Number 25 / 2011-2012

CHRISTIAN STUDIES

// CHRISTIAN STUDIES
SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE CHURCH

A PUBLICATION OF THE FACULTY OF AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Volume 25 / 2011-2012

Michael R. Weed
Editor

M. Todd Hall
Associate Editor

Christian Studies (ISSN–4125) is a publication of the faculty of Austin Graduate School of Theology. *Christian Studies* is funded by gifts from readers and friends of the graduate school. Subscription is free upon request. Back issues are available for $3.00 each, plus postage. Correspondence should be addressed to Michael R. Weed or M. Todd Hall, Austin Graduate School of Theology, 7640 Guadalupe Street, Austin, Texas 78752. *Christian Studies* is indexed in ATLA Religion Database. Copyright Institute for Christian Studies. FAX: (512) 476–3919. Web Site: www.austingrad.edu. E-Mail: christianstudies-press@mail.austingrad.edu.

CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Volume 25 2011-2012

FOREWORD 5

ARTICLES

The Erosion of Community:
A Challenge to the Church 9
Wendell Willis

Reading Revelation Today:
A Word to a Complacent Church 21
Allan J. McNicol

Paul and the Mission of the Church 35
James Thompson

Psalm 22:
The Prayer of the Righteous Sufferer 47
R. Mark Shipp

What Should Christian Do?
Revisiting John Howard Yoder's *What Would You Do?* 61
Jeffrey Peterson

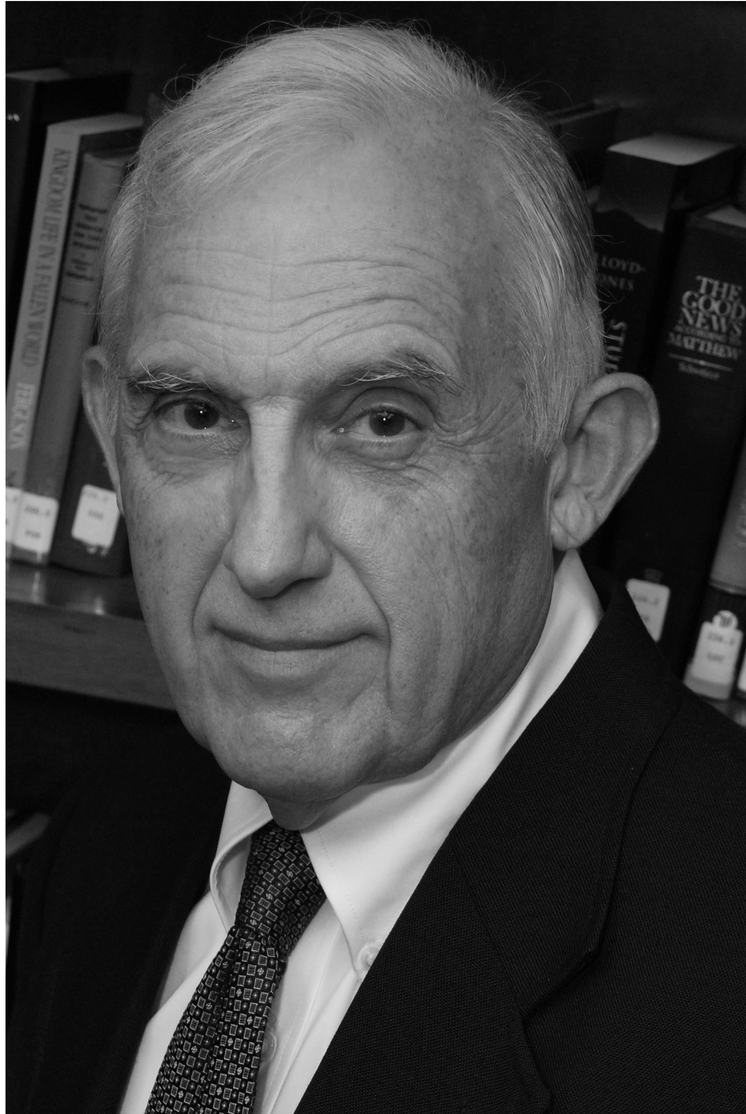
My Pilgrimage 79
Michael R. Weed

A Written Legacy:
A Bibliography for Michael R. Weed 83
M. Todd Hall

OBITER DICTA 93

CONTRIBUTORS 95

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 25 2011-2012 ©



**Photograph by Kay Taylor*

Michael R. Weed
Billy Gunn Hocott Professor
Austin Graduate School of Theology

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 25 2011-2012 ©

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 25 2011-2012 ©

Michael R. Weed
Scholar for the Church

This issue of *Christian Studies* is dedicated to Michael Weed. He is the founding editor of the journal and continues to serve in that role after 32 years. Michael recently initiated the addition of *Scholarship for the Church* as a subtitle for the journal. It accurately reflects Michael's commitment and purpose.

Appreciation and respect for his family heritage is at the core of Michael's being. His father, Maurice, and mother, Lela Belle, were important influences who guided the development of Michael's faith. In 1954, Michael was baptized by G.H.P. Showalter at the University Church. In addition to those role models he benefited from the mentoring of some outstanding church leaders.

Michael gained the attention of Reuel Lemmons. As editor of the *Firm Foundation* Lemmons was a significant leader among Churches of Christ for decades. He was also a friend of the Weed family. I have heard Michael speak of the practical advice and encouragement he received from Lemmons.

Another person of importance in Michael's growth would be J.D. Thomas, chair of the Bible Department at Abilene Christian University through the 1960s and '70s. Thomas was committed to preparing educated preachers and teachers who would help the church understand and instantiate the gospel of grace. The respect Thomas held for Michael was evidenced in his request that Michael deliver the eulogy at Thomas' funeral in the College Church in Abilene. Other influences at ACU would include Tony Ash and Abraham Malherbe. The latter suggested the topic of Michael's master's thesis, "*Heilsgeschichte* in the Theology of Oscar Cullmann."

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 25 2011-2012 ©

During his doctoral work at Emory University, James Laney, the Dean of the Graduate School of Religion, took an interest in Michael and mentored him. Laney would go on to serve as president of Emory and also served as the U.S. Ambassador to South Korea. About Laney's legacy it was said that "He understood clearly that the core of great research universities lies in the training of new generations of intellectual leaders for the academy and for the public good."

I believe that as one of Laney's gifted students Michael could have found his place as an intellectual leader at a great research university. However, Michael heard a different call. Along with other young Church of Christ scholars in the 1970s, Michael wanted to make a difference by doing—and modeling—scholarship for the church.

This was evident in his career decision to return to Austin from Emory to become a part of the editorial team at Sweet Publishing. In the 1970s, Sweet published some of the best adult Bible school curriculum ever produced among the Churches of Christ. Michael's vision and contribution to that project is an example of how scholarship for the church can make a difference.

Michael brought that same vision and commitment to Austin Grad when he became a professor in 1978. He understands the difference between a graduate school of religion and a seminary. The former is primarily interested in the Bible and theology as an academic discipline. A seminary, on the other hand, is committed to serving the church through sound scholarship. I will always be grateful for Michael helping me grasp the difference.

Within the past year I have heard two of Michael's former students recall the impact Michael's classroom teaching had on them. One was a student during the Bible Chair days of the 1970s. According to him Michael's teaching continues to shape his understanding and practice of the faith. Another student who graduated more recently said that while preparing sermons he can virtually see Dr. Weed leaning over his shoulder and asking, "How will this affect the life of this church?"

Those who only know Michael "the academic" have missed the blessing of knowing the person. Michael's humor and stories have been a part of the life at Austin Grad. His wit has eased many a heated discussion. His practical jokes are legendary. His skill with the pen goes beyond his essays: his sketches of colleagues drawn during boring meetings are hilarious.

As a personal testimony, I will probably never fully appreciate the extent of Michael's influence on me. When I began preaching, he helped me sort through a number of questions. In particular, he helped me understand that it is vital for the church to appreciate the role of tradition since a church without a tradition is like a ship without a rudder. Michael's respect for "those who came before us" has also made a lasting impact on me.

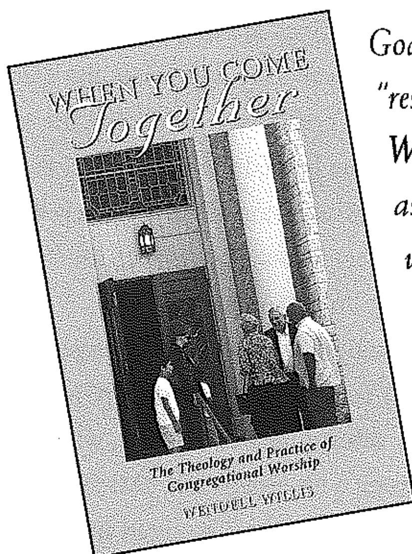
Becoming president at Austin Grad brought a number of challenges. One was that men who were my mentors would be under my leadership. Michael handled that transition with class. He is always respectful and willing to submit to leadership even when he disagrees with a decision. Michael continues to be a valuable advisor. I know that his counsel is given in the best interests of the church and school.

