for health and wealth as religious rewards. What are the churches doing to respond? Advertising, says Schaller. And he then proceeds to offer advice on how to make the advertising more effective.

The authority in this model comes from success. The mark of success is winning the competitive battle for clients/parishioners. Status and rewards of every kind go to clergy with the largest parishes or “ministries.” They have learned from “church growth” experts how to get the natural factors which make for organizational growth working for them. Looking ahead to the year 2005 an article in *The Christian Century* envisioned the ultimate church, “First Ultra of Southern California,” with 2.5 million members, adding 10,000 new members every month, 333 per day, 13.9 every hour, one every 4.3 minutes. Sunday attendance is more than a half a million with 50,000 at each of the 11 services held in the 52,000 seat sanctuary.<sup>16</sup> Each service offers a distinctive worship experience catering to different tastes. And so on, *ad nauseam*.<sup>17</sup>

The client-oriented service church has several consequences which need to be mentioned. One consequence is the potential for conflict when the expectations of the congregation differ from those of the clergy. When such conflicts persist, both parties often appeal to the bishop for more compatible match-ups. The bishop then is required to play the role of personnel manager, often without the power to take direct action, and equally often losing the confidence of both clergy and congregations. Little remains of any authentic pastoral authority when either pastors or bishops are simply grateful that there is no trouble.

A second consequence is the dreadful loss of self respect which clergy who set out to “meet the needs of people” (and most of us who are ordained began with such a goal) experience when they discover that the needs of people are “virtually limitless, particularly in an affluent society in which there is an ever-rising threshold of desire.” Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon describe the consequence with clinical insight. Those clergy who

like to be liked and need to be needed ... are devoured by the voracious appetites of people in need. One day they awake to find that they have sacrificed family, self-esteem, health and happiness for a bunch of selfish people who have eaten them alive. Pastors then come to despise what they are and to hate the community that made them that way.<sup>18</sup>

Both of the sociologically operative models of the Church in our culture are able to provide the ecclesiological context in which the “Church Growth Movement” could thrive and flourish. Neither model could have much in common with the “Liturgical Movement” and its efforts to renew the Church’s worship.

### **THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD**

But what if the seed to be grown is the word of God? If the growth is to be God’s, the seed *must* be the word of God. All of Jesus’ language about growth

comes in connection with parables. We know them. The interesting thing is that they are hard words, not words designed to ingratiate or attract. They are not words easily experienced and understood. John Dominic Crossan, in his book *The Dark Interval*, says that a parable always begins by attaching itself to something familiar in our experience, to a world in which we are at home. Then suddenly, without any warning, a parable wrenches us out of that world, destroys the comfortable and conventional meanings that we have achieved, and creates new possibilities for the Kingdom of God. In short, the parables of Jesus call for and require something like conversion.<sup>19</sup>

In the Gospel of Mark the parable of the seed that is sown has to be explained to the disciples. Jesus says,

To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven' (Mark 4:12-13).

The parallel to these words in the Gospel of Matthew is equally harsh. There Jesus says,

The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.' With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:

'You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes, so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them.' (Matt. 13:13-15)

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus begins the explanation of the parable with a simple sentence. "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11).

When Jesus speaks about growth in the parables, it is important to note how much of the seed which is the Word of God falls on unreceptive soil. What is even more significant, the growth of the seed which is the Word of God is not under our control.

(Jesus) also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:26-29).

We will not understand the growth of which Jesus is speaking or the fact that this growth is not ours to control unless we remember that these parables about the seed which is the word of God are not about the Church and its growth. They are about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not an institution, not the Church. It is the gracious and redeeming rule of God which is inaugurated by Jesus. It will be consummated

when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (I Corinthians 15:24-26).

The Kingdom of God, the gracious and redeeming reign of God, is happening whenever and wherever the powers of death are being defeated and dethroned; wherever deadly diseases are being attacked and eliminated; wherever food is going to the starving and survival assistance is being given to the victims of natural disasters; wherever justice is being done and oppression is being overcome; wherever peace is being sought and cultivated and served; wherever the wanton pollution and destruction of nature is being stopped and reversed.

“The seed is the Word of God.” “Word of God” means that something has final, ultimate authority. If the parables in which the seed is the Word of God are about the Kingdom of God, then their authority is that of the Kingdom of God itself, that is, their authority is grounded in Jesus. In the introduction to their monograph on authority, Antonius Gunneweg and Walter Schmithals conclude with a description of the Roman distinction between *auctoritas* (authority) and *potestas* (power of office). According to this distinction, “*potestas* has to do with compulsion, while *auctoritas* always has to do with freedom.”<sup>20</sup> It is impossible to make this distinction with different words in the Greek of the New Testament. The Greek word *exousia* can be used of the Roman centurion’s power to command and be commanded (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10), of Herod’s jurisdiction over Galilee and, therefore, his right to question Jesus (Luke 23:7), of the coercive power of both the Sanhedrin and Pilate to arrest and execute Jesus, a power which Luke quotes Jesus as calling *he exousia tou skotous*, the authority of darkness (Luke 22:53). Hence, in the case of *exousia*, as in the case of his own messianic calling or with events like crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus defines the meaning of *exousia* rather than being defined by it. Jesus is the one who gives authority to that seed which is the Word of God.

His authority is eschatological. That is, it derives from the future and not from the past. It comes from what will be, not from what is or what has always been. It is the authority of promise and not precedent. In claiming such authority, Jesus leaps over the scribal tradition which established itself in post-exilic Judaism, and he claims the authority of the Exodus tradition which envisioned the liberation of an enslaved people. He claims the authority of the prophets who envisioned a messianic age of peace and justice.

All four Gospels report that the people “were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22; cf. Matt. 7:28-29, Luke 4:31-32, John 7:46). In a context in which the people felt that there were no longer any prophets, Jesus speaks as if he has the kind of direct divine authorization which was characteristic of the prophets.<sup>21</sup> The only explicit teaching of Jesus which Mark cites prior to his report that Jesus taught with authority is Jesus’ dramatic announcement, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). What differentiates Jesus’ teaching from that of the scribes? “The main business of the scribes was teaching and interpreting the law. This consisted mainly in the

transmission of traditional legal judgments, known as *halachah*.”<sup>22</sup> There is security and stability in moving into the future on the basis of interpreting and adapting, ever so slightly, a sound legal tradition.

But such movement into the future has two significant problems. First, the security it provides is only temporary. For the past not only teaches how to protect ourselves in the present. It also teaches that there is no escaping death, that the death-rate remains one death per person. Hence scribal “authority” has both its attraction and its limitation. It is as safe a way as we know to face that future whose one certainty is death. Second, the scribal system serves only those who have power, who benefit from the status quo, who already have a solid stake in present arrangements, and for whom the heritage of the past and its traditions is part of the justification for their present privileged position. But it offers no hope for those who have been deprived, excluded, oppressed.

Jesus claims a different kind of authority, an authority not bound by death, the authority of the eschaton. He anticipates it already here and now. He does new and surprising things. Jesus includes in his messianic vision just those persons in Israel who were excluded from the scribal messianic vision. He welcomes sinners to the table in anticipation of the messianic banquet (Luke 15:1-2, and the parables which follow; cf. Matt. 8:11 and parallels). He welcomes the otherwise patriarchally dominated mothers and children (Mark 10:13-16 and parallels). He proclaims the reconciliation of enemies (Matt. 5:43-48) and attention to the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned (Matt. 25:31-46). This is a vision of the Kingdom of God which involves risk, not simply returning to God what has been given (Matt. 25:14-30), the risk of selling all for the “pearl of great value” (Matt. 13:45-46), the risk of being at the mercy of those whom one serves (Luke 16:1-7).

When Jesus exercises the sovereign freedom to forgive the sins of the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12, Matt. 9:2-8, Luke 5:18-26), he is anticipating the final eschatological verdict of God. He claims authority to anticipate that eschatological verdict here and now because the messianic age is present in his ministry and person. He makes the lame man walk, one of the signs of the messianic age (Is. 35:6, cf. Matt. 11:5). After the tumultuous events of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple (Mark 11, Matt. 21, Luke 19-20), the chief priests and the scribes and the elders ask him “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?” It seems as if Jesus is evading the question by countering with a question of his own. But his question is the answer. For it is a reference to John’s eschatological baptism. Jesus’ authority is eschatological. John makes all of this explicit. In John’s Gospel the cleansing of the temple takes place at the beginning of the Gospel (John 2:13-17). When Jesus is asked, “What sign have you to show us for doing this?” his answer is explicit reference to the resurrection (John 2:18-22). The healing of the lame man in John 5 prompts an exchange between Jesus and his opponents that has explicit reference to the resurrection (e.g., John 5:25-29).

The Gospel tradition locates the basis for Jesus' authority in his claim to be the eschatological messiah because the starting point and content of the good news proclaimed by Jesus' earliest disciples is the simple statement that Jesus has been raised from the dead (Rom. 1:4, Acts 2:24, etc.).<sup>23</sup> What the followers of Jesus experienced when they were encountered by Jesus after his execution and burial was not his resuscitation. That would have meant that Jesus returned to the same mode of existence that was his prior to death, that he had resumed his life where it had left off, that his eventual death had merely been postponed. That was indeed the expectation of many pious Jews, that righteous martyrs, unjustly deprived of the fullness of life, would return to live an appropriate length of days.<sup>24</sup> What the disciples encountered was infinitely more awesome. If it is true that Jesus was crucified because of his messianic claims, then his execution represented a judgment upon those claims<sup>25</sup> and a rejection of his claimed eschatological authority.<sup>26</sup> His resurrection was an eschatological reversal of that judgment.<sup>27</sup> Jesus had been raised to the "eschaton," to the final future of the Reign of God. That is the significance of the appearances and disappearances that are no longer subject to "this age," the age of death. That is finally the significance of Luke's "ascension" narratives. Jesus does not leave the world and go to some "place" outside of the cosmos. He ascends into the eschatological future, and He is therefore not "gone." For he is present with and to his disciples with the power of the future. The Acts of the Apostles is not the story of the community *after* Jesus, but rather the story of the community *under* Jesus.

Now the disciples were required radically to re-envision the future. The messianic age had begun. They had seen the outcome of history proleptically, in preview, in the midst of history. They now knew that the future belonged to Jesus and to no other. He could make unconditional promises, promises no longer conditioned by death. In his resurrection the eschatological future was disclosed, the "secret of the ages" that the Kingdom of God would triumph over the power of death, and over all the powers that depend upon coercion, which is the penultimate form of the power of death. Life, not death, would have the last word. The Gospel of Matthew could thus conclude with the ultimate claim of the risen Christ: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The disciples are sent with that eschatological authority, and they receive Jesus' final promise: "I am with you always, until the end of the present age" (Matt. 20:16-20).<sup>28</sup>

To be grasped by such an event changed the life of the disciple community. They had eschatological authority, the authority of the Holy Spirit, the "down-payment" of the messianic age (Eph. 1:13-14) which enabled them to live in the house of the future as if it were already their own. They were freed to be the community that anticipated the age to come because it had already begun. That changed their participation in history, and therefore set in motion changes in history itself. I understand all of this in terms of the way I read mystery stories.

After I get some sense of the characters in the novel, I turn to the last chapter to find out the denouement. It changes the way I read the novel. I only involve myself emotionally in characters who are going to be around at the end. And I notice all of the clues as well as the false leads which the author distributes throughout the plot. If the resurrection of Jesus discloses to us the outcome of history, we will read the plot of history with radical newness. Coercive power will be seen to belong to the old age, the age which is passing away. It can no longer determine the future. The Gospel therefore frees us to participate in history differently. In a novel, the plot is copyrighted, and only my participation can change. But the future is not copyrighted. To participate in history differently means that history itself will be changed. If the power of death is broken, then we are free to reject all the ways, from self-preservation to self-hatred, in which its power is given ultimate significance. If Jesus determines the future, then his paradox is true: Those who seek to prolong their lives will lose them anyway; and those who lose their lives for the sake of the Gospel will share in the victory of life over death.

Because death no longer has dominion over him, Jesus inaugurates the messianic age, the age of the Kingdom of God. The seed which is the “Word of God” has to do with the Kingdom of God, and therefore the growth of which Jesus speaks is the surprising growth and manifestation of the Kingdom of God. The parables about the growth of the Kingdom of God are a judgment on the Church when its existence does not serve the Kingdom of God. For the Church is called by the Good News that Jesus is risen to serve the Kingdom of God, to be a witness to the Kingdom of God.

The Church serves the Kingdom of God, witnesses to the Kingdom of God, in at least three basic ways.

*First*, it is called to witness to Jesus as the ground, the way, the goal of the Kingdom of God. Because Jesus is the Messiah, the Church knows that the Kingdom of God has to do with the powers of life, not with the powers of death; that the Kingdom of God has to do with servanthood and persuasion, not with coercive power; that the Kingdom of God has to do with conversion and repentance, not with marketing and catering to the voracious needs (wants) of the culture; that the Kingdom of God has to do with Jesus’ all-encompassing arms for women and men, old and young, oppressed and oppressor, friend and enemy. In short, the Kingdom of God has to do with Jesus’ way of being in the world.

*Second*, the Church is called to serve the Kingdom of God by recognizing where and how Jesus’ way is finding expression and embodiment also outside the Church: by movements, individuals, and institutions which serve healing and compassion, peace and justice, reconciliation and forgiveness, care and stewardship of the cosmos.



*Third*, the Church is called to serve the Kingdom of God by anticipating the vision of the Kingdom of God in worship and life and witness. I would, at this point, venture the thesis that if the Church sets out to grow, it will compromise its witness to the Kingdom of God. If the Church is led by the Holy Spirit to witness in its worship, life, and mission, then the Kingdom of God will be served and the Holy Spirit will give the Church appropriate growth. For its growth will not be programmed. It will be like death and resurrection.

What the Church's worship will be like if the seed is the Word of God is the subject for the next lecture.

## NOTES

1. All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.
2. Cf. Robert H. Smith, *Easter Gospels* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983) 145-147, 150-155.
3. David S. Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988) 86.
4. Cf. Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990). This basic volume was first published in 1970. A revised second edition was published in 1980. This is the third revised edition. It is, says C. Peter Wagner in his preface, "one of those classics which has become the indispensable foundational text for an academic field" (vii).
5. All the page references in parentheses are references to Luecke's book, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*, cited above.
6. Luecke never tells us from whence he derives the adjectives "versatile" and "mobile," but he uses them repeatedly, as if they were self-evident descriptions of Jesus. One cannot help but compare and contrast these adjectives with the assertion of Jesus' constancy and consistency which is attached to the appeal for similar constancy and consistency on the part of the church in the letter to the Hebrews:

Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods which have not benefitted those who eat them. We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:7-16.
7. George L. Murphy, "For the Ordination of Women: An Appeal to Missouri," *Lutheran Forum*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (November 1990): 6, makes the point that "Acts 15:29 is authoritative scripture, but does not forbid *Blutwurst* to Christians today." Virtually no Christians today would recognize the list of Acts 15:29 as belonging to the "substance" of Christianity, as Luecke himself admits. In order to make the point that the apostolic gathering in Acts 15 dealt with the distinction between "style" and "substance," Luecke must then state that the "line" between "style" and "substance" has shifted throughout Christian history. But this undermines his attempt to define "substance" as that which is unchanging about Christianity in contrast to "style," which he then defines as that which can be changed.
8. It may be that Luecke places the emphasis on *churches*, that is, religious institutions which are recognizably Christian. Otherwise one would have to conclude that in those places where Islam is the fastest growing religion, Islam is obviously God's choice.

9. I appreciate the recent description of the controversy by Gilbert Meilaender in a review in which he says about himself, "I did not find much to approve in Tietjen's leadership."

What was the controversy about? In the most obvious sense, it was about the Bible—what kind of book it is and how it should be read. The issues here are legion. Missouri Synod theologians had traditionally affirmed the inerrancy of the Bible, and, although such a term can mean many things, in practice it meant certain rather specific things: harmonizing of the various biblical narratives; a somewhat ahistorical reading of the Bible in which there was little room for growth or development of theological understanding; a tendency to hold that God would not have used within the Bible literary forms such as myth, legend, or saga; an unwillingness to reckon with possible creativity on the part of the evangelists who tell the story of Jesus in the Gospels or to consider what it might mean that they write that story from a post-Easter perspective; a general reluctance to consider that the canons of historical exactitude which we take as givens might have been different for the biblical authors.

Gilbert Meilaender, "How Churches Crack Up: The Case of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," *First Things*, No. 14 (June/July 1991): 38.

10. Gerhard Friedrich, "*euangelizomai, euangelion, proeuangelizomai, euangelistes*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. II, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) 707-735.

11. Quoted by Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney in *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987) 229.

12. Cf. Walter R. Bouman, "Supermarket Evangelism," *Dialog*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter, 1973): 55-59.

13. Cf. Walter R. Bouman, "Models of the Church and Styles of Liturgy," *Trinity Seminary Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1982): 10-25.

14. When I was a seminarian I used to love to read the *Saturday Evening Post* in the library. One issue contained a wonderful poem, actually a little bit of doggerel, for which I have always been grateful.

By daylight when I wished to awe  
My friends with my acumen,  
How wittily I hem and haw.  
To err is only human.  
But when at night I lay abed,  
And Morpheus treats me badly,  
The clever things I should have said  
Come trooping to me gladly.  
Ah, what a killer I would be,  
How deucedly attractive,  
If repertoires of repartee  
Were only retroactive!

15. Martin Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970) 72, 75. The entire chapter is instructive.

16. The mention of 50,000 people in the congregation reminds me of a dream I had just prior to the recent basketball tournament in Indianapolis. I dreamed that I was in a huge stadium with 50,000 people cheering a contest between Ohio State University and St. John's University. The contestants were the string quartets of the two universities. I woke up and I could still hear the Dvorak string quartet they had been playing. It was wonderful. Referees were blowing whistles for mistakes. The crowd was cheering passages that were played with special brilliance!

17. Tom Raabe, "The Ultimate Church," *The Christian Century*, Vol. 106, No. 23 (August 2-9, 1989): 717-721.

18. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, "Ministry as More Than a Helping Profession," *The Christian Century*, Vol. 106, No. 9 (March 15, 1989): 282.

19. John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval* (Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1975) 119-122.

20. Antonius H. J. Gunneweg and Walter Schmithals, *Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982) 16-17.

21. Werner Foerster, "Exousia," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. II, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) 569.

22. Matthew Black, "Scribe," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. IV (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) 246.

23. Günther Bornkamm, *The New Testament: A Guide to Its Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) 23-24. "The Gospels and the Jesus tradition they enshrine are rooted in the certainty of the resurrection of Christ.... It may sound like nonsense, but we venture to say that the gospel story begins with its end. For Jesus' Jewish opponents and for the Roman occupying power, there could be no doubt that his end on the cross was the annulment of his story. For the disciples, on the other hand, the appearances of the risen One and their experience of presence in the Spirit meant that his end was a new beginning, in the sense of a final and absolute act of God for the salvation of the world. Men had condemned Jesus, but God turned their no into a yes. In that yes God committed himself to the world that rejected him." Cf. Robert Smith, *Easter Gospels* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983) 199: "The Gospels are Easter books not only because they end as they do. They are Easter books from beginning to end, penned by people who in various ways—not in the same way—knew Jesus as raised from the dead, forever alive, and mighty." Cf. also James D. G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), Chapter 3 and the bibliography on 109. Also Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus is Risen* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

24. II Maccabees 7, Daniel 12. Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 518-525.

25. Arland Hultgren, *Christ and His Benefits* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 31. "It is necessary to begin with data which virtually everyone would consider historical. ... (1) The earthly Jesus, following his baptism by John, proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God, called disciples, performed miracles of healing, and declared forgiveness of sins and salvation to those considered by their contemporaries to be unworthy, thereby becoming accountable to God on behalf of others. (2) The earthly Jesus was crucified under the authority of Pontius Pilate as a messianic pretender."

26. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974) 128-159.

27. Moltmann 160-199. Reginald Fuller and PHEME PERKINS, *Who is This Christ?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 28-40.

28. *sunteleias tou aionos* is a characteristic expression of Jewish apocalyptic, and it means "to the conclusion of the present period of time," Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949) 252. Cf. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 799.

## II: “MANY WILL SIT AT TABLE IN THE KINGDOM”

In the previous lecture I indicated that the Church Growth Movement, especially in its Lutheran version, posed a direct challenge to the hopes and concerns of the Liturgical Movement. If this were only a clash of movements a neutral observer would simply let the battle rage. Because we are attending the Institute of Liturgical Studies, we could naturally be excused if we turned out to be partisans of the Liturgical Movement in that battle. Our response would be predictable, and just for that reason not taken very seriously. But I believe that there is something more than a clash of movements at stake. To discern what more is at stake, we need to look again at what Lutheran church growth supporters advocate with regard to Christian worship.

### WORSHIP AS ENTERTAINMENT

Growing churches, we are told, have an attractive style of worship, one which is audience-friendly. For a people on the move, not settled into villages, there is a “versatile and mobile God.” The church needs a camp-meeting approach to its Sunday worship, one that appeals to non-members, one that makes contact through testimonies and personal stories, one that looks for audience-response and avoids a priestly and liturgical style of leadership. A polished liturgy, we are told, doesn’t work. It simply doesn’t draw people. A good example of what church growth partisans claim *does* work appeared in print approximately a year ago when *The Lutheran* published a “Viewpoint” piece titled “Entertainment Evangelism” by Walther P. Kallestad, senior pastor of Community Church of Joy, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in Glendale, Arizona. What he advocates ought to be heard in its entirety.

The key to reaching our world with the “good news” of Jesus is *entertainment evangelism*. It is time for the Christian church to become serious about penetrating the heart of the culture with the heart of the gospel.

Entertainment evangelism is a clear call for Christians in the church to stop talking to ourselves and judging the world—and start talking to the world and begin judging ourselves. How do we talk to the world? What is getting their attention? Where are their values being developed? The answer is *entertainment*.

It is the medium of our day. It is a mega-million-dollar-a-year enterprise. People will stand in line all night long to get a ticket for their favorite rock band or athletic event. Recently a major motion picture grossed more than \$100 million in one weekend. The entertainment industry will continue to grow even larger and become more powerful. The Christian church needs to learn how to use this powerful tool to accomplish Christ’s mandate of Matthew 28, “Go into all the world and make disciples.” Sunday morning is the time for congregations to bring in the 60 percent to 90 percent unchurched, unreached population. Sunday morning is a prime time to seek and to save the lost. The problem is that church people have been taught that Sunday mornings can only be used to teach, train, inspire, and equip Christians. Church people tend to want only their needs to be met instead of the needs of the unchurched.

Christians should design Sunday nights for themselves and turn the morning over to evangelistic outreach. The reason most churches do not grow and, in fact, begin to decline is because they are unwilling to put the needs of the lost ahead of their own.

Sunday morning they sing hymns only traditional Christians know. They use religious language that only Christians can understand. Sermons are preached that become dull, boring, and uninteresting to the lost, because they don't have any "assumed prior knowledge." Churchy rites and rituals are practiced. Sure, much of our traditional heritage has meaning and value—but only to those who understand by having been indoctrinated to it.

If we are absolutely honest, what most churches do on Sunday morning is not working. We can give profound theological reasons why we "have to" do what we do. However, if what we are doing doesn't work, let the Spirit show us new and different ways to reach people with the "good news" of Jesus Christ.

Entertainment-oriented churches are growing. The do-what-we-have-always-done-before churches are dying. When people come to Community Church of Joy on Sunday morning, they have fun. We may have a stage band, comedians, clowns, dramas, mini-concerts and productions, high energy choreography, as well as many other entertainment forms. One thing that is always present is a simple enthusiastic message about the unconditional love, the unlimited grace and the transformational cross-centered salvation power of Jesus Christ.

It is time for radical reform of Sunday mornings. God is calling for a new day in the church. The Spirit will help us clearly see what God is up to in 1990 and beyond. The Bible emphasizes this in the words, "Behold I am doing a new thing, do you not perceive it?"

What was relevant in the 16th century in terms of the medium of the day is not relevant today. Certainly the changeless message remains the same. It is a matter of stylistic change, not substance change. Entertainment is a gift of God. Entertainment evangelism will fill up our churches. Augustine said empty churches do not please God. We are not called simply to build churches. We are called to fill churches.

There has never been a more critical time when creative, innovative, clear thinking is needed about effectively communicating to the world about Christ, the cross and the Church. If Jesus were here today walking the face of the earth, he would without a doubt use the No. 1 medium of the day to tell his story. Jesus would become all things to all people to save some. He would use entertainment.<sup>2</sup>

There were readers who thought this was a put-on, that it couldn't be serious. The fact is, it is intended as a serious proposal. Community Church of Joy has invested serious money in staging, lights, electronic instruments, and sound systems. Pastors, parishes, synodical staff persons, and individual church members look to Community Church of Joy as a serious example. That means it needs to be taken seriously.

## AN ENTERTAINMENT CULTURE

At least one of Kallestad's premises is hard to refute: we do live in an entertainment culture. Neil Postman in his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, contrasts the predictions of George Orwell's *1984* with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Both books point to the time in which we are living. Postman summarizes:

Orwell warns that we will be overcome by an externally imposed oppression. But in Huxley's vision, no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it, people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think...Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy-porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy.... In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we

love will ruin us. This book is about the possibility that Huxley, not Orwell, was right.<sup>3</sup>

Television does one thing, says Postman, and does it very well: it entertains. The average American watches approximately 41 hours per week. There are homes where the set is never turned off. We are not talking about one television set per home these days. We are talking about multiple sets, sets in every room, sets for the bathroom, the kitchen, even the yard, so that you are never, never more than a few feet away from the television screen. Cable television gives us multiple program choices and increases the challenge for the entertainment industry.

It should be noted that Postman is not mounting an all-out attack on television. There are many ways in which television benefits us, enriching our lives significantly, such as taking us to great news events in the world, or making us participants in momentous ceremonial occasions like presidential inaugurations and funerals of world leaders, or giving us just the right camera angles and the benefits of instant re-play for watching athletic events so that we see many things better than if we were there in person.

Nevertheless, television, because it feeds our insatiable appetite for entertainment, is a problem. William Fore, in his brilliant study on the relationship between religion and television, says that the problem television poses for religion is not so much religious television as television's general programming. That general programming, from sit-coms and dramas to soap operas and quiz programs, supplies us with the cultural stories within which we live. It shapes the values we hold, the priorities by which we order our lives.<sup>4</sup>

Television programs teach us that the end justifies the means, that it is all right for "good" people to break the law, (for example, breaking and entering without a search warrant, if it serves a good purpose); that defense attorneys are brilliant in their service of justice, always defending the innocent by exposing the guilty; that all problems can be resolved at minimal cost to our heroines and heroes (saviors) and at little or no cost to us. It is a mythic world, but a powerful one. It deprives us of the necessity for coming to terms with the sinfulness of our own lives, with the ambiguities of our nation and culture, with the complexities of our world, and with the costliness of being part of the saving Kingdom of God.

In the Spring of 1985 I spent two months in what was then East Germany, the Communist German Democratic Republic. In early May I participated in a weekend retreat for 150 Lutheran lay people seeking to come to terms with Germany's Nazi years as part of the 40th anniversary observance of the end of World War II. After the Eucharist in the Cathedral of Meissen which concluded the retreat, the retreat leader, Pastor Ackermann, thanked me for participating (I was the only non-German present) and then left me with what he called a "hard word." "Brother Bouman," he said, "when the war ended 40 years ago, I feared the Russians more than anything. Today I think I fear the Americans."

I had no time to ask what he meant because I had to rush off to catch my train. As I sat in the train compartment with a half-dozen teen age girls, some insight into his concern arose out of our conversation. When the teen age girls discovered that I was an American, they could hardly wait to ask me their most important question: Was America like “Dallas”? They were all able to watch Western television, and they were drawing their conclusions about America from our most popular television programs.

Neil Postman examines the impact of television on four important public institutions: the news media, politics, education, and religion. He deals with the news media in a chapter titled “Now This.” He says that the “this” which follows can literally be anything: a story of tremendous import, something of lesser or even little importance, or a commercial. Everything is located on a single level. We are drowned in a sea of headlines, many of them trivial. Stories *in depth* last all of four minutes. We are poorly informed not only because the news is so briefly told, but also because it is trivialized by the mass of information available to us.<sup>5</sup>

He examines the impact of television on politics in a chapter entitled “Reach out and Elect Someone.” The last two presidential candidates to write their own speeches were Dwight David Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. Since 1960 we have been electing image makers and speech writers, not candidates. We are not invited into a discussion of issues. We are manipulated by thirty-second television commercials, sound bytes, and photo opportunities appealing to our most irrational fears or our most jingoistic patriotism.<sup>6</sup>

He examines the impact of television on education in a chapter titled “Teaching as an Amusing Activity.” The worst thing to happen to education, he says, is Sesame Street—not because it is bad, but because it is so very good. It leads youngsters, before they ever start school, to expect that learning is going to be non-stop fun and games. There really isn’t any way that Bert and Ernie are going to help you memorize the capitals of the 50 states or the countries of Africa. Learning is hard work. It requires self-discipline, patience, hard effort, and long hours to become a learned and learning person. Calculus does not lend itself to muppet commercials.<sup>7</sup>

His chapter on religion is titled “Shuffle off to Bethlehem.” Postman is not a Christian. If he is anything, he is Jewish, although he has been a consultant to the National Council of Churches on communications. However, his insights into what television/entertainment does to religion are devastatingly on target. Television religion must become entertainment because it is competing head-to-head with entertainment on every other channel. Television religion has fifteen seconds to catch and hold its *audience*. But turning religion into entertainment, he says, destroys religion.