Michael's wife Libby has been an important part of Michael's work. She has supported, encouraged, and blessed him. Their children, Susan and Jonathan and their spouses, Pat and Amber, along with their grandchildren Mary, Hannah, Daniel, Luke, and Natalie have been the source of much joy and love for Michael.

All of us in the Austin Grad community express our gratitude to Michael for his commitment to be a scholar for the church. We pray that the coming years will be fruitful for Michael as he has the opportunity to focus on areas of study that were set aside to meet the needs of our students. The essays in this issue of *Christian Studies* are presented by friends and colleagues in appreciation of Michael's friendship and partnership in the important work of theological education.

Stan Reid

In worship we are "response-able" to God's work of grace.



God has acted and we are "able" to "respond" in worship. This is how ***When You Come Together*** *begins as Dr. Wendell Willis challenges us to re-think about what happens when we gather to worship. Dr. Willis brings a focused look to the fundamental features of worship that members of Churches of Christ have long practiced and experienced. His historical grasp enables readers to reconsider their own understanding of worship.*

Bob Chisholm
Spiritual Formation Minister, Prestoncrest Church of Christ

AUSTIN
GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF
THEOLOGY

7640 Guadalupe Street
Austin, Texas 78752

$10.95 per copy; 10-24 copies for $9.85 per copy; 25 or more for $8.76 per copy

To order: e-mail mporter@austingrad.edu or call the Austin Grad Bookstore (866-AUS-GRAD).

Providing quality study materials addressing the Bible and the Christain Faith.

The Erosion of Community: A Challenge to the Church

Wendell Willis

One of my undergraduate university courses is on New Testament ecclesiology. While I regard this as an important topic, I am often frustrated that my students do not share that assessment. In part, it is my failure to inspire them in the course. But while I accept some culpability, I have learned that I am also fighting against understandings that they bring to the course. The problem is not largely a matter of my challenging an ecclesiology they have, but it is to persuade them that ecclesiology is of value at all. Most have no ecclesiology, nor do they see a need for one. This not to say, or imply, that they are not committed disciples. In fact, most are quite committed believers, particularly if one defines commitment as service to others. They are dedicated to serving others and to supporting each other.

In a provocative, but discouraging, essay entitled "Loose Connections," Amy Frykholm reports on trends in the last two decades in America. She documents the declining identification of believers with religious groups. Surprisingly, this parallels an increase in personal religiosity. She summarizes, "People do not belong to churches the way they once did, even when they show up for religious services."[1] This agrees with the research of sociologist Robert Putnam and the point made in his influential book, *Bowling Alone*, as

[1] Amy Frykholm, "Loose Connections," *Christian Century* (May 2011), 20.

well as subsequent writings and lectures.[2] While once a nation of joiners, recently Americans have tended to value institutions as support systems, without sensing any obligation that they may have to those institutions.[3] In American religion of the present day "church shopping" is not about seeking the most dedicated Christian community, but using those churches which exist for meeting personal needs.[4]

Nor is this lack of interest in commitment to a congregation a reality only for the young. Julia Duin, Religion Editor for the *Washington Times*, has researched and described the drop-out trend in the over-35 group of believers in her book, *Quitting Church.* There are, of course, several reasons she discovered for this trend.[5] She quotes Frederick Buechner, from his *Secrets in the Dark*,

> Much of what goes on in churches, I am afraid, is as shallow and lifeless as much of its preaching and as irrelevant to the deep needs of the people who come to church hungering for a sense of God's presence that they more often than not never find.[6]

---

[2] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

[3] Amatai Etizioni, *The Spirit of Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), urges a model of "communitarianism" in response to the current attitudes of many Americans who insist upon personal rights but have little sense of responsibility to the larger society.

[4]An example is the Ethos Church in Nashville, TN. A recent article in the *Christian Chronicle* observed, "Though its adherents number between 300 and 400, Ethos Church's attendance is closer to 1,500. Most are young adults—many visitors—who have not yet become members." Clearly the church is attracting many, but many fewer actually identify.
(http://www.christianchronicle.org/article2159606~Declining_numbers%2C_but_signs_of_hope%3F).

Another interesting example of this is when many churches dismiss worship on Christmas Sunday to allow members family time. Clearly the personal benefit to those who had frequented these churches trumped church traditions. The "idolatry of the family" is another important concern for the church, but a topic for another time!

[5] Julia Duin, *Quitting Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). She notes that many Americans continue private religious practices such as Bible reading, prayer, even sharing their faith. "But they have given up on the institution" (18).

[6] Frederick Buechner, *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*. (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 284.

One of her most interesting conclusions is that more of these older members are leaving because they experience church as too reflective of the American consumer culture.[7]

The Crisis of Community

There have been a number of studies from the fields of social anthropology or cultural anthropology which have sought to explain what a community is. Earlier studies in the first half of the twentieth century focused on structures and economics, but a more recent shift is to look at communities in terms of function. Anthony Cohen suggests that communities are aggregating devices. Those in a community are formed on a basis of a sense of shared commonality. "It is a matter of feeling, a matter which resides in the minds of the members themselves … they suppose themselves to be more like each other than the members of other communities … they share symbols."[8]

In a recent book, Robert Putnam and David Campbell have surveyed the present state of American religious life.[9] They studied not only the social shifts in American religion and the current statistics of membership, but also the involvement of believers in religious communities. They found that the overall number of communicants has sharply declined in the last 50 years. They draw attention to three major shocks to established American religion in the last century. The first big shock was in the "long Sixties" (long because it lasted well into the Seventies), focused around the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights struggles which alienated many of the Baby Boomer generation. The second shock was the politicization of religion in the Seventies and Eighties when Evangelical Christianity became identified with one political party (the "Silent Majority" and the rise of the Religious Right). The result was that a significant number of younger adults dropped away from all reli-

---

[7] Duin, *Quitting Church*, 76–81, 101–108.

[8] Arthur P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester, England: Ellis Horwood Ltd., 1985), 20f.

[9] Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010). Their data are explained in an appendix based on surveys conducted in 2006, with a follow-up in 2007, in which over 68,000 interviews occurred.

gions. The third shock, which Putnam and Campbell identify as "after-shocks" was the culture debate over sexual conduct breaking out at the end of the twentieth century.

One of the most interesting findings of their work is the significance of the congregation in American religion. They discovered that congregations are the most common form of association in America. Sixty-two percent of those polled said that they are part of a regular place of worship. Over half (58%) of the churchgoers surveyed were "very satisfied" with their congregations; about a third are only "moderately satisfied."[10]

More surprising is why people chose their current congregation. Sixty percent of respondents suggested that most significant was "theology or religious beliefs," and a close second was "liturgy or style of worship" (45%). Spouse or other family connections were the next two most common reasons, and clergy was less than either. Friends (beyond family) were rated as significant by 20% of the responders, but when family and friends are included together, they form 60%. Most interesting was that least important were political or social views.[11]

What does this information have to say to contemporary attempts to renew interest in church? It is unclear, because those responding were active in some faith community, and thus probably their concerns do not parallel those who have no such commitments. Nevertheless, I think it does imply that among those seeking congregational commitment, beliefs are significant, and therefore to diminish or avoid theological teaching is an unwise move.[12]

---

[10] Ibid., 168f.

[11] Ibid., 170. Obviously the numbers add up to well over 100%, but this is because people were allowed to offer several reasons for their congregational choice. Analysis regarding why people move from one congregation to another (Putnam, et al., 172–74) suggests that "Americans may select their congregations primarily because of theology and worship, but the social investment made within that congregation appears to be what keeps them there."