Not everything is *televisable*. Or to put it more precisely, what is televised is transformed from what it was to something else.... There are several characteristics of television and its surround that converge to make authentic religious experience impossible.... There is no way to consecrate the space.... The television screen itself

has a strong bias toward a psychology of secularism.... The television preachers themselves are well aware of this. They know that their programs do not represent a discontinuity in commercial broadcasting but are merely part of an unbroken continuum.... The executive director of the National Religious Broadcasters Association sums up what he calls the unwritten law of all television preachers: "You can get your share of the audience only by offering people something they want." You will note, I am sure, that this is an unusual religious credo. There is no great religious leader—from the Buddha to Moses to Jesus to Mohammed to Luther—who offered people what they want. Only what they need. But television is not well suited to offering people what they need. It is "user friendly."... It does not accommodate complex language or stringent demands.... I believe I am not mistaken in saying that Christianity is a demanding and serious religion.<sup>8</sup> When it is delivered as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion altogether.

## ENTERTAINMENT AND ECCLESIOLOGY

If Postman is right, and I am convinced that he is,<sup>9</sup> then "entertainment" is not a neutral medium, as Kallestad claims, capable of being the bearer of many messages. It *is* the message. To change the Sunday gathering into entertainment is not just a matter of "stylistic changes, not substance change," as Kallestad (using Luecke's distinction) asserts. "Entertainment evangelism" is not "the key to reaching our world with the 'good news' of Jesus," as Kallestad promises. It is falling prey to our culture's "sickness unto death." Although there is deep and profound joy in being a Christian, when people gather for entertainment they do not gather to be the church!<sup>10</sup>

The problem with "church growth" proposals like that of Walther P. Kallestad and David S. Luecke is ecclesiological. To put it baldly, the "Church Growth Movement" is not about the Church. The two sociologically operative "models of the Church" that I described in the previous lecture (the Church as "salvation institution" and the Church as "service institution") are not, in the last analysis, essentially about a community at all.

The sacraments administered according to the model of the "salvation institution" cater to the most individualistic interpretations of Christianity. This is the problem with understanding ordination as giving individuals the power to do something to the elements. It empowers them to be individualistic administrators of saving rituals. And it makes of the laity individualized recipients of these saving rituals. But the situation is no better in traditions like that represented by Oral Roberts. I recall watching Roberts administering "communion" as part of a television program in which he requested his viewers to supply bread and grape juice for a televised ritual which they could experience in the privacy of their homes. It struck me as blasphemous. To call that "communion" is a contradiction in terms.

Equating salvation with accepting Jesus as personal Savior also does not require a community. This is one of the reasons why camp meeting religion was popular in frontier America. One could get together once a year with friends and family. There would be fiery preaching designed to induce one to accept Jesus into one's heart. One could then return home and not have anything to do with the community called Church. This fueled the self-understanding that



the United States was basically a “Christian” nation, that everyone who was neither Catholic nor Jewish was “Protestant,” and that the challenge was to get the “unchurched” into church. Lutherans attempted to introduce the “camp meeting” style into the life of the Church in the 19th century. Advocates referred to it as introducing “new measures,” and it was ultimately rejected.<sup>11</sup>

The Church as “service institution” is in no more need of a community. The clergy or the staff provide services to individuals as these individuals have need of them: counseling, day care for children, interest groups, weddings, baptisms, funerals, worship experiences. This is why Luecke’s use of the term “audience” is so significant when he seeks to describe those who are gathered for his new style of worship. An audience gathered for anything is not a community in the sense in which the church is called to be a community. I can enjoy an evening of music as a member of the “audience” without entering into a relationship with any other person present.

To join an audience for entertainment, even if the content of the entertainment is religious, is not to experience the Church. It is like being a passenger on a plane. Physical proximity to one another does not make the passengers a community. Something has to happen in order to make them a community. Nothing happens on most flights, for which I am very grateful. But if “something happens,” for example, exceptionally bad weather, an accident involving the equipment, the dramatic illness of a passenger, or an act of violence like a hi-jacking, there is the potential that at least for a time the passengers will become a community.<sup>12</sup>

Such communities are not, of course, Church. Something that is constitutive of “Church” must “happen” if the community gathering for and around the event, the happening, is to be Church. Kallestad is disdainful of “profound theological reasons” regarding what has to take place in the Sunday gathering. He says we must be concerned about what is effective in reaching people with the Gospel. Kallestad is here confusing one possible understanding of the *mission* of the Church with its identity.<sup>13</sup> But what is most important is that the “profound theological reasons” to which he refers do not have to do so much with liturgy as with ecclesiology. What makes a community “Church” needs to be the essential theological concern.

That entertainment is what constitutes a gathering as the Church was disputed by our Reformation ancestors as part of their protest against the medieval mass. The medieval mass as celebrated by the Western church at the time of the Reformation had three ritual emphases: (1) an “epiphany” of God, an entrance of God into the community and its liturgical space; (2) an unbloody propitiatory sacrifice offered to God; and (3) a drama in which the event of redemption is re-presented to the assembled community.<sup>14</sup> The chancel served as the stage for the drama; the liturgy was the vehicle for allegorical re-enactment of the drama. The priest and the other orders of clergy were the actors, and the elements of bread and cup were featured in the drama. The Lutheran

reformers insisted that the “epiphany” was that of God’s grace, clothed in the gift of Christ’s Body and Blood, and offered to the congregation, not the drama of Christ’s sacrifice offered anew to God through the epiphanic miracle of transubstantiation.

Kallestad’s entertainment includes “dramas” in his list of what takes place at Community Church of Joy on Sundays, although the dramas are most probably not the medieval mass. Instead his Sunday entertainment involves “a *stage band*, comedians, clowns, *dramas*, mini-concerts and *productions*, high energy choreography, as well as many other entertainment forms.” However, Postman’s comment is appropriate. The “epiphany” in the entertainment ritual is not the epiphany of God but the epiphany of the religious “star” who attracts the “audience.”<sup>15</sup> No one asks whether and how God promises to be present; nor does anyone ask whether what happens is constitutive of the Church.

## GOSPEL AND CHURCH

It is tempting to reply to Kallestad’s contention that “what most churches do on Sunday morning is not working” by arguing that it is working. It is tempting to cite the evidence of weekly Eucharists and growing churches. A year ago, just about a month before this entertainment evangelism piece appeared in *The Lutheran*, I was in Phoenix for a speaking engagement. Friends took us to Sunday worship in their parish church. It was a large parish, nearly as large as Community Church of Joy. There were three celebrations of the Eucharist every Sunday morning, at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00. About 50 per cent of the baptized membership are in attendance on Sundays, in contrast to 40 per cent of the baptized membership at Community Church of Joy. Our reception was as hospitable, warm, and inviting as one could possibly expect from the Christian community. The clergy provided liturgical leadership that was quite appropriate for visitors. Most importantly, the congregation, including many children worshipping with their parents, was vitally and actively involved in doing the liturgy on that Sunday morning.

I am tempted to reply that people often seek out churches because of the liturgy, but I won’t do that. I am tempted to note that the Roman Catholic Church, with nearly sixty million members in the United States, is by far the largest church and growing significantly. But I won’t mention that. I am tempted to note that so-called “liturgical churches” make up more than half of the Christians in this country. But, following Cicero’s rhetorical example, I will refrain from adducing such arguments. To give in to such a temptation is to concede that our primary concern ought to be with what “works.”

Instead, we must turn to the “profound theological reasons” which Kallestad disdains because those reasons tell us what the Christian Gospel is, what the Church is called to be, and what the Church does when it worships. One of the features of television entertainment, even the dramas or sit-coms with continuing characters, is that they require no prerequisites. Each episode is

complete in itself, and therefore it requires no initiation and no memory. But “real life” requires both initiation and memory. Entertainment is escape from reality. Kallestad’s “gospel” of entertainment may also be escape from reality, the reality of the Gospel as well as the reality of life.

We need to be attentive to the historical circumstances out of which the Church emerged. We must let that history address us as authentic history, not read our own programs and preferences back into the New Testament anachronistically. We must look carefully and obediently at the way in which the Christian community emerged out of the event of Jesus as the Christ. We must note that the event of Jesus as the Christ alone gives authenticity to the liturgy that takes places when the Christian community gathers.

It cannot be said often enough. Jesus is not the “founder” of a religious institution known as the Christian Church. He is not like Muhammad, the founder of Islam, or Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science. He does not give the Church its scriptures, its doctrines, its rites, or its constitution. We must let the claim of Jesus, identical with the apostolic claim made about him, speak for itself. Jesus appears on the Jewish scene sometime after the beginning of the fiery eschatological preaching of John the Baptist with a self-proclaimed mission to Israel (Matt. 15:24; cf. Matt. 10:5-6) and, through Israel, to all of humanity (Is. 25:6-9).

His claim, always implicit and sometimes explicit, is that he is the Messiah of Israel, that is, the bearer of eschatological salvation. In him the Kingdom of God is happening before the eyes of those who see his works (Matt. 11:2-6), who see him cast out demons (Luke 11:20). It is taking place when he makes the lame walk, makes the blind see. It is taking place in his teaching in parables. It is taking place above all in his table fellowship with those who have been cast out of Israel. His table fellowship stands in the long tradition of Israel’s experience and expectation of salvation.<sup>16</sup> He intends to be the true shepherd of Israel in contrast to those who have abandoned the sheep.<sup>17</sup> Therefore he wants to gather the lost and the excluded into Israel once again and seat them at Israel’s eschatological banquet table, so that the whole of Israel will be renewed.

The seed which is the word of God is not the seed for the Church. It is the seed for the Kingdom. So he defines his messiahship in contrast to other messianic visions current at the time: the Zealot vision of political revolution; the pharisaic vision of a ritually purified Israel keeping Torah in anticipation of Messiah; the Essene vision of withdrawal from contamination by the world. All these visions are in contrast to Jesus’ vision: the gathering of Israel to the messianic banquet as a prelude to the gathering of the nations. When he is asked for authorization for what he does, he appeals to his resurrection, for he is anticipating what will be when the Father vindicates his mission. He was crucified for his claim. It was the way “the powers” rejected his claim and his mission.<sup>18</sup>

## JESUS' RESURRECTION

Christ's resurrection was originally experienced by his disciples as something terrifying. It is very important for us to pay attention to the shorter ending of the Gospel of Mark. In translation it reads, "So they [the women] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8).<sup>19</sup> The Greek ending is even more abrupt, for it reverses verb and conjunction and ends with *gar*, "for." Explanatory hypotheses include the possibility that Mark was interrupted and didn't get to finish the Gospel or that the scroll was torn off. The explanation that makes the best sense is that Mark's Gospel ends as it does because in the first verse of the Gospel he entitles his work "the *beginning* of the gospel of Jesus Christ." This does not mean that he, the author, is now beginning to tell the Gospel. Rather it means that the whole story which Mark is telling is the beginning, and the Gospel continues in and through the community.

The women leave the tomb in terror because the resurrection is not a happy ending. It is not only Jesus' own vindication. It is terrifying because it might really all be true. Robert McAfee Brown titled one chapter in his volume *Is Faith Obsolete?*, "We Doubt Because We Fear that Faith is False." The subsequent chapter is titled, "We Doubt Because We Fear that Faith is True."<sup>20</sup> If Jesus of Nazareth has indeed been raised from the dead then he is the Messiah. His way of being in the world is the way of the Kingdom of God. His call to his disciples is an authentic call. His promise that they too will experience the cross is true. I, too, am terrified when I encounter the *truth* of the Gospel—Jesus has been raised from the dead.

Just because we are concerned about the *truth* of the Gospel we require "profound theological reasons" for what we believe, what we proclaim, what we do in Christian worship. Wolfhart Pannenberg says the concern for truth is sharpened

when we consider that it is precisely the Jewish God, the God of the Hebrew Bible, whom the Christian believes and confesses to be truly God... Here we are at the core of... the need for systematic theology, because it all depends on the question of truth: If we suppose that the God of Israel and of Jesus is the one and only true God, then and only then is there sufficient reason for believing in that God, even if one is not a Jew.<sup>21</sup>

Pannenberg goes on to say that "the story of Jesus Christ has to be history, not in all its details, but in its core, if the Christian faith is to continue." Only attention to history will help us determine what is true and therefore what is essential in our traditions.<sup>22</sup>

What did happen in Jesus' resurrection can be summarized by contemporary scholarship in terms of four moments.<sup>23</sup> The first of these is that the tomb was empty. Significantly, as James D. G. Dunn points out, no cultus ever developed around the supposed tomb of Jesus. There was no interest in artifacts

or places connected with Jesus' life and ministry. We preserve the death room of Martin Luther intact or the artifacts and places associated with George Washington because that is our only access to a person who has died and is no longer living. But nothing like this occurs with regard to Jesus and his grave. Because the tomb is empty there is continuity between whoever was buried in the tomb on Friday and whoever encountered the disciples as beyond death after the empty tomb was discovered.

Second, by one of God's great ironies, women are the earliest witnesses of the empty tomb and among the first witnesses to the resurrection. It is significant that the first list we have of witnesses to Jesus' appearances in I Corinthians 15:5-8 has no women in it.<sup>24</sup> Paul knew as well anyone that identifying women as witnesses was not going to strengthen the case. If Paul was able to eliminate women as witnesses to the empty tomb and the risen Jesus, why do they appear in all of the later stories and accounts? James G. D. Dunn gives the reason.

In the Palestine of that time a woman's status and testimony was not as highly regarded as a man's. Indeed, women were probably regarded as unreliable witnesses in first-century Judaism, simply because they were women.... That being so, we must conclude that a testimony in which women are presented as the primary witnesses must be based on sound fact.<sup>25</sup> A contrived narrative would hardly have given the leading testimony to women.

Women belong essentially to the event. The paradox, of course, is that their very inadmissibility as witnesses in the first century makes more credible the accounts of the resurrection in the twentieth century.