[12] Putnam and Campbell, 178–79, describe the "emerging church" as a conscious attempt to recover the twenty- and thirty-year-olds who have left churches. Leaders in this movement do not think the key to doing so is the style of worship (often loud and unconventional), but the minimizing of doctrine to emphasize "missional living"

Those who study the nature of communities note that "community" not only assumes that members have something in common, but also that what they have in common distinguishes them from others. Thus community implies both similarity and difference, and those two realities entail a boundary. Some boundaries to community can be physical (a river, a fence); others are governmental (city limits, voting) or even linguistic. While boundaries can serve to exclude people, and some are created for that purpose, boundaries also serve to include people—they create the community.[13] Any community must have some boundary as part of its existence. This is recognized in most major religions, as E. Frazer has noted:

> … the Christian ideal of the communion of saints and the congregation and the Eucharist as forms of community; the centrality of *umma* or community in Islamic traditions and contemporary practice and theology; community is a prominent theme in Judaism, and in Buddhism.[14]

It is unfortunate that the need for boundaries is often considered as arrogant and un-Christian because of current debates within our national history. But boundaries are an essential part of communities. Biblically, the existence of boundaries is related to election. While Paul's struggles with Jewish people (including some Jewish Christians) are occasionally presented as if he were opposed to boundaries (cf. Eph 2:15), he is in actuality re-locating the boundaries of God's people in faith in Jesus' work (noted in Eph 2:16 and Rom 11:16-26).[15]

---

and building community. The movement is too recent to analyze its impact or success.

[13] The initial function of many early Christian creeds was to demarcate the community by stating its beliefs. The creedal controversies of the third and fourth centuries (and later) were sometimes used to condemn others (explicitly).

[14] E. Frazier, *The Problem of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict* (Oxford: University Press, 1999), 24.

[15] The pioneer work of E. P. Sanders in several works beginning with *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* has argued that Paul's argument over circumcision and Mosaic law in Galatians and Romans is not about how one is saved, but the boundaries which mark off the community of God.

The attempt to minimize the boundaries of community by emphasizing personal freedom and choice has occurred repeatedly, including within the church. Chaim Potok, in his history of the Jews, describes how European Jewish intellectuals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries moved away from accepting a marginalized status to what they thought was full acceptance into the new secular humanism originating in the Enlightenment.

> Jews throughout Europe embraced the high culture of the Enlightenment as their ancestors had once embraced covenants with YHWH. They could not know that they were whirling and pirouetting in a pagan dance macabre (484).[16]

Their descendants learned by painful experience that the feigned acceptance by the secular states masked an intense hatred that erupted into the Holocaust. Faith communities can too easily assume non-rejection is acceptance.

In a mostly forgotten essay, H. Richard Niebuhr, at the first involvement of the church in Germany during the rise of the Third Reich, warned of the danger when the church identified itself too closely with trust in civilization. He wrote:

> During the last generations the anthropocentric faith has entered deeply into the structure of society and has contributed not a little to the megapolitanism and megalomania of contemporary civilization. … The captive church is the church which has become entangled with this system or these systems of worldliness. It is a church which seeks to prove its usefulness to civilization, in terms of civilization's own demands.[17]

When the believing community denies or minimizes their distinction from the larger society often two unintended consequences follow. First, the Christian community becomes less important to Christians, not just in the question of affiliation or attendance, but in shaping values and norms. Since most people want values in their lives, they will get them from other places.

---

[16] Chaim Potok in *Wanderings* (New York: Fawcett, 1976), 474–512.

[17] H. Richard Niebuhr, "Toward the Independence of the Church," in *The Church Against the World*, eds. H. Richard Niebuhr, Wilhelm Pauck, Francis Miller (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, 1935), 137.

Every community has certain values essential to its self-identity, and when those values are indistinguishable from all others, the identity of the community is lost. One thinks of Jesus' warning in Luke 6:26, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." Secondly, in reaction to a less-identifiable community, there is often a tendency for those in the community to adopt a more critical and judgmental attitude toward outsiders (or lapsed members). An unacceptable spirit of pride can develop.

A Biblical Indication of the Importance of the Church[18]

One of the more common descriptions of Christian mutuality employed by Paul is seen in the use of the common term *koinōnia* and its cognates. It is found 19 times in the New Testament, all but five of which are in Paul.[19] It is a word with a broad reach of meanings. It is so well known that it is widely used by Christians today to describe church camps, Bible study groups and similar events. The background of this term and its usage in the New Testament is seldom noted, however.

At the most basic level *koinōnia* means what two or more people share in common. It could refer to a wide variety of topics and situations: joint undertakings in war or civic life, marriage (or sexual relationships), business partnerships, friendships, and clubs. Even before Plato there was the proverb, "Friends have all things in common." *Koinōn* was also a political term, referring to a collection of communities with common purposes, but larger than a town or city.[20] Provincial cities with a common ethnic background would band together to pursue common interests in relationship to a particular cult.[21] This wide field of usage should caution us against assuming that the

[18] The following discussion fits better my own training, since, with regard to sociological analysis, Michael is a much more astute analyst than I!

[19] There are three in 1 John and once each in Acts and Hebrews.

[20] Liddell & Scott, Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: University Press, 1985), 968. II.b.

[21] In the first century this cult was quite often a temple for the imperial cult. Cf. Barbara Burrell, *Neokoroi: Greek Cities and Roman Emperors* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2. This impressive book surveys these cults region by region in the Eastern Roman Empire, with special attention to the manifestations of imperial cults.

term implies "intimacy" or "mystical relationship." This move is often made with respect to the use of this term in reference to "communion" with the Spirit (or with Christ). When such implications are present, they must be drawn from the total context, not simply the use of these words.

Paul does use the word *koinōnia* to refer to the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:13; Phil 2:1). He also uses a verbal form to refer to sharing one's possessions with those who are teachers (Gal 6:6). Common to many uses, including ones not overtly religious, is the use of this term to describe a partnership. This is the case in Luke 5:10, where with a cognate noun we are told that James and John were Simon's "partners" in fishing. The same word occurs in Matthew 23:30 when Jesus says that his Pharisee critics fail to recognize that they are "partners" of those who killed the prophets.

The partnership connotation of *koinōnia* is found in Philippians 4:14 when Paul praises the Philippians because they became "co-sharers with" (*synkoinōnēsantes*, an intensive form of the verb) him at the beginning of his ministry (in Greece) in the matter of "giving and receiving" (4:15).[22] In the "partnership" of evangelism, the Philippians provided funds and Paul provided labor. Philippians 1:5 points to the same reality.

A similar manifestation of a partnership image applying to church community is seen in Galatians 2:9. There, Paul says at the Jerusalem conference that James, Peter and John gave the "right hand" of fellowship and recognized Paul and Barnabas as "partners" in the mission efforts.[23] In Romans 15:26 Paul applies the term to the funds he is raising for Jerusalem. All these "business" metaphor examples are important because the use of this term to describe the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 10 is too often understood as a private moment shared between the believer and the Lord (a problem at Corinth, as seen in 11:17–34).

[22] These terms are financial.

[23] A financial aspect is alluded to by noting that the Jerusalem leaders asked only that Paul "remember the poor" which Paul affirmed.

The point of this rapid survey of a Greek word group is that to describe the church as a "fellowship" (*koinōnia*) is to describe a mutual investment in interest and commitment that creates a joint venture—a partnership. While this partnership offers benefits for stakeholders, it also carries responsibilities. This may well be the hardest sell in the present culture. It is clear from the increased practice of co-habitation rather than marriage, as well as the increased divorce rate among the married, that the American individualistic model tends to value institutions largely based on personal benefit received.

Baptism and Lord's Supper: Boundaries and Being

Gerhard Lohfink tells a revealing story of an "instant response" chaplaincy program in Germany.[24] A church agency in Berlin equipped an automobile with a radio by which a priest, a physician, and a psychologist could be summoned at any hour of the day or night in the event of a crisis. Lohfink asks incisively what ecclesiastical model this unit presents? It reveals a church that is captive to modern culture in that it takes care of individuals, but does not shape a community.

Putnam and Campbell recount a similar event a century earlier in America. On the western frontier of America, the far-flung towns were too new to have churches. A "chapel car" was created for the railroads in which both Protestant ministers and Catholic clergy would bring worship to the settlers. Much like today's internet churches, these ecclesial inventions provided personal services, but neither asked for, nor could, receive commitments.[25]

Cohen in particular has emphasized symbols as constitutive of communities. While symbols may be physical, they can also consist of shared ideas: "… the symbolic repertoire of a community aggregates the individualities and other differences within the community and provide the means for their expression, interpretation and containment."[26] Shared beliefs and practices are essential to a community. The fact that others do not share these locates a

[24] Gehard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 4.
[25] Putnam and Campbell, 161.
[26] Cohen, 21.

community with boundaries. Boundaries not only exclude those who do not share the community's interests, they also serve to mark off those who do. Again we quote Cohen, "the symbolic expression of community and its boundaries increases in importance as the actual geo-social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred or otherwise weakened."[27]

With respect to the Christian community, the sharing of the communion and the practice of baptism for community membership serve both to identify those in the community ("the baptized" or "the communicants") and to distinguish this community from others.[28] In a time of decreasing commitments to congregational life in America, the value of symbols serving as boundary markers actually increases. That is why the arguments for an open communion table[29] or for diminishing the significance of baptism[30] are unwise responses to cultural shifts (presuming, of course, that one places a value upon the church for Christians, certainly no longer a given).[31] Such reluctance to be a distinct institution reveals the church's lack of faith in its mission and its dependence on the surrounding culture. Again, as Niebuhr well summarizes:

> The dependent church rejected theology or found it unintelligible because it accepted a 'theology' which was not its own, a theory

[27] Ibid., 50.

[28] Thus Robert W. Jenson comments: "Baptism initiates the community of the church; as the liturgical scholarship of all confessions has repeatedly emphasized, baptism is primarily a rite of initiation, a 'liminal' step into a new communal reality with its new possibilities and obligations." Robert W. Jenson, "The church and the sacraments," *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 215.

[29] For example, see the discussion between Sharon Warner, Jerry Sumney and Sharyn Dowd: Sharon Warner, "The Gate to the Communion Table," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 40 (2005): 127-130. Jerry L. Sumney, "A Communion Table for the Baptized," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 40 (2005): 221-223.Sharyn Dowd, "The Invitation to the Lord's Table," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 40 (2005), 276-280.

[30] As is described by David Falk, "Baptism and Membership: An Alternative Perspective," *Direction* 33 (2004): 48-59.

[31] For a concise argument regarding the function of baptism in conversion see: Robert Stein, "Baptism and Becoming a Christian in the New Testament," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2 (1998): 6-17

> of life which was essentially worldly. It wanted action rather than creeds because its creed was that the action of free, intelligent men was good and that God's action was limited to human agencies of good will.[32]

Conclusion

In his *Confessions*, book 8, Augustine tells of the conversion of Victorinus, a teacher of Rhetoric in Rome, who became a Christian late in life. At one point Victorinus, an old man, told Simplicianus, the father of Ambrose the bishop of Milan, that he himself had studied the Christian scriptures and believed the gospel. He said privately to Simplicianus "Understand that I am already a Christian." But Simplicianus replied, "I will not believe it, nor will I rank you among Christians, unless I see you in the Church of Christ." Victorinus retorted, "Do walls then make Christians?" Later he did confess his faith before a gathered congregation and was the occasion for Christian rejoicing.

My point is that the present trend toward less open identification with a Christian community has significant consequences not only for those communities but for believers as well. Christian leaders are unwise to respond by minimizing the importance of the community—the church—and by removing or minimizing the boundaries important to self-identity. The church is more than the sum total of its members. It is the *communio sanctorum* and the long history of the Christian community which is rooted in its Savior and the earliest believers. Involvement in the church community is essential to the formation of identity and values for members of the Christian faith. As my friend, Michael Weed, once quipped, one purpose of the church is to make us better than we want to be!

[32] Niebuhr, 153.

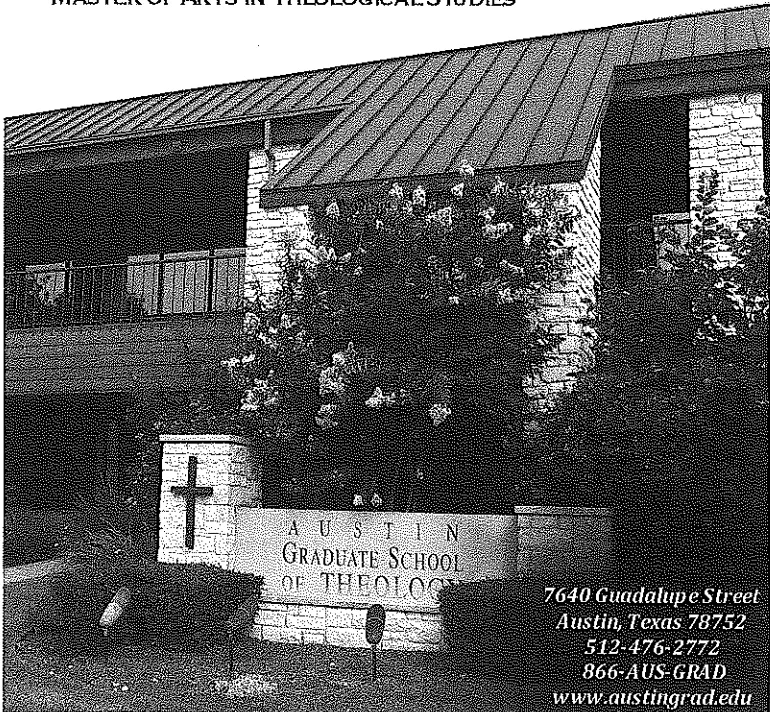
AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

To Know, Understand, and Practice the Christian Faith

"Austin Grad is truly a place where the 'Body of Christ' is at work preparing men and women for vital roles in ministry."

Wayne R. Urbanowski, Jr., Minister
Leon Springs Presbyterian Church

Degrees offered:
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES
MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES



Reading Revelation Today: A Word to a Complacent Church

Allan J. McNicol

If we look back through the history of preaching we can observe that there have been great sermons preached on Revelation. I recall from my youth hearing stirring evangelistic appeals based on Revelation 3:20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." For some reason most of these sermons managed to culminate with a description of Holman Hunt's painting of Jesus standing outside a very worse-for-the-wear door holding a lamp, knocking, and seeking entrance. Of course the punch line was that there is no handle on the door. Only the one inside can let him in.

After listening to these sermons, you can imagine my amazement when I was walking around in a vestibule one day in St. Paul's cathedral in London; I looked up, and there, to my astonishment was that painting. It was almost an epiphany. But anecdotes aside—though the illustration is instructive—it sheds little light on what John was saying in Revelation. There is much more to Revelation than an offer to accept the invitation! We must view this carefully composed literary work against a wider and more suggestive backdrop.[1]

[1] This essay is in honor of my long-time colleague Michael Weed. Professor Weed has carefully guided *Christian Studies* as editor of the first twenty-five issues. I chose to write some things on the book of Revelation for two reasons. First, this occasion allows me to express similar ideas to a wider audience than would not have access to my academic study *The Conversion of the Nations in Revelation* (Library of New Testament Studies 438; London/New York, T&T Clark, 2011), especially

In this essay I intend to offer a brief overview of the book of Revelation. The overview falls into two parts. Initially I am interested in sketching the main perimeters a current Christian reader should observe in reading this first century book. What is John saying? In doing this I will attempt to develop a sense of appreciation for the scope of the argument of Revelation—the flow of the text.[2] Thus I wish to spend some time putting on the table what I see as the basic point of the book of Revelation.

Second, I intend to discuss why this word is still significant for the church today. Hermeneutically speaking, the believers addressed in the churches of Asia faced a situation that parallels what people today encounter who are serious about their faith. Like the Sirens who sought to lure Odysseus to his doom, powerful elements in Roman society, as well as contemporary Western culture, offer attractive alternatives to the exclusive lordship of Christ. Revelation is a call not to heed those Sirens.

The prophet John was God's agent for making known the revelation of Jesus Christ to the churches in the Roman province of Asia. What he had to say to that ancient church is a message, I believe, that is far too often obscured in interpretation and preaching; what is more amazing, this message is seldom communicated in the mass of details of the modern commentary.[3]

---

chapter 5. Second, I have come to learn much from Michael Weed's famous article in an earlier issue of this journal titled "The Twilight of the Gods: Pluralism, Morality, and the Church," *ICS Faculty Bulletin* 3 (1982) 5-16. This article along with two works by Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), and Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), have been influential in allowing me to see the importance of the call of the prophet John for the church to be a contrast-society or alternative community to the powers of the age that still maintain their grip on much of humankind. Both the author of the Apocalypse and Michael Weed have given attention to this reality.

[2] This is roughly something like the Germans call *die Sache*.

[3] For example, the conservative evangelical commentary of G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 1999) is 1243 pages; the well-known Word Bible Commentary on Revelation written by David Aune spans three large volumes. There is much that is helpful in these works. But it is sometimes difficult to

A necessary pre-condition before drawing lessons from the Apocalypse is that we hear its basic claim as John unpacks it. Only then can we begin to contemplate the full impact of its message. In the same way that "we can't teach something that we don't know," we can't understand a book until we have grappled with its fundamental message. That is what we plan to do in this overview.

Thus I wish to spell out the essence of the message that John wrote his prophecy to convey to the seven churches of Asia.