Third, there are appearances. These appearances are contrary to the expectation of the disciples. They were not seeing what they hoped to see or expected to see or anticipated. They were seeing what they did not expect to see, what they did not anticipate. It was not a mirage, a fulfilling of their hopes and dreams. Their *negative* expectations had to be overcome, had to be vanquished.

Finally, there are disappearances. We do not normally notice the disappearances, but they are as significant as the appearances. They raise the question, "Where does Jesus go?" In an earlier world view the assumption was that Jesus went high up above the surface of the earth, perhaps up above the canopy of sky that was presumed to cover the earth, to a place from which he could look down upon, rule, regulate, govern, and direct the affairs which took place below. Luther's language is more instructive at this point. Where does he go? Where is the right hand of God? It is wherever the Gospel is proclaimed—wherever the eschatological victory of the cross is taking place.<sup>26</sup>

Jürgen Moltmann's suggestion is that Christ ascends into the future.<sup>27</sup> The ascension is not spatial, but temporal, the last of the disappearances. In the Gospel of Luke the disciples do not leave the site of the ascension as if they had said farewell to their Lord. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy because the Lord is not gone. If he goes into the future, he is present to the community as the power of the future. He has what Robert Jenson calls an intensified presence because he alone has death behind him, and therefore he alone is able

to be with his disciples, his community, wherever he has promised to be with his community as the eschatological power of the future.<sup>28</sup>

## MESSIANIC COMMUNITY

The resurrection of Jesus determines what the Church is called to be and what it does when it gathers to worship. The earliest disciples of Jesus did not understand themselves as “church” in the sense of a religious institution distinct from synagogue. They understood themselves to be a messianic movement within Israel. Some of them, especially Paul, began to conclude that if the eschatological messianic age has begun, if the Kingdom of God has been grounded by the event of Jesus, then Gentiles are now to be gathered to Israel. Hence the most traumatic event to befall the nascent messianic movement was its formal expulsion from the synagogue at the end of the first century C.E.<sup>29</sup>

That most Jews did not believe Jesus to be the messiah had enormous importance for the disciples of Jesus, as Paul’s wrestling with the whole issue in Romans 9-11 indicates. The tragic consequence of the separation of Jesus’ disciples from the synagogue was a bifurcated community. Paul taught that Israel remains part of the people of God (Romans 9:4-5; 11:28-32) because of God’s faithfulness. God will not renege on his promises to Israel and his gifts to Israel. They are still the people of God, albeit the people who do not believe Jesus is the Messiah.

But the Gentiles are also part of the people of God, having been grafted onto Israel (Romans 11:17-24). The separation of synagogue and church means a broken existence for the people of God, and this remains a permanent issue for the Church. If one were to set a date for the “birth” of the Church as a distinct religious institution it would not be Pentecost. It would be the rabbinic synod of Jamnia and the exclusion of the disciples of Jesus, the *Nosrim*, from the synagogue. Our separated existence today means we view our present ecclesial existence with appropriate modesty, humility, and repentance. Recognition of the brokenness with which church and synagogue bear witness to the dawning and consummation of the messianic age places limitations upon the claims the church can make about its own fullness and its own continuity. It does not mean we do not have continuity, but it does mean that until all of Israel shares in the confession of Jesus as Messiah, we exist in a broken way.<sup>30</sup>

The very existence of a messianic community is witness to the messianic age. There are stimulating, even exhilarating statements giving expression to this in the New Testament. Ephesians is a classic example.

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and

seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:15-23).

This is an audacious, even outrageous, set of assertions when one considers how small and insignificant the community of Jesus' disciples was in comparison to the might and reach of the great Roman empire. But the grounding for the claim that Jesus is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" is not the size of the Church. It is rather that the future is now in the hands of Jesus of Nazareth and no other, for he alone has death behind him. The reign of the powers of death is truly passé.

Unity, being gathered into one human community, belongs to a description of what has already taken place.

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision," ... remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God (Ephesians 2:11-22).

The gift of unity has as its intention "one new humanity." Thus, the quest for giving expression to the visible unity of the Church as a sign of what humanity will be belongs essentially to the Church's witness.<sup>31</sup>

Because unity is the reality about the community of Jesus' disciples, the community can also be called to give visible expression to its unity as a dimension of its witness. Ephesians addresses such a call in a familiar passage.

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:1-6).

The Church is created as witness, and on this basis it is called to be witness. How? By anticipating the consummation of the Kingdom of God in its being and doing and acting. It is called to anticipate the future belonging to the reign of life—to the Kingdom of God—not to the powers of death. Hence, Gerhard Lohfink can call the Church a "contrast society," not because of its superior morality, but because it is called to embody and embrace a future to which its very existence is a witness.<sup>32</sup>

The key word is witness. The content of that witness is not the kind of personal story (“what Jesus has done for me”) advocated by David Luecke.<sup>33</sup> Rather the community is called to tell what has already happened to the world. That is the thrust of Paul’s great statement and appeal in the fifth chapter of II Corinthians.

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ *God was reconciling the world to himself*, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (II Corinthians 5:17-21).

To be witnesses to the monumental event that the Kingdom of God has begun is what we are called to be.

## THE MEAL

The Meal is central both to the event and to the witness. “Many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus says (Matthew 8:11). He says it in an instructive context: the healing of the centurion’s servant. “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith,” is Jesus’ comment just prior to the table saying (Matthew 8:10). Although he understands himself to be sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, claiming to be Israel’s messiah, he does not disdain to respond to faith among Gentiles. The two persons about whose faith Jesus marvels are a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28) and a Roman Centurion.

“Many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (RSV). In the exodus tradition the meal is already associated with God’s covenant and promise (Exodus 24:9-11). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the prophets of the exile envision God’s deliverance in terms of feeding and eating (e.g., Is. 55:1-2; Ezek. 34:23-31; Zech. 9:17; Is. 65:13, etc.). The Isaianic apocalypse describes the eschatological salvation of God in the context of the overcoming of death’s power. I quote it in the translation of the (old) RSV because “fat things” is among my favorite images.<sup>34</sup>

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken (Isaiah 26:6-8).

Building on this tradition messianic expectations came to be expressed in terms of a meal, a great banquet, a cosmic party. By the time of Jesus these expectations came increasingly to be associated with the passover meal.<sup>35</sup>

The Meal is therefore one of the most important characteristics of Jesus’ activity, teaching, and promise. It is an essential part of both his implicit and explicit messianic claim. His parables of the Kingdom include meal settings (Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24). His feeding of the multitudes was implicitly



messianic in the synoptic Gospels (Matt. 14:13-21 and parallels), and is given explicit messianic interpretation in the Gospel of John (John 6:1-59). His table fellowship with sinners, an implicit messianic action, is an implicit challenge to the messianic expectations of the Pharisees (Luke 15:1-2). It serves as grounds for their accusations and ultimately for their enduring hostility. Jesus' reply includes gathering for feasting (Luke 15:6, 9, and 23).

When he celebrates the last meal with his disciples on the night of his betrayal, his promise is central to the event. "I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25). In the Gospel of Luke the promise is important enough to be repeated twice:

"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:15-18).

The resurrection appearances of Jesus became occasions for the fulfillment of his promise. If what had happened to Jesus had been a resuscitation, the vindication of the righteous sufferer (which had become a part of pharisaic eschatological hope), there would have been, at best, rejoicing *with* Jesus. But the resurrection encounters with Jesus were awesomely more than this. In the risen Jesus they were encountered by the *eschaton*, the outcome of history in preview. They were now able to participate in the messianic age by eating and drinking in the Kingdom of God.

## THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN LITURGY

At this point a brief review of the origins of Christian liturgy is appropriate. After the resurrection of Jesus the Jewish disciples of Jesus continued to participate in the life of synagogue and, when in Jerusalem prior to its destruction, in the rituals of the temple. Paul also goes first to the synagogue whenever he comes to a new city, and he maintains his commitment to the temple until the end.

Simultaneously, however, the disciples of Jesus assembled in homes for that ritual which identified them uniquely, namely, the Meal of the Kingdom of God. We find both of these features, continuance in the rituals of synagogue/temple and the special messianic Meal, in the same passage in Acts: "Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47). Not all Jews, not even the majority, believed Jesus was the Messiah. But those who did were *identified* by that one ritual Luke calls "the breaking of the bread," a phrase Joachim Jeremias has correctly recognized as a technical term for the Eucharist.<sup>36</sup>

The Meal is the characteristic of the eschatological messianic age. It is as much a characteristic of that age as is the call to serve God's peace, God's justice,

God's compassion, and God's care of the world. If Jesus was indeed the Messiah, if the eschatological messianic age had indeed begun, then the eschatological messianic community would witness to and participate in that reality by being at the eschatological messianic banquet table. For in the messianic age "many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob."

Initially, then, the "worship" of the disciples of Jesus was twofold: participation in the reading of scriptures, their exposition, and the prayers of the synagogue in common with all Jews; and participation in the messianic age inaugurated by Jesus through the common Meal celebrated in private homes with all those who had been baptized into Christ.

Clearly the community of Jesus, the Messiah, witnesses to God's salvation and to its understanding that it is living in the messianic age by what it does when it gathers. When the disciples of Jesus were formally expelled from the synagogue, they had no option left to them except to transfer to the meal which they were already celebrating those elements of the synagogue liturgy in which they could no longer participate, namely, the reading and exposition of scripture (in this case the scripture of Israel), and the prayers.

If a liturgy of scripture, prayers, and Meal is the identifying characteristic of the community of Jesus the Messiah when it gathers, then what does it mean if the gathering does not include the Meal? Then the gathering is still that of the synagogue, the pre-eschatological people of God. Without the Meal, the gathering is not yet witnessing to Jesus as Messiah. It is not yet witnessing to the Gospel, the good news that Jesus has been raised from the dead and the messianic age has begun.

## **AN OUTLINE OF CHRISTIAN LITURGY**

If the church is called to witness to the Gospel when it gathers, then it needs to give continual attention to what ought to take place when it gathers. It is significant that in 1 Corinthians 11, when Paul is forced to give an apostolic scolding to the Corinthian congregation, he begins by writing, "When you come together *as a church*" (I Corinthians 11:18). They could come together for other purposes, not necessarily to be the Church. There is nothing wrong with coming together for other purposes, for education, or political action, or entertainment. But our focus must be on what a community does when it wants to "come together as a Church."

The first factor to note is that the Church *gathers*. One cannot be Church in front of one's television set. The very fact and act of gathering is itself a witness. There is an orthodox Jewish synagogue, Agudas Achim, located in Columbus, Ohio, where I live. Many of our neighbors are members of Agudas Achim. On the Sabbath or on holy days we see whole Jewish families walking rapidly on the way to Agudas Achim because Halachah says that a Jew can hardly wait to be with Torah, and walking very slowly on the way home because

they are reluctant to leave Torah. The very act of gathering is a witness. Everyone in our neighborhood knows where these people are going and where they have been just by seeing them walking.

In a culture where going to meetings is a way of life, we must not take the sheer fact of gathering for granted. I read recently that a person surfeited with meetings had proposed giving annual awards for them: best meeting of the year, best supporting meeting, best foreign meeting, best meeting based on material from another meeting, etc. But we must not let all of this incessant gathering and meeting deprive us of the fundamental understanding that to come together, to gather, is already a witness. It is a witness because the messianic age is the gathering of all peoples around Israel, the final coming together of all of humanity, all of creation, in God's eschatological home. The Church gathers as a small sign of, a witness to, that larger, cosmic, final gathering of all people and of all creation.

But not all gathering, not even all gathering in which the name of Jesus is mentioned, means that persons "come together as a church." Walther Kallestad thinks the present Sunday morning gathering is essentially self-serving.

The problem is that churched people have been taught that Sunday mornings can only be used to teach, train, inspire and equip Christians. Church people tend to want only their needs to be met instead of the needs of the unchurched. Christians should design Sunday nights for themselves and turn the morning over to evangelistic outreach. The reason most churches do not grow and, in fact, begin to decline is because they are unwilling to put the needs of the lost ahead of their own.<sup>37</sup>

What should be noted is that Kallestad defines the Sunday morning gathering not in terms of witness and identity but in terms of meeting needs, and the only concern he raises is whether the gathering meets the needs of the "churched" or the "unchurched."

But careful diagnosis discloses a different and perhaps much more difficult problem. Martin Marty recently quoted a very perceptive paragraph by Jewish theologian Nathan Glazer, written in 1955.

I myself believe the terrible wounds suffered by religion in the past 300 years, primarily because of the spread of the scientific worldview throughout society, cannot be healed. Religion, which was once a belief for the everybody, and a matter of policy for the elite, has changed its character. Today faith is only possible for the sophisticated, who can explain—or explain away—the implications of modern science and scientific thinking. The majority, regardless of what they say on public-opinion polls, can no longer be deeply affected by religious faith. For them, henceforth, *religion will be a matter of social utility* (my emphasis).<sup>38</sup>

I do not share Glazer's pessimism, perhaps because we have discovered profound Christian resources to respond to the challenge of the secularist worldview which has so wounded religion. But Glazer is correct in pointing out that treating religion in a utilitarian way, as a meeting of needs, is to transform religion into something other than a matter of religious faith. To argue about whose *needs* are being met is to be part of the problem instead of addressing the problem.

Hence it is vitally important for the gathering to want to identify itself as "Church." It is equally important for the gathering to understand the calling of

the Church to be that of witness to the Gospel: Jesus of Nazareth has been raised from the dead. Something quite specific needs to happen for a gathering to be identified as “Church.” A community needs to gather for that ritual identifying it as church, as the community of the *eschaton*, as the community anticipating the Kingdom of God in its being and in its gathering. Justin Martyr gives us one of the earliest descriptions of what needs to happen when a community gathers “as a church.”

On the day which is called Sun-day, all, whether they live in the town or in the country, gather in the same place. Then the Memoirs of the Apostles or the Writings of the Prophets are read for as long as time allows. When the reader has finished, the president speaks, exhorting us to live by these noble teachings. Then we rise all together and pray. Then, as we said earlier, when the prayer is finished, bread, wine and water are brought. The president then prays and gives thanks as well as he can. And all the people reply with the acclamation: Amen! After this the eucharists are distributed and shared out to everyone, and the deacons are sent to take them to those who are absent.<sup>39</sup>

One can hardly improve upon this brief paragraph as a succinct outline of the elements of uniquely Christian liturgy: scripture and its exposition, the prayers of the people, the offering of the gifts through which the table is set, and the thanksgiving meal.

There is time for no more than a few brief comments on the ritual which is our witness because it identifies us as community of the *eschaton*. If what I am about to say seems self-evident, I can only respond that these comments need to be repeated again and again because they are either so little known or so often forgotten.