The Essence of the Message

The book of Revelation opens with these words:

> A revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to show to his servants what is necessary to come to pass—soon; And having commissioned it through his angel, he showed it to his servant John.[4]

At the outset we discover two major items of prime importance for the reader. First, we are told that the revelation is information about "What is necessary to come to pass—soon." Second, we are told that this information comes from the Ultimate One: God; and was communicated from Christ (in the presence of God) to the angel and then to John.

It should be noted that this "revelation of Jesus Christ" has actual content. This is a point of importance for understanding the book. The fact that the content of the revelation is verified through a chain of witnesses is also important—especially with regard to understanding its structure.

What is the content of the revelation of Jesus Christ? What is it that was told to John that must soon come to pass? It is my conviction that the whole structure and drama of the book is built around revealing the content of this message which had major implications for the small, struggling early Christian communities in the Roman province of Asia.

---

escape the impression that the vision of the woods (the message) is hindered by a focus on individual trees.

[4] Except as otherwise noted, translations are the author's.

A brief survey of the book will show how its pattern unfolds. After the initial vision of the risen Christ walking among the churches (the seven lampstands), there is an initial assessment of them in chapters 2–3. The nature of this assessment is often misconstrued. Because of what follows in Revelation, the average reader is predisposed to think that the major problem for the churches at the time of writing is persecution (cf. Rev 2:13). Yet while hostility to Christians is clearly in evidence, the primary crisis that John sees facing the churches is a growing desire to accommodate to the debased civic culture of Western Asia. This seems to be promoted by their increase in wealth and commensurate desire for social acceptance. Gentile converts who had become leaders in the churches were tilting strongly in favor of friendly interchange and accommodation with the wider culture.

The apostle Paul had a legacy in this region. Some may have quoted him as favoring such accommodation in his teaching on buying meat in local markets earlier sacrificed to pagan gods (cf. Rev 2:14). John brands certain teachers in the church who favor cultural accommodation as followers of Balaam and Jezebel (Rev 2:14, 20–24).

This process of striving for social acceptance leads to a loss of fervor for the gospel and complacency in material success (Rev 2:4; 3:17). It is to these people that the heavenly Jesus addresses a strong call to repentance (Rev 2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:3, 19). They are the readers addressed most directly in the book. In light of the message about to be revealed, strong reasons will be given for them to change. These reasons reinforce the hortatory message of the book. No less than the opponents, the accommodationists within the church are in danger of being excluded from the kingdom when it fully arrives. Believers in the churches should not settle for the seductive (but paltry) benefits of present societal acceptance in place of the infinite benefits that will accrue to those who will walk the streets of the coming New Jerusalem.[5] The rest of

[5] At the core of the book are seven macarisms (statements of blessings) addressed to the earliest believers highlighting the need to remain faithful to a particular view of reality (Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). These words represent the divine mandate for action in light of the essence of the message of the book.

the book, the heavenly vision of what is to come (4:1–22:9), portrays the impending conflict and its resolution in the coming of the new heavens and new earth. This is the thrust of Revelation.

The Eternal Vision

Chapter 4 begins with a vision of God in the heavenly sanctuary. That vision culminates at 5:1. After an oblique description of the heavenly Father we are startled to find that in his right hand is a scroll. Within the scroll are the words which reveal what must soon come to pass. Most of the commentators rightly dwell on analogues of familiar court scenes taken from the time when the Roman emperor was seated upon his throne and held in his hand a *libellus*: either a petition from the people or a letter announcing his judgments. This would be in the form of a scroll.

What is noteworthy here is that the scroll is closed. The issue is raised in chapter 5 as to who is worthy to open the scroll. After considerable drama a search proceeds throughout the whole cosmos to find the one eligible to open the scroll. No one is found worthy to open it. In a scene reminiscent of Abraham finding the ram shortly before he was about to kill Isaac, the Lamb is discovered by God's throne. It is as though there had been a great oversight that renders the cosmic search moot. The Lamb is the one who is worthy to open the scroll and thus to make known God's will for the immediate future.

Then with chapters 6–7 the scroll begins to be opened. The first four seals reveal a growing number of disasters which affect the ecology of the Empire. Then, beginning with the fifth seal and an interlude, we hear the cries of the people of God who have not capitulated to the imperial powers and gods of the age. They cry out to God to bring them relief soon by exercising fully his sovereign claim over the world. The people of God are not immune from persecution. But there is some solace because they are sealed against spiritual separation at the final judgment.

At this stage it is important to note that the opening of the seven seals in chapters 6–7 is not itself the message of the apocalypse. The function of the opening of the seals is to provide an anticipatory setting for the revelation to

begin to unfold at the midpoint of the book. There (10:1–10) the prophet digests the scroll and prepares to express its message. The three cycles of plagues in chapters 6–16 (the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls of wrath) highlight God's judgments against a rebellious world. The action in the seven seals is from the first coming of Christ to the time of destruction and the second coming of Christ (6:1–17; cf. 1:7 and 16:17–20).

Chapter 6 opens with the famous four horsemen of the Apocalypse. For an ancient reader it is hard not to see that they represent the true nature of Roman rule and its expansionist military policies.[6] From this perspective, Rome or any other idolatrous power that claims to bring peace by the sword is mistaken. This kind of empire eventuates in chaos. The seven trumpets, seven bowls of wrath, and accompanying interludes give greater detail of what will take place during this time which inaugurates the Day of the Lord. Then the full fury of the wrath of God is poured out upon those who do not honor the Creator. These plagues are not thunderbolts of a Zeus-type figure being hurled capriciously at poor unfortunate mortals. The plagues are a measured wake-up call to the peoples who suffer under idolatrous powers. The nations who have allied themselves with Rome are to learn that it is not the political and economic powers of the age that are ultimate, but the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.[7] Despite their increasing intensity, these judgments do not evoke repentance. Thus we come to a crucial point in understanding Revelation.

---

[6] Marko Jauhiainen, "Recapitulation and Chronological Progression in John's Apocalypse: Towards a New Perspective" (New Testament Studies 48, 2003, 548). cf. I Thess 5:9.

[7] It is critical in interpreting Revelation to understand that the units on the seven trumpets (8:2–11:18) and seven bowls of wrath (11:19–16:21) are expansions of what takes place in the sixth seal (6:12–17). In my book *The Conversion of the Nations in Revelation*, 114, I ask readers to visualize a set of Russian dolls. Instead of unpacking the next one placed inside another in decreasing size the opposite takes place here. The units on the seven trumpets and seven bowls of wrath give expansive greater details of 6:12–17. J. Lambrecht, "A Structuration of Revelation 4, 1–22, 5" in *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'apocalyptique dans le Nouveàu Testament*, BETL 53 (ed. J. Lambrecht; Leuven; Leuven University Press, 1980) 77–104, calls this process "encompassing."

> The rest of men who had not died as a result of these plagues [i.e. those who had suffered directly by God's measured judgments]—did not repent of the works of their hands nor did they give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders of their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts (Rev 9:20–21).

The quality of the moral life in the wider Western society in which we live has degenerated to an unbelievable degree of depravity, even in my lifetime. Evidence of that is everywhere around us. But we ought to be under no illusion that this awareness of cultural degeneration will, in and of itself, bring a change for the better. The Apocalypse warns us that this will not be the case. Indeed, in the last set of plagues, when God no longer restrains his judging wrath—and goes all out against the forces of evil—men openly curse God (16:9, 11, 21). They would rather die clinging to their depravity than turn to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. Until the very end men blame God for the terrible state of affairs which emerged as the direct result of their idolatries. Something more has to be brought to bear before humankind will acknowledge the rule of the Father above. This something else is a key feature of the message of the scroll.

In chapter 10 the scroll—which holds the secret purposes of God for establishing his kingship over the created order and which has been opened by Jesus Christ in heaven—is finally ready to be revealed to the people on earth. In keeping with Revelation 1:1 the scroll is brought down to John by an angel (Rev 10:1).[8] After John receives the scroll he internalizes its message by eating it. In Revelation 10:11 he begins to give utterance to its message.

That message is found in summation in Revelation 11:1–13, a much discussed section of the Apocalypse. It occurs in the latter part of the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet. Essentially, the message is this: a

[8] The possibility that 10:1–11 referred to a "little," or "open scroll" (diminutive) does not mean this is a different scroll from the one mentioned earlier. There are several textual variants here; even if the diminutive is the correct text, the Greek of Revelation allows for us to use language variants incorporating diminutives.

brief time of horror will emerge (as already anticipated in Revelation 6:12–14). Indeed, echoing Daniel, John conceives of it as the fulfillment of Daniel's 1260-day period of tribulation (Dan 9:24–27). During this period, the people of God—the true believers—will be "measured" in the sense of being spiritually protected against the horrors of the Last Judgment (11:1; cf. 7:3; 9:4). But idolatrous and compromising Christians will suffer the same fate as the idolaters of the wider culture unless they repent (11:2).[9]

During this time, the steadfast church (symbolized by the two witnesses, 11:3–14) will maintain its prophetic witness to the world. It will be persecuted and scorned for that witness. The faithful servant-witness of that church manifesting the true claim of God shown in the life of his suffering Son will shine forth. *But even this testimony will fail to bring to repentance the idolatrous powers of the age*. Only God's direct intervention at the Second Coming will furnish the necessary changes. Then the kingdom will fully come. An anticipation of this event emerges in Revelation 11:12–18.

Revelation is not only a minority report on the failure of human initiatives to bring peace; it is also an alert to the possibility of martyrdom for the faithful. God's judgment carried out in the plagues (chaps. 6–16) does not bring about the repentance of the nations.[10] Even the suffering witness of a martyr church, which does not resort to violence, is not enough to prepare the nations to turn to God in repentance.

Here is a message of substance for the church today. In America, after each Presidential election there are some who believe a great time of peace and prosperity has arrived—but it never happens. If we believe that the re-

---

[9] See *The Conversion of the Nations in Revelation*, 110, where I make a case for the reading that those "trampled in the holy city" refer to the apostates. In Revelation the apostates are those who embrace the teaching of Balaam and Jezebel—John's opponents in the seven churches.

[10] Here I strongly contest the position of Richard Bauckham who argues that ultimately the suffering-servant witness of the church in this age will lead to 'the conversion of the nations.' See his important study *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993) 238–337; also his more readable work on the subject is worthy of notice. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 144–164.

sults of any political election or change of government will bring about the repentance of the nations, from a biblical perspective, we are sadly mistaken. The canonical text asserts that it will be only through direct action and intervention from God that the world will finally be made right.

The Ultimate Outcome

Simply put, after chapter 11, Revelation 11:19–22:9 articulates the revelation and works out the implications of this message. Revelation 12–15 gives greater specificity to what John envisions with the coming great onslaught (the symbolic 1260 days) against the people of God. The onslaught will be led by the great triumvirate of Satan, the sea beast (the revival of the demonic political-religious power shown earlier in the reign of Nero), and the earth beast, the priesthood which fosters the veneration of this idolatrous power.

Hearing the prayers of the saints, God eventually brings judgment upon these powers that hold such a strong claim over the nations. His final judging wrath is now exercised against them (Rev 15:5–16:21). Interestingly enough, as the wrath falls on this demonic system that holds power over the nations, there is still no repentance from this arrogant group.

> They were severely burned, and cursed the name of God who had the power to inflict such plagues; but they did not repent and do him homage (Rev 16:9).

In 16:21b, after Babylon is visited with huge hailstones, we are told that the people "cursed God because the plague of hail was so severe." The lesson is that there is a strain of evil so deeply embedded in the cosmos that it will never be removed except by God himself. The continual persistence of evil and rebellion is central to the message of the book.

Thus, in order, the centers of power of the demonic system are obliterated. First is the evil city (17:1–19:10).[11] Then the two beasts are destroyed—

[11] The "evil city" is Babylon (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). As noted, this is a cipher for Rome, as most commentators acknowledge. There remains a persistent

presumably with the coming of the Lord Jesus (19:11–18). Here we are reminded of Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians:

> It is just that God should balance the account by sending affliction to those who afflict you … when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in blazing fire then he will mete out punishment to those who refuse to acknowledge God and who will not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thess 1:6–8 REB).

Finally, the dragon himself (Satan) will be banished (Rev 20:10). Under the symbol of the millennium the ones who had been in a continuous conflict and struggle unto death during the 1260 days (3 1/2 years) are vindicated to reign for a thousand years (20:4–6). The time difference between 3 1/2 years and a thousand years is important. The 3 1/2 years symbolize a brief inevitable crisis culminating in the Day of the Lord. Times will be bad; but these are manageable compared to the joy of the final overwhelming victory which cannot be compared with the short duration of the coming conflict. *To grasp this reality is to get at the core of the revelation of Revelation*. Therefore one should conclude that accommodation with these idolatrous powers by the people of faith is folly. At the second coming, the idolatrous nations will crash in their own excesses. Then the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ.

---

group of interpreters (a number of whom affiliate with the Restoration Movement) that continue to insist that Babylon is the old Jerusalem of the first century of our era. The major grounding for this argument is the reference to "the great city" in Rev 11:8 as the place "where the Lord [Jesus] was crucified." This is an obvious reference to Jerusalem. The terminology "great city" also occurs in Rev 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21.Thus some conclude that Babylon is Jerusalem. On the other hand, although a case could be made that "the great city" of Rev 16:19 is Jerusalem there can be little doubt that what takes place in Rev 17:1–18:24 is John's prophetic description of God's wrath being poured out against Rome. Only part of this evidence is such things as the descriptions of the commerce of "the great city" (Rev 18:11–13). Babylon having the power over the kings of the earth, and the clear echoes from the numismatic evidence of the goddess *Roma* sitting on the seven hills overlooking the waters of the Tiber (cf. Rev 17:3, 9) supplements this. All of this points to Babylon being Rome. It is very questionable whether these descriptions could be applied to Jerusalem. Rather, just as certain places in the Old Testament (Egypt, Tyre, Babylon) are routinely dredged up as bad places, so old Jerusalem (11:8) and Rome function in a similar way in the Apocalypse.

In harmony with Revelation 11:15, the nations, no longer held captive by the dragon and his allies, stream into the New Jerusalem.

> By its light shall the nations walk and to it the kings of the earth shall bring its splendor … the splendor with wealth of the nations will be brought into it (Rev 21:24–26).

God will be all in all! The prayer that Christians have prayed for two millennia, "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," will be fulfilled.

Having received this revelation, the believers in the seven churches are given a world-view with which to endure the things at hand (symbolized by the 1260 days). In the face of the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6,15) and the prophets and prophetesses, who are given such pseudonyms as Balaam and Jezebel, John's hearers are urged not to compromise with the unholy system. Toward the end of the book there is a subtle warning that unless they repent they will not enter the New Jerusalem (21:27; 22:5). They are to be an alternative community, or contrast-society, to the world. As such they are destined at present to engage in a mortal struggle with the gods of the age, but faithful believers will emerge as the victors. Therefore John's audience is urged not to sell out to the local authorities (as advocated by some prophets) for the few paltry benefits found in "going along to get along."

With this word of hope the revelation comes to a close. It is in this context that I see real hermeneutical possibilities for use of the message of Revelation for the church today. One wishes that we would focus on the message that the crisis we face from the hostile forces of idolatry is paltry compared with the quality of the Lamb's victory (the revelation of Jesus himself) and install it in the pulpits of the contemporary church. Our preaching would have far more power. It is to the contemporary situation that we now turn.

The Message of Revelation for Today

An abiding value of the book of Revelation is its many reminders that life is not all that immediately meets the eyes. From Revelation 1:1 onward the book claims that there is a hidden dimension to the existence of the church—God's viewpoint. Our perspective on reality is this side of heaven. It

is always incomplete and distorted. We need to see reality in a different way. We need to see that our lives play themselves out in a much larger theater—that of the divine perspective. From a human perspective those who engage in mortal conflict with the gods of the age are losers; but from the divine perspective it is an entirely different picture. Believers triumph in the end. As is often said, "In Revelation, the victims become the victors."

A helpful way to look at the book for today is to note who, for John, was the ultimate enemy. There is little doubt that in John's era it was the Roman imperial power that, especially in the Eastern provinces, sponsored an entire apparatus of veneration of itself as ultimate. This was leading some, even among the people of God, away from the true object of worship. Throughout the book, time and time again, we are confronted with various images of the emperor and the system he spawned as a counter-point or even a parody of the Holy One who sits upon his throne in the heavenly sanctuary. But for the forces of Rome—as for all idolatry—the days are numbered. It comes as little surprise to encounter the fate of Rome in the taunt of Revelation 18.

It is not breaking news to observe that the Roman imperial power no longer exists. Given the public's low opinion of politicians today, we need not be concerned with a revival of the worship of leaders of state. But there are syndromes of power in our society that do function as contemporary analogues to the ancient power of Rome. Today these forces claim ultimate allegiance and loyalty for those who are fully enmeshed in them. Following the ground rules of functional atheism, paradoxically, they themselves serve as centers of power demanding ultimate claims on our allegiance—indeed, our very souls. I refer to such syndromes of power as those found in big business, the scientism of higher education, the media, big government, and even sports at the top competitive level. These are the contemporary equivalents of the claims of the Roman imperium that face those who would owe full allegiance to the gospel of Christ.