(1) Justin Martyr underscores the fact that the liturgy is the activity of the people, the “work” of the people. He does this by giving the title “president” to the one who presides over the people’s liturgy. In the previous lecture I pointed out the significance of Luecke’s referring to those who gather on Sundays as “audience.” Kallestad does not use the term “audience,” but it is difficult to think of any other term for those who are treated to “a stage band, comedians, clowns, dramas, mini-concerts and productions, high energy choreography, as well as many other entertainment forms.” The truth is, however, that the Christian gathering can never be “audience” and “church” at the same time.

The Christian gathering is called to be “congregation”—people who have been called together by the eschatological event of Jesus to celebrate that liturgy by which we participate in and witness to that event. The liturgy is what we have come to do. It celebrates what God has made us in Christ. The liturgy is the way we are called to be witnesses. To be deprived of the opportunity to do my liturgy on Sunday means, again, I have come to a gathering which is “synagogue” and not “church.” Gatherings without the Meal are pre-eschatological, as if the *eschaton* had not yet begun, as if the messiah had not yet been disclosed. In order for me and the other members of the congregation to be able to do our liturgy means that on Sundays, on the “Eighth Day,” the eschatological

day, the community needs to schedule the proclamation of the Gospel, the prayers, and the Meal.

(2) My second comment is intended to be a response to a familiar objection to what I have just said. Isn't Jesus present if we simply gather in his name? Didn't Jesus say, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them?" (Matt. 18:20) Couldn't we be the community of the *eschaton* with nothing more than the reading of scripture, the proclamation, and the prayers? Didn't Jesus say, "Whoever listens to you listens to me?" (Luke 10:16) Isn't Jesus present if we just talk about him, if we tell the story?

Whenever one says that we must always do the Meal at the Sunday gathering of the Christian community, it sounds as if one is somehow denigrating the proclamation. That is not my intention. But why ask these questions in the first place? They seem to arise out of the "Salvation Institution" orientation, a perspective which is pre-occupied with "minimums." It cannot help asking how little we have to do and still get salvation. This is hunting for religious bargains.

However, the Christian Gospel is not an offer to get us to heaven when we die on the cheapest possible terms. The Christian Gospel is that Jesus has been raised from the dead! The Kingdom of God has been inaugurated! That Gospel does not so much offer us a bargain as change the world. It is as if one found a pearl of great value, and one would now sell all that one had in order to buy the pearl; as if one found a treasure hidden in a field, and one would now sell all that one had in order to buy the field (Matt. 13:44-46). We do not think we are making a great sacrifice. Rather, we think we are incredibly blessed because we have found that for which there is finally no substitute. We have been let in on the mystery of the universe, that Jesus has been raised from the dead and has become the "first fruits" of all the dead (I Cor. 15:20). We cannot try to discover how little we can get by with and still be disciples of Jesus the messiah.

The true question is whether we can be the eschatological community without the banquet. Can we witness to the messianic age without being the messianic community at the Messiah's feast? Can we invite people with the Gospel without having a table at which the many who shall come from the east and the west can sit with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob?

(3) We are called to give thanks, indeed to receive everything with thanksgiving. Justin Martyr tells us that when the bread and wine have been brought to the table, the president "prays and gives thanks as well as he can." To use only the liturgical "words of institution" means that we never give thanks, we never receive with thanksgiving what God is offering. I often wonder whether we simply don't understand all of the words we say prior to the thanksgiving prayer. Let me rehearse the familiar dialogue:

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give *thanks* to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give God *thanks* and praise.

Then the president uses a *preface*, the purpose of which “is to give reasons for rendering thanksgiving at the particular occasion.”<sup>40</sup> But it is a *preface*; it is not yet the giving of thanks. If we then just say the liturgical “words of institution” we never do the very thing we have been invited to do, have agreed to do, and have been given reasons for doing.

One of the most distressing features of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* is that it continues to give presiding ministers the option of using only the liturgical “words of institution.” Often the decision to avail oneself of this option is not based on theological factors. It is based on a quick glance at one’s wristwatch to see if things are running a bit long. We need to remember that the only reason the option exists is that our Lutheran ancestors did not have a thanksgiving prayer available to them in the medieval mass. The medieval canon was not a thanksgiving, not even a *bad* thanksgiving. In a sense, there was nothing there to reform. We need to be unfailingly grateful that the *Lutheran Book of Worship* has given us prayers enabling us to do what we are invited to do, to do what we say we want to do, namely, to give thanks. For our thanksgiving is not our way of trying to manipulate God, trying to get something from God. It is rather receiving that which is already freely offered and bestowed (Luke 17:16).

(4) The Christ who is present to us is the one whose servant way of being in the world and for the world is authenticated by his resurrection from the dead. What prevents our celebration of the eschaton from being idealism, utopianism, is the fact that what we receive, what is given to us, is that body sacrificed on the cross, that blood by which his life was poured out for us. Our witness in the world is grounded in that offering of Christ which takes our offering of ourselves, as well as our gifts of money, bread, and wine, and transforms it into the Body which is sent to the world to be for the world.

The Corinthians were properly scolded because when they came together as Church, they did not remember, recall, re-present the offering of Christ on the cross, and thus they treated the poor in their midst with contempt. They humiliated them by not sharing with them the food they had brought for the meal. Thanksgiving is a way of receiving Christ’s sacrifice for us and Christ’s mission for the world.

Therefore the liturgy does not end when we have been blessed. The liturgy continues when we are sent into the world. We are still living before the *parousia*, before the consummation of the Kingdom of God. So our gatherings are anticipatory. They are signs which anticipate the reality of the Kingdom’s consummation. We must scatter and be scattered to the world like the seed of the Kingdom scattered by God, the sower. Our witness and our liturgy continue in our scattering and our being scattered. Part of our witness when scattered has to do with the evangelization of the world, and that is the subject for the final lecture.

## NOTES

1. I presume he means that 60 to 90 percent of the population of this country is unchurched. In 1988 the Princeton Religion Research Center (PRRC) operated by the Gallup Organization found that "since 1978 the percentage of adults who believe Jesus Christ to be God or the Son of God has increased from 78% to 84%, and the percentage of those who say they have made a 'commitment to Jesus Christ' has increased from 60% to 66%." The PRRC defined as "unchurched" these Americans who were "not members of a church or had not attended services in the previous six months." In their 1988 survey, 44% of adult Americans are "unchurched." That figure includes the approximately 10% to 12% of adult Americans who belong to non-Christian religions, i.e., Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. *Emerging Trends*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (June 1988): 1.

2. Walther P. Kallestad, "Entertainment Evangelism," *The Lutheran* Vol. 3, No. 8 (May 23, 1990): 17.

3. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985) vii-viii.

4. William F. Fore, *Television and Religion: The Shaping of Faith, Values, and Culture* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987) 21-25, 38-71.

5. Postman 99-113.

6. Postman 125-141.

7. Postman 142-154.

8. Postman 114-124. The quotations are from 118-121.

9. Dale A. Meyer, radio preacher on "The Lutheran Hour," wrote a very perceptive appreciation of Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and William Fore's *Television and Religion* in his November 1989 letter to Lutheran clergy. He writes in part:

Postman's analysis illumined many of the frustrations I felt in the parish. I compiled (in most instances "borrowed" is a better word) a list of changes in behavior and belief attributable in large measure to the dominance of television in our culture and in many congregational homes.

1. We minister to a *now generation* which does not relate to the psalmist's prayer: "Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

2. Television teaches instant *gratification* instead of (the way of) the cross.

3. The incessant images of television have *desensitized* us to what is temporally and eternally important.

4. Television promotes *individualism* rather than community and the social abilities that contribute to community life.

5. Television has changed the *images* by which we relate to life.

6. Commercial television teaches *materialism*.

7. Television stunts *intellectual discussion*. The real world has prerequisites. You don't take Latin II until you've passed Latin I. TV, however, requires nothing and in 30 or 60 minutes deludes people into thinking they're competent to discuss anything.

8. The uncritical use of TV becomes *idolatrous*.

10. Cf. Mark Olson, "Evangelism—not a floor show for the bored," *The Lutheran*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (July 11, 1990): 17.

11. Cf. Frank Seilhamer, "The New Measure Movement Among Lutherans," *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (May 1960): 121-143.

12. I had one memorable flight which illustrates the point I am making. I was going from Chicago to Rhineland, Wisconsin, for a clergy gathering one August. The flight attendant began the flight by saying, "This plane is going to Madison, Oshkosh, and Rhineland. If these cities are not in your plans today this would be a good time to leave the plane." She told us that if we were traveling with a child or with an adult who acts like a child, we should put the mask over our own mouth first, then attend to the child. She said, "anyone who is caught smoking will be asked to step outside." We all laughed. It was already a memorable beginning to the flight. There was a weather front moving across Wisconsin from West to East as we were flying North. It was one of the bumpiest flights in my memory. It was so bad that we couldn't have beverage service. I am a two martini, white-knuckle flier anyway. The worst part of these bumpy flights is that when you need beverage service, you can't get it. So I was reduced to talking to my seat mate, who turned out to be a Borden salesman. He told me that the whole plane was full of people

who were in the Borden sales force. They had won a week in Rhinelander as a reward for achievements in sales. I know what you are thinking—the second prize was two weeks in Rhinelander. Not so. It was actually quite nice being there. The fact of the matter is that by the time we actually got to Rhinelander and began to stand around waiting for luggage, etc., we had become somewhat of a community. We all had this bumpy flight behind us, we were glad to be on the ground, and we had actually conversed with each other if for no other reason than to pass the time. Something happened and a modest little bit of a community began to develop.

13. I have argued elsewhere that there is the closest possible relationship between the identity of the church and the witness of the church which is its mission. Both are grounded in the church's celebration of the Eucharist. Cf. Walter R. Bouman, "Identity and Witness: Liturgy and the Mission of the Church," *Institute of Liturgical Studies Occasional Papers Number 6. With Hearts and Hands and Voices: Liturgy in the Life of the Parish*. Edited by Randall R. Lee (Valparaiso, Indiana: Institute of Liturgical Studies, 1989) 115-139.

14. Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1961) 48-51. The entire introduction to the mass, pp. 27-51, is instructive.

15. In a preceptive review of *Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste*, by Thomas Day, Paul V. Mankowski writes (and quotes Day) about the attempt of liturgical reformers to facilitate greater involvement of the entire congregation. Mankowski begins:

Day argues that, on the contrary, the "presider" has come to monopolize the Mass to an extent inconceivable in times past, and with this difference, that the monopoly is effected not *qua* priest but *qua* personality. In a chapter titled "You're Looking Great, Narcissus," he points to the celebrant's banal greeting at the beginning of the Eucharist:

"Good Morning" really means, "I [the person, the individual called Father Hank, Father Chuck, Father Bob] deign to wish *you* a pleasant continuation of the morning, *I*, the center of your attention and probably the reason you have come, *I*, the one and only *me*, welcome you to *my* show and it will be a good show with a good performance by *me*, and for this reason you will be fortunate to have a good morning." *First Things*, No. 12 (April, 1991): 56.

16. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1971) 21-25.

17. Ezekiel 34 is a denunciation of the false "shepherds," i.e., the kings and leaders of Israel. God will be the true shepherd of Israel (v. 15). God will "set up over (Israel) one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them and be their shepherd" (v. 23).

18. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974) 114-159. Arland Hultgren, *Christ and His Benefits* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), which contains a number of summaries of what is generally recognized as historical in the ministry of the Jesus and the proclamation about Jesus. See pp. 31-32, 37-38, 185-189, among others.

19. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

20. Robert McAfee Brown, *Is Faith Obsolete?* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974) 89, 96.

21. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991) 4-5.

22. Pannenberg 5-8.

23. What follows is based on James D. G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985) 53-76. See also Reginald H. Fuller and Pheme Perkins, *Who is This Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 28-40; Robert H. Smith, *Easter Gospels* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983); and Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Risen* (Mahwah, New Jersey: The Paulist Press, 1987).

24. The New Revised Standard Version translation of v. 6 reads, "Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time." But in a footnote we are told that the Greek has only "brothers."

25. Dunn 65.

26. "That These Words of Christ, 'This is My Body,' etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics," *Luther's Works: American Edition*, Vol. 37 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961) 55-69. See also Vol. 29, 120-121; and Vol. 10, 444-447.

27. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981) 88.



28. Robert Jenson, "The Holy Spirit," *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, edited by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 144-145.
29. Fuller and Perkins 82.
30. Cf. *Implications of the Gospel*, Report of Lutheran Episcopal Dialogue Series III, edited by William A. Norgren and William G. Rusch (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988) 34-37, paragraphs 38-42.
31. One of the disappointing features of "Church Growth" advocacy is the easy endorsement of competition and the corresponding indifference to the ecumenical dimensions of the church's witness. Cf. as an example Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977) 43-45.
32. Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 122-147.
33. Cf. David S. Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988) 111-117.
34. Garrison Keillor once encouraged us not to be intimidated by "weightists," but to think of ourselves as "total persons" and of thin people as "not all there." Garrison Keillor, *Happy to Be Here* (New York: Atheneum, 1982) 119.
35. Wainwright 21-25.
36. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) 120.
37. Kallestad 17.
38. Martin Marty, *Context*, Vol. 23, No. 12 (June 15, 1991): 1-2.
39. Thompson 9.
40. Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990) 160.

### III: “THE NEWBORN GROW UP TO SALVATION”

These lectures are to give attention to “how the church grows and thrives.” They are, in part, a response to the Church Growth Movement and especially to its Lutheran advocates. The Lutheran advocates are convinced that Lutherans must make significant, perhaps even radical, changes in their style of worship. They tell us that attention to the liturgical tradition of the Church and its use for Sunday worship fosters a maintenance mentality instead of a growth mentality, that if Lutheran churches are going to grow they must adopt a style of worship which attracts the unchurched. They must engage in “Entertainment Evangelism.”

In the first lecture I dealt with the concept of growth in the Gospels. Jesus speaks of the advent and growth of the Kingdom of God whose “seed” is the Word of God. The grounding of the Kingdom of God is Jesus’ own ministry, death, and resurrection. The Church is called to be a witness to the Kingdom of God. In the second lecture I responded to the proposal that evangelistic worship needs to be entertaining. The messianic Meal belongs centrally and essentially to Jesus’ mission as Messiah. The Church participates in Jesus’ mission and witnesses to the messianic age as it has begun and will be consummated by gathering for the Word, the prayers, and the Meal.