Phillip E. Johnson, former professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley, has observed that in the past fifty years the established public

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 25 2011-2012 ©

philosophy of America allows God little or no place in law, science, or the schools. Johnson claims that this philosophy, based on the materialistic thinking that nature is all there ever was, is, and will be, has become the new paradigm for imparting knowledge in the schools.[12]

At present in popular best sellers, we see a militant type of atheism abroad that treats believers with condescension and contempt.[13] The attitude of many elites is, “How dare you consider the God of Abraham and Jesus to be a factor in this world?” Larger numbers of Christians than we may think (as in the first century) are drawn into these syndromes of power and enticed into living by these naturalistic presuppositions.

Whether in the church or not, a careful reader can see that Revelation calls this idolatry. For those in the church who seek accommodation with these powers, Revelation recommends a strong dose of repentance. I do not think it is too much of a stretch for us to see that the power of the sea and earth beasts is abroad today. It is not the Roman Empire, but it is the same old idolatry. By emerging in an enticing new dress of contemporary syndromes of power, it has merely taken on a different guise.

A Final Word

A difficulty that we encounter in reading Revelation is that the book promises throughout that resolution to the church’s problem is close at hand.[14] At the outset we are told that the revelation of Jesus Christ is of “what must soon take place” (Rev 1:1). Later we are informed that the critical period of confrontation between the forces of the Lamb and the forces of the dragon is 1260 days, or in the language of Daniel, “a time, times and half a time.” Readers often lose enthusiasm for Revelation when they find out the

[12] Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1995) 35-50.

[13] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006) is the most prominent of these works.

[14] Seven times the formula “I am coming [soon]” is referred to highlight the Lord’s coming in judgment and vindication of the righteous (Rev 2:5, 16; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20).

book's description of the war between the forces of the Lamb and the dragon does not literally fit any reasonable interpretation of the history of the Roman Empire in the days immediately following the writing of the book of Revelation. But was prophecy ever totally neat and tidy? When we read the lives of the Old Testament prophets we often see that, by the grace of God, the wrath of the Day of the Lord, for various reasons, was often delayed. Yet the promise is never lost that God's eternal purposes, although endangered, would finally win out. This is the word that must not be ignored.

Moreover, to be precise, John did not predict the imminent "end of the world"—only a coming terrible confrontation with the gods of the age and a resolution for the faithful far superior to the present tribulation that they must undergo. Just as the Old Testament prophetic books are given a new dimension of meaning by the coming of Christ, so the ongoing course of history gives more depth to the message of the Apocalypse itself. We learned that evil is embedded in all sorts of locales and syndromes. It is difficult to sort out, but ultimately it is self-destructive and will destroy all those who enter into a Faustian bargain with it. Needless to say, this reading of Revelation challenges the view that the book is a code or time clock detailing how future events will unfold. Rather, Revelation is a statement of great faith that the followers of the Lamb will be the ultimate victors.

Evil may situate itself in all sorts of places and institutions before the nations submit to the witness of Christ and the martyr church; but one day the nations will bow the knee to his lordship. John was telling his first-century readers that it would be a tragedy if, having started the course with Jesus as Lord, they switched to Caesar, and thus in the end lost everything. Dare we fail to exhort our own hearers likewise?

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 25 2011-2012 ©

Paul and the Mission of the Church

James W. Thompson

The recognition that the established church is losing ground in Europe and North America has given special urgency during the past generation to a renewed examination of the mission of the church. Dissatisfaction has emerged with both the focus on and means of evangelism. This has led to a succession of alternative approaches in the last generation intended to recover the church's vitality and ensure that the Christian message speaks to a new generation. In 1980 Donald McGavran articulated a vision of church growth based on social science models.[1] In the 1980s Bill Hybels gained a following with the "seeker sensitive" model. Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*[2] offered an alternative vision. Advocates of the missional church have articulated another vision of the church's task. All of the advocates have appealed to biblical models of missions and evangelism. In this article, I will examine a major witness of the biblical view in the work of Paul, the paradigmatic missionary, to investigate the apostle's understanding of the mission of the church.

Our first challenge in finding biblical models is the recognition that neither "missions" nor "evangelism" is, strictly speaking, a biblical word. Nei-

[1] Donald McGavran, *Church Growth: Strategies that Work* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980).
[2] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

ther word appears in standard English translations, and neither is a direct translation of a Greek word. The Jesuits introduced the Latin *missio,* a rendering of the Greek *apostel-,* to describe the spreading of the Christian faith.[3] While three references to evangelists occur in the NT (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5) without further delineation of their task, the term *evangelism* is nowhere mentioned as a ministry of the church. The latter term is rooted in the NT developments of the prophetic announcement of the one who "spreads good news" (Isa 52:7) and "proclaims good news to the poor" (Isa 61:1). The verb *euangelisasthai* appears throughout the NT for the proclamation of Jesus, the disciples, and Paul. The noun *euangelion* appears primarily in Paul as the term summarizing the content of the Christian message. Thus, while both missions and evangelism ultimately derive from the biblical words, neither word is employed for the task of the church.

Paul's view of the mission of the churches he left behind is a debated issue. Did Paul expect his converts to carry on his mission? Did he expect them to evangelize and send missionaries? Secondary literature has suggested that he encouraged his communities to continue his missionary work. For example, Michael Green argued, "Evangelism was the prerogative and the duty of every Church member. We have seen apostles and wandering prophets, nobles and paupers, intellectuals and fishermen all taking part enthusiastically in the primary task committed by Christ to his Church."[4] Roger Gehring maintained, "From both Acts and the Pauline epistles it is clear that Paul practiced 'cell planting' missional outreach in these centers." He adds,

> Paul believed that his main objective was to establish small cells, that is, bases of operations in these cities, and to develop missional outreach from these support bases. From these bases outward the city itself and then the surrounding area were to be reached with the gospel. … These churches were trained by Paul

---

[3] Michael Goheen, "Bible and Mission: Missiology and Biblical Scholarship in Dialogue," in *Dialogue, Christian Mission: Old Testament Foundations and New Testament Developments* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 211.

[4] Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 274.

> to take the responsibility for their own community life and the missional outreach in their city and to the surrounding area.[5]

Similarly, Eckhard Schnabel writes,

> Apart from the tasks of edification and meeting with Christ, the church has the task of making sure that the people in the neighborhood, the city, the region and more remote areas hear the news of Jesus. Since the followers of Jesus in the local congregations love the one true and living God who created the universe, and since they love the Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life to save sinners, and since they are filled with the Holy Spirit who gives them power to be witnesses, they seek to reach the immediate vicinity and the remoter regions with the news of Jesus. This task involves both evangelism and missionary work. Churches have a responsibility to reach the people who live in the neighborhood and the same city with the news of Jesus.[6]

While Gehring and Schnabel may be correct, we have no direct indications from Paul that he instructed his churches to engage in missionary activity.

Some maintain that Paul's call for imitation implies encouragement to share in his ministry of evangelism. Lois Barrett appeals to 2 Cor 5:20, affirming that "the church publicly announces the reign of God because it is an embassy full of ambassadors for Christ."[7] This passage was, however, a part of the defense of Paul's ministry. It does not speak of all members as ambassadors, but of Paul's own ministry.

Although it would appear to be self-evident that Paul the missionary would urge his congregations to participate in his mission, the letters offer no indication that Paul exhorts his readers to engage in missionary outreach. All of the letters contain exhortations on a variety of topics, but in none of them does Paul urge his readers to engage in missions and evangelism. One is

---

[5] Roger Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 180.

[6] Eckhard Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove: IVP 2008), 423.

[7] Lois Barrett, "The Church as Apostle to the World," in *The Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (ed. Darrell L. Guder; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 136.

struck by the intramural character of Paul's instructions. He engages in extended catechesis and urges his converts to "walk worthily of God." However, he never instructs the converts to engage in evangelism or plan mission programs. The weight of his instructions involves building up the community and his desire that the communities will be blameless at the coming of Christ.

When one considers the importance of missionary outreach for Paul, the absence of exhortations for his congregations to share in his mission is astonishing. Inasmuch as the letters contain only a small portion of Paul's total instruction, the possibility remains open that his oral instructions contained exhortations for missionary outreach. However, since the letters present our only record of Paul's instruction, the question of the involvement of Paul's churches in missions and evangelism remains open.