In this lecture I wish to focus our attention on the Church’s mission after each gathering, that is, when its members are scattered, when a significant dimension of its witness is evangelization. I want to give initial attention to the history of evangelization in the United States and the problems attendant upon it. Then I want to focus on Baptism as the means given to the Church for evangelization. The New Testament epistles understand growth in terms of what takes place in Christian Baptism and in the new life of the baptized. I want to ask how evangelization might look if it has Baptism at its center.

#### AMERICAN EVANGELISM

The model for Lutheran advocates of “Church Growth” is the camp meeting.<sup>1</sup> The camp meeting was a 19th century American phenomenon, an example of what can appropriately be called “Frontier Religion.”<sup>2</sup> The first spectacular camp meeting took place at Cane Ridge in Bourbon County, Kentucky, in August 1801. Promoted by a Presbyterian clergyman named Barton Stone, it drew a crowd estimated at from 15,000 to 25,000 people, lasted a week, and featured emotional outbreaks that have continued to elude “the descriptive powers of many historians.”<sup>3</sup> Stone himself described the bodily manifestations as beginning with “the jerks” and then proceeding to falling, dancing, barking, laughing, running, and singing. Stone admitted “there were

many eccentricities, and much fanaticism in this excitement,” but insisted “the good effects were seen and acknowledged in every neighborhood.”<sup>4</sup>

The camp meeting had a decisive impact on American Protestantism. The denominations which grew the most as a direct result of camp meetings were the Methodists, the Baptists, the Disciples of Christ, and the Church of Christ. Nineteenth-century frontier Protestants understood evangelism as taking place primarily through services featuring preacher-evangelists, services very similar to the camp meetings.

We owe the emphasis on this form of evangelization to the pietism of the 18th century “awakenings.” Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) institutionalized the “awakening” in the Midwest. He introduced what he called “new measures,” a term that eventually became the name for a significant controversy in 19th century Eastern Lutheranism. “New Measures” were especially popular in the Maryland Synod and found a sympathetic friend in Simon Samuel Schmucker.<sup>5</sup> Much of what is being advocated today has its historical parallels in the 19th century.

Charles Finney’s “new measures” involved what he called “protracted meetings.” These were intensive evangelism efforts lasting a week or more. He introduced the “anxious bench” for people who were on the verge of being “saved,” and who came forward for special attention. At the “anxious bench” potential converts were “prayed through” to a renunciation of their sins (“sin” being understood mostly in moralistic terms), an acceptance of Christ as personal savior, and a promise to strive for perfection after conversion.

Finney, writes Sidney Ahlstrom, was the inventor of modern high-pressure revivalism.<sup>6</sup> Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) was Finney’s successor, adapting revivalism to the Sunday morning service as it is widely experienced in Baptist and other pietist traditions. Moody made of Christianity a sweet and sentimental moralism, a religious blend of “American optimism and evangelical Arminianism.” Eternal life, said Moody, is for the taking if only the sinner would believe in the love of Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

Moody was followed in the “apostolic succession” of evangelists by Billy Sunday (1863-1935), who simplified matters still more. His invitation on the 12th day of his New York campaign was typical.

Do you want God’s blessing on you, your home, your church, your nation, on New York? If you do, raise your hands. How many of you men and women will jump to your feet and come down and say “Bill, here is my hand for God, for home, for my native land, to live and conquer for Christ?”

Then Homer A. Rodeheaver and the choir would begin their musical accompaniment as a sea of humanity surged forward, one out of every ten in the audience of 20,000 on that day. That kind of altar call meant, says Ahlstrom, that “the burden was easy and the sawdust trail, wide.”

All of this became increasingly popular in American religion since Sunday’s attacks on high society, worldly amusements, filthy habits, pliable politicians, liberal preachers, trashy immigrants, and especially booze traffic (every man who was not a teetotaler was a “dirty, low-down, whiskey-soaked, beer-guzzling, bull-necked,

foul-mouthed hypocrite”) simply fostered the self-righteousness of his middle class audiences.

The high tide of this approach to evangelism occurred in the decade immediately prior to World War I. From 1914 to 1917 there were more than 650 full-time and 1,300 part-time evangelists in the field. \$20 million a year was spent on tabernacle evangelism, the kind that Sinclair Lewis satirized with such telling effect in *Elmer Gantry*.

There is virtually a direct line from Finney through Moody and Sunday to the Billy Graham Crusades with, one must add, a very significant attempt on the part of the whole Graham organization to involve rather than to replace the local parish. I think we need to see the Church Growth Movement in this succession. We also need to understand why this became the form of American religion.

## RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES

We have been nurtured on the story of the pilgrims arriving in New England in 1620 in search of religious freedom. The story is misleading on at least two counts. First, the pilgrims were not interested in religious freedom. They were interested in *establishing* their own religion (Massachusetts was the last state to dis-establish that religion, in 1820!). Second, their story was not typical. The vast majority of the European emigrants did not come to North America for religious reasons and were not especially interested in church membership. Some representative statistics of church membership reveal the realities.

In 1790, the year of the first census, with a total population of about four million, less than 10 percent (probably closer to six percent) of the population actually belonged to churches. In 1835, about 12 percent of the US population belonged to churches.<sup>9</sup> By 1860 that figure had grown to about 20 percent of the population, some 6 million people out of a population of 30 million.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the most surprising statistical figure is that in 1940, immediately prior to World War II, less than half of the people of this country belonged to religious institutions, churches or synagogues.<sup>11</sup> The astonishing increase in membership from 1940 to 1960 was, one could say, almost an aberrant phenomenon in American religious life. Religious affiliation increased from 49 percent of the population in 1940 to 69 percent in 1960. In raw figures, religious affiliation more than doubled in these two decades. By 1970, the percentage of religious affiliation had declined to about 62 percent. Since then, the raw figures for religious membership have continued to increase but not in proportion to the increase in the total population.

These figures, however, are misleading. Membership in religious institutions is uneven throughout the country. New England and the upper midwest have the highest percentage of religious affiliation, nearly 70%. The percentage is lower in large urban centers; and it is also lower in the south, below the old Mason-Dixon Line, where it is below 50 percent. It is lowest of all in the west

and northwest. In British Columbia, about five percent of the population has a religious affiliation and the figure is not much better in Alaska. But the United States' overall 60 to 62 percent is an unusual phenomenon in western culture. It seems to mean we have somehow been spared the evident decline in religious participation characteristic of almost all of western culture (Canada, Australia, Europe).

Two matters are significant in the review of the statistical data on religious affiliation. First, most Americans understood themselves as "Christians," and after World War II, they understood their country to be a "Judeo-Christian" nation. They were "believers, but not belongers," as the polls on religious belief consistently reveal. Second, the Anglo-Saxon Protestant churches as well as the churches which emerged out of "frontier religion" understood their mission as directed toward getting these "non-belongers" into churches. They were regarded as "unchurched" by many of the churches which enrolled them in the middle decades of this century. The Church Growth Movement has affirmed this self-understanding and this mission. As the percentage of "belongers" reaches a certain level, however, what occurs is not an increase in the percentage, but a shift in affiliation from one set of churches to another.

### SHIFTING RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Two factors have affected both the growth of some churches, notably some conservative evangelical churches, and the decline of other churches, notably most of the so-called "mainline" churches. Neither of these factors was mentioned in any of the church growth books I was able to read, but they have been noted by religious sociologists.<sup>12</sup> The first of these is the criticism of American foreign policy that began to be voiced in the "mainline" churches during the war in Vietnam.

The unprecedented growth in religious affiliation which took place between 1940 and 1960 benefitted all churches, and none more than the "mainline" churches. The growth came at a time when the United States was more culturally united than at any time in its history. No American war enjoyed more universal support than World War II. Americans understood it as a crusade against unambiguous evil. We basked in self-congratulation and self-affirmation almost to the end of the Eisenhower years. Being American and being Christian were easily and uncritically regarded as virtually synonymous.

But the 1960s brought the increasing ambiguity of the conflict in Vietnam and an increasing encounter with the complexity of the world in general. It was no longer possible for many American Christians to equate their Americanism and their religious affiliation. The consequence was that those churches in which critical voices began to be heard, including virtually all of the "mainline" churches, declined in membership; while those churches which wrapped themselves in the American flag, including most of the conservative evangelical churches, grew in membership.<sup>13</sup>

Jerry Falwell and D. James Kennedy typify the flag-waving of America's televised evangelists. The victory in the 1990-91 mid-east war was celebrated ecstatically by churches eager to embrace the returning troops. First Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, declared March 10, 1991, "Yellow Ribbon Sunday," handing out 5,500 yellow ribbons to worshippers, marching an honor guard in camouflage dress down the center aisle, unfurling a huge American flag from the ceiling while the "Voices of Liberty" choir sang, and so on. The pastor of Kirby Parkway Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, announced that on February 27 his congregation voted unanimously to make General Norman H. Schwarzkopf their "honorary Deacon Chairman" while the marquee in front of the church proclaimed, "Thank God America is a Man again."<sup>14</sup>

The second factor to affect shifting membership and give us fast-growing conservative evangelical churches was the polarization of churches on social issues.<sup>15</sup> In the 1960s it was the issue of race, then feminism, then abortion, and now homosexuality. The growing churches were on one side of these issues, and, whether through proposals by advocacy groups, or through official positions, the "mainline" churches appeared to be uncertain if not actually on the other side. Robert Wuthnow believes this to be the most significant development in current American religion.

One can almost date the moment of decline and shift in affiliation with certain incidents. For example, in 1971 the United Presbyterian Church, by a vote of 347 to 303, voted to question but not reject the leadership's decision to contribute \$10,000 to the defense fund for Angela Davis, a black woman and a committed communist (the candidate for Vice-President of the United States on the Communist Party's 1968 ticket). Davis was charged with murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy in a violent courtroom incident in Marin County, California, in which a judge was killed during an escape attempt that punctuated the trial of the "Soledad Brothers."

Presbyterian officials were swamped with letters, most of them critical.<sup>16</sup> Although the money was contributed to ensure that Angela Davis would receive a fair trial, something she claimed would not be afforded a black woman communist in the United States, and although she was eventually found not-guilty, the impact on the United Presbyterian Church was catastrophic. There was a huge decline of financial support, a massive exodus of members, and eventually the termination of more than half of the national church staff.

Presiding Bishop John Hines of the Episcopal Church led that church to become similarly involved in controversial issues. The Episcopal Church suffered a similar exodus of members and a decline in financial support. Declines took place in other mainline denominations for similar reasons.

The reason for mentioning these factors at some length is because they challenge the opinion of David S. Luecke, cited early in the first lecture, that there is a relationship between the growing popularity of the Lutheran liturgical renewal movement on the one hand and the numerical decline in Lutheran

church membership on the other hand.<sup>17</sup> I am not aware of a single religious sociologist who sees a relationship between the membership decline in mainline American religion and the liturgical movement.

What I have reported above supports the conclusion of religious sociologists that growing churches have generally been the beneficiaries of a shift in religious affiliation. There remains, however, a serious question that needs to be addressed by the mainline churches, namely, whether they have, in fact, lost both rationale and energy for evangelization. When this question is posed we must look at both the impact of secularism and the increasing cultural pluralism of the United States.

## SECULARISM AND PLURALISM

We were deceiving ourselves if we thought American religious life could escape the overt expressions of secularity that overtook Western culture in the wake of the Enlightenment. Martin Marty has long since demonstrated that America's "path to the secular," different from that of Europe and England, was a transformation of religious symbols that took place in the middle decades of the 19th century. Religious language continued to be used in America's public rhetoric, but religion itself was effectively marginalized by being relegated to the realm of the private and the familial.<sup>18</sup> For the majority, as Nathan Glazer pointed out in the quotation I cited in the previous lecture, religion would be "a matter of social utility."<sup>19</sup>

Secularity in its overt form raises the really serious question about whether religion means anything at all, about whether the religious understanding of how we experience our world can still be viable for people in the late 20th Century. My colleague, Ron Hals, used to tell his classes that if he were to do a miracle in front of them, they would not say "God has visited and redeemed his people." They would say "Do it again, slowly." That is overt secularity. When that kind of secularity insinuates itself, thoughtful members of religious communities ask themselves whether religious institutions are doing anything meaningful at all, whether persons can be invited to give time and energy to essentially meaningless religious institutions.

America became increasingly conscious of its pluralism in the decade after the end of World War II. One of its milestones was the publication of Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* in 1955. The expansion of Protestant America to include Catholics and Jews was relatively easy. One could at least speak of the Judeo-Christian tradition. During World War II, the military led the way in presuming that everyone in the United States belonged to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The military services automatically classified as "Protestant" everyone who was neither Catholic nor Jewish.

By the time Martin Marty published his "new map of American religion" three decades later, the encounter with a pluralistic society was unavoidable.<sup>20</sup> In addition to grouping Christians in a new way as Mainliners, Fundamental-

ist/Evangelicals, and Charismatics, Marty identified “new religions” (including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, self-improvement religions, “new age” religions, etc.), “ethnic religions,” (ranging from Native American religion to Black Muslims), and “civil religion.” Marty wrote before the full flowering of feminism, but now one would have to give “Womanchurch” a seventh place in the “new map.”

A vivid encounter with the expanded pluralism occurs when one drives north from Columbus, Ohio, to Toledo. At a superhighway intersection on the outskirts of Toledo, an All-American City, stands a mosque, minarets and all. There are now more Moslems in this country than Presbyterians. There may soon be more Moslems than Lutherans. Eastern religions came with the arrival of Southeast Asian immigrants to the United States. The Honda factory near Columbus broke ground with the assistance of a Shinto priest.

All of this begins to blur America’s self-understanding as a Christian nation. It also challenges radically the centuries-old internal mission to which Anglo-Saxon Protestantism had devoted itself. The churches could hardly relate to the new and ethnic religions in the way they had grown accustomed to relating to the “unchurched,” namely, as subjects for “churching.” Nor did it seem appropriate to relate to fellow Americans as “men benighted,” to use the language of a familiar 19th century missionary hymn.<sup>21</sup> No one objected to sending missionaries overseas in order to convert the “heathen.” But Americans were not accustomed to thinking of any other Americans as “heathen”; and therefore attempts to convert them simply did not seem to be “American.”

Secularity and pluralism helped to shrivel the impulses for evangelization in the mainline churches. The Church Growth Movement has at least called attention to the Christian calling to evangelization. That is its value and its contribution. The question is not whether the Church is called to give itself to evangelization. The question is whether the principles and proposals of the Church Growth Movement can be a vehicle for that calling of the Church.<sup>22</sup>

If the Church must consider its calling in the face of secularism and pluralism, conservative evangelical theology is not very helpful. For secularism challenges the meaningfulness of religion and pluralism challenges the truth of religious claims. Neither challenge can be addressed by simply adducing, as conservative evangelical theology does, the authority of Christian Scriptures.<sup>23</sup> This is not meant to question the truth and power of the Christian Scriptures. It simply means, as Wolfhart Pannenberg has put it, that “authority cannot function as an argument.”<sup>24</sup>

## **BAPTISM AND CHURCH**

There are two issues: how the Church’s calling to evangelize is grounded, and how the Church is directed to carry out that calling. My proposal is that the Church must focus on Baptism as a way of dealing with both issues. But it must do so without assistance from the literature of the Church Growth Movement.



There is little mention of Baptism in Church Growth literature, and there is no attempt to give Baptism a central place in evangelization. Despite a professed intention to be attentive to the New Testament, there is no recognition that Baptism plays a prominent role in the New Testament's understanding and practice of evangelization.

There is no need to account for this neglect of Baptism in the literature of the Church Growth Movement. But there is a need to recognize that Baptism will undergo both a distorted understanding and a distorted practice if it is not located in the context of an authentic ecclesiology. The two sociologically operative but inauthentic models of the Church which I described in the first lecture have corresponding misunderstandings of Baptism.

If the Church understands itself primarily as "Salvation Institution," then an understanding of Baptism that developed under the influence of Augustine will predominate. It is based on Augustine's understanding of the power and consequence of original sin. Since the Fall of Adam, the sinfulness of all humanity, transmitted through procreation, bars every human being from the blessing of heaven after death. Since the coming of Christ, only those who are baptized in the Triune Name escape eternal damnation.

Because of this harsh teaching, Christian Baptism began to be administered to infants as soon after birth as possible. Since there was no hope of heaven for unbaptized infants, hell had to be made a bit more congenial. The theologians of the middle ages began to think of hell in terms of descending circles, with the worst punishment taking place in the lowest or seventh circle. Those condemned to the first circle of hell were denied the pleasures of heaven but spared the pains of the rest of hell. Whether or not it follows the medieval theologians in describing hell, the Church as "Salvation Institution" will want to baptize as many persons as possible, as soon as possible. The Anabaptist and other protests against this understanding and administration of Baptism reveal that it has little to do with authentic evangelization.

If the Church is understood as "Service Institution," then Baptism will be administered as one of the services the Church provides. Some years ago I learned to my astonishment that The Children's Hospital of Columbus, one of the outstanding medical institutions in this part of the midwest, expected its chaplains, including C.P.E. students, to baptize patients upon parental request as one of the "services" provided by the hospital. I learned of instances in which babies or children who had been dead for some hours were baptized by students in the C.P.E. program because hospital administrators or staff members ordered them to do so. The reasoning was that Baptism certainly couldn't do any harm, and it obviously made the parents feel better. So it was to be done, as a "service."<sup>25</sup> Neither understanding Baptism as a "service" nor as an admission "ticket" to heaven are any more authentic than the models of the Church which are their context.

The model of the church providing an authentic context for worship and administration of the sacraments is the church as “Eschatological Community,” that is, as a community confessing Jesus as the eschatological Messiah and understanding itself as called to anticipate the ultimate consummation of the *eschaton*. Therefore, it initiates persons into the event of Christ and into the community for which that event of Christ is constitutive. The Church baptizes as an exercise of its mission and through Baptism initiates people into its mission. That is the meaning and function of baptism according to the New Testament.

## BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The good news of the New Testament is that Jesus of Nazareth has been raised from the dead. In him something final and utterly decisive has happened to the world. The final victory of God for the world has taken place. According to Günther Bornkamm,

the Gospels and the Jesus tradition they enshrine are rooted in the certainty of the resurrection of Christ... It may sound like nonsense, but we venture to say that the Gospel story begins with its end. For Jesus' Jewish opponents and for the Roman occupying power, there could be no doubt that his end on the cross was the annulment of his story. For the disciples, on the other hand, the appearances of the risen One and their experience of his presence in the Spirit meant that his end was a new beginning, in the sense of a final and absolute act of God for the salvation of the world. Men had condemned Jesus but God turned their no into a yes. In that yes God committed himself irrevocably to the world that rejected him.<sup>26</sup>

Robert Smith makes a similar point with regard to the Gospels of the New Testament.

The Gospels are Easter books not only because they end as they do. They are Easter books from beginning to end, penned by people who in various ways...knew Jesus as raised from the dead, forever alive, and mighty.<sup>27</sup>

As I stated in the previous lecture, the calling of the Church is to be a witness to that Gospel which says in various ways: Jesus is the Christ, or Jesus is Lord, or God has raised Jesus from the dead. This declaration, if true, creates a new future. For if Jesus has been raised from the dead, then everything has changed for the world, for the individual. The power of sin and death has been broken. The new messianic age has begun in the midst of the old age. The old age is now passé.

Essential to that Gospel is a community, the eschatological people of God, the Gentiles gathered around a renewed Israel. This eschatological community is called to be witness to this good news initially when it gathers to celebrate, in anticipation, the messianic banquet. This understanding of the nature of the Church is the basis for understanding the Church's practice of Baptism as well.

The origins of Christian Baptism lie in the baptisms of John. There had been nothing like the baptizing of John in the history of Judaism. John's baptism was an eschatological baptism, the summoning of people to be baptized for repentance in anticipation of the coming messiah and the coming messianic age. Jesus himself is baptized by John. The New Testament describes that baptism

as a messianic commissioning. For the first time the theme of suffering servant is joined to the theme of messianic son.<sup>28</sup> According to the Gospels, Jesus understands his own messianic mission as involving suffering and the cross. The temptations that follow Jesus' baptism are assaults on that commissioning, assaults on his messianic mission.

Jesus refers to the cross as a "baptism." "I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed" (Luke 12:50). In Mark 10:39 he refers to his cross as both the "cup" he is to drink and the baptism with which he is to be baptized. In that surprising and instructive pericope, Mark 10:35-45, Jesus promises the same cup and baptism to his disciples. James and John come with a request to sit in the places of honor (as his chief advisers) when he comes into his kingly power. Jesus replies by asking them whether they are able to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism. "We are able," they answer. At this point one would expect the master to reply that such a fate is for him alone. Instead, Jesus acknowledges their answer. "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized." But he cannot grant their request. "To sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared" (Mark 10:39-40).

When the disciple community begins to baptize, it is *into* the Name of Jesus. Jews and Gentiles alike are "Christ-ened." That does not mean that they got their names. It means they received Christ's name. Since one's name represents the individual's reality, it means the reality represented by the name of the individual is now overlaid with Christ's reality.

### THE TRIUNE NAME

There is no distinction in the New Testament between being Christ-ened, that is, baptized into the Name and therefore into the event of Christ Jesus, and being baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is difficult to know how much to emphasize this point because I can hardly imagine that those who would be in attendance at the Institute for Liturgical Studies would challenge the exclusive use of the Triune Name of God for Christian Baptism. There is, however, a pastoral problem, as the recent action of the Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America indicates.<sup>29</sup>

What is theologically as well as pastorally important is to recognize that the dogma of the Trinity is a dogma of the Gospel, that the Gospel itself is the only appropriate grounding for the Triune Name of God.<sup>30</sup> The path to the Triune identification of God is the Gospel's own path. It begins with the resurrection. If Jesus has been raised from the dead, if death no longer has dominion over him, then he and no other has the power over the final future of the universe. But that is just the meaning of "God": whoever controls the final destiny of the universe. Therefore Jesus' disciples could not escape the conclu-

sion that they ought to pray to Jesus, be baptized into Jesus, and to think of Jesus as God.<sup>31</sup>

If that is the case, then the cross, too, was something that happened to God. Hence, the doctrine of the Trinity is the way the Church makes sense of what happened to Jesus on the cross. The doctrine of the Trinity is not mathematical nonsense. It has to do with the terrible cry of Jesus, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46). If the cross is something that happens to God, then Jesus’ cry from the cross is a cry that rends God’s own being. This word of Jesus implies at least two: the one who cries out and the one to whom he cries. That is how all of us experience the power of death: as our own dying, and as our helplessness when faced with the dying of those whom we love.

God enters into our suffering as the Father who does not die but endures the death of the beloved Son; and God enters into our suffering as the Son, who dies in anguish and abandonment to death.<sup>32</sup> Paul, theologian of the cross, sees this most profoundly. “He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?” (Romans 8:32). The Greek behind “gave him up” is *paredoken*, “to hand over,” exactly the word Paul used three times in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28 when he speaks of God handing the gentiles over to their own sins. But Paul is confident we will never be abandoned by God.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

The Jewish matrix of our faith makes all of this intelligible.<sup>33</sup> To confess God as creator is to confess a vulnerable God. To confess God as creator means not only that God calls into existence that which is other than God. It also means that God’s final, ultimate freedom is that God is free to be conditioned by that which is other than God.

If the universe is an emanation, not a creation, as the ancient Greeks thought, then “god” means whatever is not conditioned by a universe of time and space.<sup>34</sup> An emanation is something that escapes from one’s being, something not necessarily willed or wanted, like body odor, or bad breath. But the Jews who confessed God as creator did not think of the universe as an emanation from God, as something that comes to be without the willing and wanting of God. To confess the universe as creation is to think of it as something God intends, wants, and loves.

But to love something other than the self is to become vulnerable. It is because I love my wife, my children, my parents, my friends, that I suffer when they suffer. I am hurt when they are hurt. I can also be hurt by them. And when they are threatened, I want to be hurt for them, in their place. That is built into the confession of God as creator. God is vulnerable, hurting when we are hurt, capable of being hurt by us, and most importantly, hurting on our behalf, being

hurt for us.<sup>35</sup> God interposes himself between us and that which is destructive of us. That is God's own ultimate commitment to us. Hence there is something profoundly Jewish about the doctrine of the Trinity if it is understood as grounded in the vulnerability and suffering of God.<sup>36</sup>

## BAPTISM INTO THE TRIUNE NAME

Now in our Baptism we are grasped by the God whose suffering love for us will not be defeated. We share the destiny of that God. Therefore Baptism is about the death and resurrection of the self, dying with Christ, dying to sin. Paul's understanding of Baptism has everything to do with a profound understanding of the meaning of sin. The insight of the Lutheran tradition is most helpful at this point. Sin is not so much doing wrong. It is the dreadful refusal ever to be in the wrong. It is the dreadful bondage to self-justification.

Grace puts an end to the very need for self-justification. Grace is God's full and unconditional affirmation of the world in Christ. Grace is not so much conditioned *by* repentance as it is the condition *for* repentance. For Grace does not say that one must first repent so that God can be gracious. Rather, because God is stubbornly and relentlessly gracious one is free to repent.<sup>37</sup>

In Baptism we are united with Christ in a death like his. Because he has been raised from the dead, Christ is the justification of our lives (Romans 4:25). We are therefore free to die to sin, that is, to give up our dreadful need to provide our own meaning and justification for our lives. Christ is unconditionally *for* us because "death no longer has dominion over him" (Romans 6:9).

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).

Robert Jenson says the Christian Gospel addresses the radical question, "Have I any justification for existence?" The Christian Gospel answers:

Jesus the Israelite is risen, and has death behind him. Therefore, nothing can now overcome his will for you; what will come of the human enterprise and of your participation in it, is in the hands of this man of hope, and no other. There is reason for all your struggles.<sup>38</sup>

The Christian Gospel can also be summarized as follows:

The Crucified lives for you. This affirmation is unconditional, for it is in the name of the one who already has death behind him, and whose love can therefore be stopped by nothing.<sup>39</sup>

Baptism is death and resurrection with Christ, in Christ. It is the end of bondage, the beginning of freedom. It is the end of the enslaving need to justify my own existence, the beginning of the freedom to trust the justification of God.

Baptism belongs essentially to being a disciple, to becoming a disciple, and therefore to the making of disciples. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (note the messianic vision which encompasses "all nations"), "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," baptizing them into the victory of the vulnerable God.

## BAPTISM COMPLICATES LIFE

Such baptizing is going to complicate our lives. In Oscar Wilde's witty and devastating play, *The Importance of Being Ernest*, the plot hinges on whether or not the hero was given the name of "Ernest" at his "christening," since the woman he loves will only marry someone named Ernest. As the play nears its climax, the hero discovers he is a long-lost heir, abandoned as an infant by his nanny in a railroad station. Now he asks, "Aunt Augusta, at the time when Miss Prism left me in the handbag, had I been christened already?" His aunt replies, "Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents."<sup>40</sup>

Christening a luxury? An experience of mine in the East Germany of 1985 could hardly be a greater contrast. I was riding on a train from Leipzig to then Karl-Marx-Stadt (now once again "Chemnitz"). A woman and her young daughter sitting opposite me in the compartment began a conversation. The young girl was enrolled in the state swimming program, and the mother was very pleased with her daughter's progress. Before her lay the possibility of international competition and the very coveted opportunity to travel outside of East Germany. When the mother asked what I did, I said, "I am a theologian." She immediately became somewhat embarrassed and said, "We are not churchly. My daughter is not baptized." Then she added the most telling comment: "There are no advantages." She was right. In the East Germany of 1985 there were no advantages to being baptized. But that comes close to describing a significant aspect of Baptism.

It would be most accurate to say that Baptism complicates one's life. Long ago, before my thinking and language were more inclusive, I thought of publishing a book on theology entitled *A Man's Best Friend is His Dogma*. I intended to call the chapter on Baptism, "Beware of the Dogma." The late E. B. White, author of *Charlotte's Web*, once said "I wake up in the morning torn between the desire to enjoy the world and to improve the world. That makes it difficult to plan the day." Without too many changes one could use that as a description of the baptismal life.

Your Baptism makes it difficult to plan the day because you are given the identity and the destiny of the redeeming God and are called to that redeeming God's mission. Sometimes the difficulty will arise because the strategies and behaviors characteristic of being a Christian are not self-evident. How shall we pursue economic justice in a time when the gap between the rich and the poor in our nation and in the world is growing? How can we best serve peace in a violent and dangerous world?

Sometimes the difficulty comes because our Baptism calls us to be the bearers of a counter-cultural vision, to be, in the words of Gerhard Lohfink, a "contrast society."<sup>41</sup> As T. S. Eliot said in "Journey of the Magi," we are "no longer at ease in the old dispensation." We are called to see enemies in a new

way because of the Gospel. We are called to overcome evil with good. Our Baptism raises questions about our support for the manufacture and stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

Sometimes the difficulty comes because the way is clear but costly. How can we love both an enemy and a friend when the enemy is oppressing the friend? Martin Luther King, Jr., articulated a redeeming vision for loving both. He repudiated both acceptance of the status quo and hatred of the white devil. He believed that God's redeeming purposes would be served only if the liberation of the oppressed encompassed simultaneously the liberation of the oppressor. His discipleship was costly to his movement and ultimately costly for him. But that is how Baptism complicates the disciple's life.

Colossians is a baptismal tract describing the complication and gives concrete substance to Peter's assertion that "the newborn grow into salvation." Listen to these words from chapters 2 and 3.

When you were buried with [Christ] in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.... So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory (Colossians 2:12, 3:1-4).

Note that most of this is indicative. These are statements about you. Now comes the behavior to which you are called.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. ... Now you must get rid of such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourself with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all. As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and, if any has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive (Colossians 3:5-13).

Because Baptism will indeed complicate our lives we need to warn others about it. There is in the baptismal rite a dying as well as a rising to new life, a renunciation as well as an affirmation. I remember reading in a church journal years ago about a missionary in New Guinea who worked seven years in a village until finally, on Pentecost, the whole village was to be baptized. On Saturday before their Baptism, they brought all the artifacts of their old religion to the village square and began to smash them with clubs. I have often wondered, "What would we smash at our Baptisms?" Perhaps our television sets? The idols of self and culture? What would we smash? What specifically is at stake when we renounce "all the forces of evil, the devil, an all his empty promises?" How would we identify just one "empty promise," just one example of the "forces of evil?"

Robert Jenson says that the use of Baptism is always after the fact. It is to be believed and trusted in the struggle with sin in ourselves and our world.

My baptism broke the bond of the past on the future, and this concluded *event* just so *speaks* always: "You are justified." ... Now we must specifically remind ourselves that the freedom of baptism is not the freedom to do what I want, what I would otherwise have done. It is precisely *not* the freedom opened by the typical pseudoevangelical sermon: "Never mind, Jesus loves you anyway." Throughout the New Testament baptism is adduced precisely as the impossibility of such empty freedom.... The audible and visible word of baptism is the word whose hearing is eschatological birth. It is thus the last word, the last judgment, an unconditional declaring and establishing of the value of neophytes' lives.... After baptism, it is too late for promises to do better, too late for "getting myself together," too late for guilt to be of any use. The baptized have their lives to live *after* the effective and specific hearing of the final judgment.<sup>42</sup>

That is the point of the Colossians passage above. That is what it means for "the newborn to grow into salvation."

## BAPTISM AND EVANGELISM

The administration of Baptism contains its own strategy for evangelism. I call attention to two features in the current baptismal rite of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

The first is that Baptism is a congregational action. The pastor presides, but it is the congregation that administers the Baptism into Christ Jesus. When the congregation baptizes, it is initiating the newborn into the very community which it already is. Hence we need to recover Baptism as a congregational festival once again. That is why the *Lutheran Book of Worship* recommends that the congregation administer Baptism on specific dates: The Vigil of Easter, The Day of Pentecost, All Saints' Day, and The Baptism of Our Lord.<sup>43</sup> It is imperative that these baptismal occasions be authorized by the congregation, after appropriate instruction, to be sure, so that there is congregational ownership of the administration of Baptism.

The rite itself is set within the gathered congregation's celebration of the Eucharist. The congregation participates in the prayers and the confession of the creed. A lighted candle is to be presented to each baptized person or to the sponsor of a young child "by a representative of the congregation" who speaks the accompanying words. Finally a representative of the congregation presents those who have been baptized to the congregation, and they are then welcomed by the entire congregation, perhaps also by the greeting of "the peace." The newborn are thus received into the priesthood we all share in Christ Jesus, joining the community in the praise of God and in the witness to God's Kingdom in all the world.

The second feature of our present baptismal rite is one that we share with the Roman Catholic rite for the initiation of adults, namely, a recovery of what sponsorship in Baptism entails. Because sponsorship has been associated with small children, it has become an honor to be distributed among relatives and friends. Such persons might still be invited to serve as "honorary sponsors." But the idea behind the current rite is that each candidate for Baptism, no matter what his or her age, will be presented by a sponsor. The sponsor should be a



member of the congregation that is administering the Sacrament of Baptism. The sponsor should have sought out the candidate for Baptism, not vice versa.

The presentation of the candidate by the sponsor, which occurs near the very beginning of the rite, should be understood as the ritual "tip of the iceberg." An entire program for evangelization can be built around the presentation by the sponsor. We should think of the sponsor as the Christian to whom the candidate for Baptism is apprenticed. The catechumenate can thus be restored to its appropriate place in the process of initiation into Christian discipleship.

We need to recover the understanding that the catechumenate will last a relatively long time, and the sponsor will accompany the candidate for Baptism, or the young child after Baptism, throughout the entire period of the catechumenate. The catechumenate takes a longer time not because one needs intellectual or ideological instruction, not because it takes a long time to learn all of Christian doctrine, but because one needs to be apprenticed for a time to someone who is himself/herself actually involved in what it means to be the Church, actually involved in the struggles and challenges of Christian discipleship.

So the sponsor is the person who seeks out individuals who might be called to become candidates for Baptism. The sponsor is the person who begins to tell the catechumen what it means to be a Christian. The sponsor is the person who brings the catechumen to worship and guides her/him to initial participation in the ritual. The sponsor is the person who brings the catechumen to formal instruction. The sponsor is available for questions, not because the sponsor has all the answers, but because the sponsor can put the catechumen in touch with Christians who can be helpful with one or another concern. Above all, the sponsor is available as a model of what it means to be a Christian, to engage in witness to the Kingdom of God, to struggle with the tough issues of discipleship in workplace and home, in sickness and health, in citizenship and leisure, in life and death.

Think of what it might mean if we began to have parishioners willing to take on the challenge of becoming sponsors. Think of what it might mean if they would be willing to let themselves be asked what it means to be Christians. This is where all the hard questions are, but these questions are often not asked. What difference does being a Christian make as you work in a corporation? What difference does it make that you are a Christian when you teach in a high school, grade school, college, or university? What difference does being a Christian make if you are in sales, management, advertising? What are the struggles that come with being a Christian if you are a police officer or serve in the military? How does being a Christian affect the way you ponder public affairs, engage in politics, vote in elections? How does being a Christian affect your stewardship of life, of income, of the natural world?

These are not questions only for, or primarily for, the ordained members of the Christian community. These are questions for the *laos*, the people of God.

It takes disciples to be witnesses. And it takes witnesses to call others to discipleship.

This is a challenging vision. It requires teaching against long-standing traditions and expectations. It requires training people for sponsorship so the Church can engage in evangelization. But I submit again that it is worth the effort. This is the way the Church needs to be in mission.

It should not disappoint us if such an approach to evangelization does not lead to spectacular increases in church membership. Nearly thirty years ago Martin Marty wrote these words as commentary on the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed:

When we are aware of setbacks on most fronts, there will be the temptation to exaggerate the successes. A man will climb into his tower and report on the condition of the church from where he stands. If he looks out on religious America in one of its periodic revivals, if he sees numbers of people attending and joining and building churches, he will suggest that all is well with the church. For him, the basic strategy of the Christian life will be to flaunt churchly successes, to awe and overpower with statistical gains.

Such a view is bad theology because it misorients the picture of the church's triumph in the middle of the world. ...Christians who seek morale to carry on their lives will have to learn from this Third Article of faith not to look to noise but to quietness for significance; not to listen for blunderbusses but for arrows.... After one has learned to see Jesus send out disciples as sheep among wolves, two by two, traveling light, only then will one have the courage to turn over the church's life to its Lord.... Then one will not pin the goodness of God to the growth of the church but to its inner character.

Put it this way: if a flicker of faith in Jesus Christ is seen in any person, take notice. If it is no more than the glimmer of a candle soon to be extinguished, take notice. If it means but one person participating in the new life, this is more important than a new universe being born. It IS a new universe being born.... "God creates out of nothing—wonderful, you say; yes to be sure, but He does what is still more wonderful: he makes saints out of sinners" (Kierkegaard).<sup>44</sup>

In Baptism we are signed with the cross, marked with that cross forever. We were not told in our baptisms that the path of discipleship was easy, only that the Lord would be with us. We can take comfort from those strange words in the Gospel of Mark. "And Jesus could do no mighty work there [in his own country], except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching" (Mark 6:5-6). Marty quotes Martin Thornton: "Jesus restricts nine tenths of His ministry to twelve Hebrews because it is the only way to redeem all the Americans."<sup>45</sup>

Herb Brokering tells a parable in *"I"-Openers*.

Once there was a church that didn't have a cross in it.

The building committee told them that they could save a hundred dollars that way.

Instead they each have learned to make the sign of the cross with their fingers.

They have learned to make the sign of the cross over bread and wine and over each other.

Now instead of one cross they have hundreds of them.<sup>46</sup>

I have often told the delightful story of a dear friend who overheard his young sons playing "church." The older son was explaining everything to his younger brother. When he came to the end of the liturgy he said, "The minister goes like this [sign of the cross], and you know what that means. It means some

of you go out that door, and some that door, and some that door.” When I first heard the story, I thought, “Just like kids. What do they know?” Now I ask, “How did they find out?”

The Church gathers for Eucharist, and before the *parousia* it is always scattered, scattered to do the work of evangelization. We are going from this place to do the Church’s Eucharistic liturgy, to receive with thanksgiving the identity we have been given in our Baptism so that we can be sent and scattered to our places of ministry, there to be witnesses, there to evangelize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

## NOTES

1. David S. Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988) 51-62, 99-120.

2. Martin Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1984) 168-176. Marty identifies the beginnings with James McGready, whose revivalist work took place in Muddy River, Kentucky, beginning around 1799, with a first camp meeting in 1800.

3. Sidney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) 431-454.

4. Ahlstrom 434-435.

5. Cf. Frank Seilhamer, “The New Measure Movement Among Lutherans,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (May 1960): 121-143.

6. Ahlstrom 458-461.

7. Ahlstrom 743-748.

8. Ahlstrom 748.

9. Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965) 129.

10. Hudson 129. These figures present some problems because the churches that baptized only adults did not include children. And, it is difficult to know how to count the church membership of the slave population.

11. Ahlstrom 952.

12. Cf. Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987) 72-105, 186-228.

13. Jeffrey K. Hadden, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1970), identified the problem as a growing gap between clergy and laity. Dean M. Kelly, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing: A Study in the Sociology of Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pointed to the link between conservative churches and American chauvinism.

14. *The Christian Century*, Vol. 108, No. 13 (April 17, 1991): 421.

15. Cf. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), whose whole volume details this development.

16. *The Christian Century*, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 27 (July 7, 1971): 823.

17. Luecke 86.

18. Martin Marty, *The Modern Schism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) 95-142.

19. *Context*, Vol. 23, No. 12 (June 15, 1991): 2.

20. Martin Marty, *A Nation of Behavers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) 2-17.

21. “From Greenland’s Icy Mountains” was written by Reginald Heber in 1819 and quickly became the century’s most popular “Missionary Hymn,” the name of its tune. It found its way into both *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) and *The Service Book and Hymnal* (1958), but its condescending perspective did not make it into the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978). Especially offensive were the following lines from the first and second stanzas:

From many an ancient river, From many a palmy plain,  
They call us to deliver Their land from error’s chain.  
Can we whose souls are lighted With wisdom from on high,  
Can we to men benighted The lamp of life deny?

22. Cf. *Partners*, Vol. II, No. 4 (August 1980), for an issue of a Lutheran journal devoted to the Church Growth Movement. N. Amanda Grimmer, "The Church Growth Movement: An Appraisal" (pp. 9-11 and 27), has a good description and a sound evaluation. John H. Stadlander, "Emanuel Looks at Church Growth" (pp. 12-14 and 32), has an excellent article on the value of Church Growth for a downtown parish in Hartford, Connecticut. His congregation received sound diagnosis of its situation, solid encouragement for its mission, a sense of freedom for being itself derived from Church Growth's "homogeneous unit principle" about which Stadlander writes, "Curiously, it was only when Emanuel Church stopped worrying about the problem that Blacks and Hispanics began to worship." Above all he was grateful for "the pronounced emphasis which the Movement places upon receptivity and assimilation."
23. Luecke 50. "The final authority of Scripture" was the first of the characteristics that Luecke identified as common to Lutherans and Evangelicals.
24. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991) 14-17.
25. Elaine Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 72-77, offers both sound analysis of the pastoral situation as well as resources available to the pastoral care giver that are alternatives to Baptism.
26. Günther Bornkamm, *The New Testament: A Guide to Its Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) 23-24.
27. Robert Smith, *Easter Gospels* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983) 199.
28. Cf. Helmer Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1956) 11-24, 54-64.
29. Edgar R. Trexler, *The Lutheran*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (April 3, 1991): 26, reported the following action of the Conference of Bishops of the ELCA at the March 8-11, 1991, meeting:  
 In another decisive move, the bishops unanimously agreed that "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" is the "only doctrinally acceptable way for a person to be baptized into the body of Christ." The phrase "Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier" is not a "personal synonym for Father, Son and Holy Spirit" because these activities "are attributed in Scripture to all three persons in the Godhead."
30. Robert W. Jenson, "The Triune God," *Christian Dogmatics*, edited by Carl Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, Vol. I (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 90-96. Jenson specifically relates the use of the Triune Name in Baptism to the eventual dogma of the Trinity.
31. II Clement 1:1. "Brothers, we ought to think of Jesus Christ as we do of God—as the 'judge of the living and the dead.' And we ought not to belittle our salvation." *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. I (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953) 193.
32. Walter R. Bouman, "Why Evil Anywhere?" *The Lutheran*, Vol. 24, No. 6 (March 19, 1986): 4-7.
33. Walter R. Bouman, "A Trinitarian Perspective," *The Cresset*, Vol. LI, No. 1 (November 1987): 21-23.
34. Jenson, "The Triune God" 115-118.
35. Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965) 19-49. Cf. Shusaku Endo, *Silence* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1980), and especially Douglas John Hall, "Rethinking Christ: Theological Reflections on Shusaku Endo's *Silence*," *Interpretation*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 9 (July 1979): 254-267.
36. Pinchas Lapide and Jürgen Moltmann, *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).
37. Cf. Gerhard Forde, "The Work of Christ," *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, edited by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 89-98, especially 92-93.
38. Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 3.
39. Gritsch and Jenson 41.
40. *The Illustrated Oscar Wilde*, edited by Roy Gasson (London: Jupiter Books Ltd., 1977) 145.
41. Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 122-147.
42. Robert Jenson, "The Means of Grace," *Christian Dogmatics*, edited by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, Vol. II (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 331-332.
43. *The Minister's Desk Edition of the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978) 30.
44. Martin Marty, *The Hidden Discipline* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962) 57-58.
45. Marty, *Discipline* 58.

46. Herbert Brokering, *"I" OPENER: 80 Parables* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974) 27.