Paul the Missionary

Although early Christian tradition claimed that the apostles evangelized vast territories, from the first two centuries we have evidence only of Paul as a missionary who conducted missionary journeys. Thus throughout Christian history, Paul has been the paradigmatic missionary. Acts reports a series of missionary journeys in which he proclaimed Christ and made converts in the eastern half of the Mediterranean (Acts 13–20). His letters recall the evangelistic work among Gentiles who "turned to God from idols" (cf. 1 Thess 1:9–10; 1 Cor 1:10–2:5; Gal 4:12–20) as a result of his preaching. Anticipating a visit to a church that he did not establish, Paul describes his ambition to preach where Christ has not been named (Rom 15:20) and speaks of his plans to complete the circle of the Mediterranean world by going on to Spain (Rom 15:24) after running out of room in the East.

Paul's statements about his missionary task indicate the distinctiveness of his call. He is the minister to the nations, and his goal is to present them as an offering to God. Like the prophet of Isaiah 49, Paul received the divine call from his mother's womb (Isa 49:1). Indeed, the frequent echoes of Deutero-Isaiah suggest that he is the prophet who announces "light to the nations," "brings good news," "announces salvation," and says, "Your God

reigns" (Rom 10:15; cf. Isa 49:6, 52:7). His concern that he not "run in vain" (cf. Gal 4:11) or "labor in vain" (cf. Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 3:5) echoes the words of the prophet, "I have labored in vain" (Isa 49:4). In his call for reconciliation with the Corinthians, he recalls the words of the prophet, "In a time of favor I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you" (2 Cor 6:2; cf. Isa 49:8). His anticipation of the time when "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:11) echoes the words of the prophet who concludes the oracle on the universality of God with the announcement, "To me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear" (Isa 49:23).

In preaching where Christ has not been named, Paul ensures that "Those who have never been told shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand" (Rom 15:21; cf. Isa 52:15). Like the prophet, he appeals to his listeners "in the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2; cf. Isa 49:8). On numerous occasions he speaks of the divine call, compulsion, and obligation to preach the good news (1 Cor 9:16). God revealed himself to Paul so that he might proclaim Christ to the nations (Gal 1:15). Thus he is under obligation "to the Greeks and the barbarians" (Rom 1:14). His purpose is to offer the Gentiles as a sacrifice to God (Rom 15:15–16). Paul obviously has a prophetic consciousness as one called to evangelize the nations.

Paul is concerned for the advance of the gospel (cf. Phil 1:12, 25) and recognizes that others are involved in preaching Christ. Other apostles and eyewitnesses preach the same gospel that Paul preaches (1 Cor 15:11; 2 Cor 10:12–18; Gal 2:1–10). Co-workers who serve (cf. Phil 2:22) and "struggle" (Phil 4:2) in the gospel apparently share his ministry of preaching. When others preach—even with impure motives—Paul rejoices that "Christ is preached" (Phil 1:18). Thus while he has a unique call to evangelize, he acknowledges that others are involved in preaching Christ.

The Mission of the Churches

In the absence of direct exhortations to evangelize and send missionaries in Paul's letters, one must ask what role his churches played in his mission.

Clearly, the churches participate financially in his mission. He desires that the Romans support him in his intended visit to Spain (Rom 15:24). He expresses gratitude that the Philippians participate in the gospel (Phil 1:5) by sending him financial support (Phil 4:15). But what evidence do we have that Paul expected for his congregations to evangelize? Scholars have appealed to several passages to suggest Paul's expectations for mission. We can examine them to recognize the nature of evangelism in his churches.

Evangelism in 1 Thessalonians. Paul's statement that "the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith has become known" (1 Thess 1:8) is understood by many scholars as a reference to the evangelistic work of the Thessalonians.[8] This passage, a part of the epistle's thanksgiving (1:2–10), expresses Paul's satisfaction in the listeners' conduct after their conversion. The larger context determines whether Paul is actually commending the readers for their evangelistic work.

The thanksgiving expresses gratitude for the moral transformation that resulted from the Thessalonians' turn from idols to serve "the true and living God" (1:9–10). Three participial phrases (*poioumenoi … mnēmoneuontes … eidotes*) in 1:2–5 elaborate on Paul's thanksgiving, indicating that the Thessalonians' turn from idols has resulted in their moral progress. As Paul prays, he remembers their "work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope" (1:3). While this progress continues until the present time,[9] it originated at the time of their conversion, as the three participial phrases indicate. Their "election" (1:4) was the occasion when Paul's gospel came to the Thessalonians "not in word alone but in the power of the Holy Spirit" (1:5). Thus the

[8] See James Ware, "1 Thessalonians as a Missionary Congregation: 1 Thessalonians 1,5-8," *ZNW* 83 (1992): 127-28; J. Lambrecht, S. J., "A Call to Witness by All: Evangelisation in 1 Thessalonians," *Teologie in konteks*, ed. J. H. Roberts et al. (Johannesburg: Orion, 1991), 324.

[9] Timothy's positive report of their "faith and love" (3:6) suggests the continuing progress of the Thessalonians.

 2011-2012 ©

focal point of 1:2–5 is the power of Paul's preaching, which has continuing effects among the Thessalonians.

Having elaborated on the Thessalonians' moral progress, Paul turns to their reception of his message (1:6–10). The Thessalonians became "imitators" (*mimētai*) of Paul and of the Lord (1:6). The nature of their imitation is suggested by the phrase, "Receiving the word in affliction with much joy of the Holy Spirit" (1:6). The word (*logos*) that they received was the gospel that came with power (1:4). Paul anticipates the later comment that the word of God "is at work in you" (2:13). Thus the word has continuing power to work in the believers' lives. The same power at work in Paul's preaching was also at work among the Thessalonians. Just as Paul spoke with power in the context of opposition and affliction (2:1–2), the Thessalonians have imitated his endurance because of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They have imitated not only Paul and the Lord (1:6), but also the churches of Judea by their endurance in the context of affliction (2:14).

As *ōste* ("so that") indicates in 1:7, the Thessalonians' imitation of Paul—and the churches of Judea—has resulted in their becoming a model for believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The reference to believers reflects the sharp division between believers and non-believers—insiders and outsiders—that permeates Paul's letters. The use of the word "brother" (*adelfos*) demarcates the kinship group from outsiders. The "brothers" include not only the local house church, but also the house churches in the wider geographic area of Macedonia and Achaia.

The ways in which the Thessalonians have become an example to siblings in the larger geographic area is indicated by the preposition *gar* in 1:8. The parallel phrases suggest the impact of the Thessalonians' faith: the word has resounded, and their faith in God has gone out. The resounding of the word in Macedonia and Achaia is a reference to the believers in those regions mentioned in 1:7. "Resounded" (*exētai*) suggests the power of the word mentioned in 1:5. Paul speaks with hyperbole in saying that their faith has gone out "to every place." Every place is probably a reference to "those who call

on the Lord in every place" (cf. 1 Cor 1:2). Thus the word has resounded among believers.

The opening phrase of 1 Thess 1:9 refers to the believers in the places mentioned above. They—the believers—are reporting the extraordinary change among the Thessalonians. Thus Paul gives thanks for the impact of the word on the lives of the Thessalonians, and he describes its influence among neighboring congregations. He does not describe their work as evangelists, but their influence on believers in distant places.

The sharp demarcation between believers and nonbelievers in 1 Thessalonians does not suggest that they retreat from the world. After describing a behavior that is "not like the Gentiles," Paul insists on behavior that is attractive to the outsiders (4:12). When the Thessalonians work with their hands, they will make a positive impression on outsiders. The attractiveness of their moral behavior seems to be the chief feature of their evangelistic impact.

Evangelism in 1 Corinthians. The Corinthian correspondence offers an additional window into Paul's understanding of the church's mission to the world. In both letters he announces that his personal mission is to evangelize a world that remains unreconciled to God (1 Cor 1:17; 2 Cor 4:1–6; 2 Cor 5:18–6:2). Response to his message demarcates those who are saved and those who are perishing (cf. 2 Cor 2:15). As a consequence, he challenges his readers to separate from the world, and he employs sharp dichotomies to distinguish between the church and the world. Outsiders are the unbelievers (1 Cor 6:16; 7:12; 20:27; 14:22–23; 2 Cor 4:4; 6:14–15). Paul's goal is to "win" some of them (1 Cor 9:19–23).

What was the role of the church? A rare insight into evangelism in the Pauline churches is evident in 1 Corinthians, which consistently draws sharp boundaries in the first four chapters between those who receive the word of the cross and the powers of this age who cannot comprehend it (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–2:27). He challenges his readers to draw sharp boundaries between themselves and the world (cf. 1 Cor 5:9)—between believers and nonbeliev-

ers (cf. 1 Cor 5:1–11:1). He knows, however, that believers cannot totally retreat from the world (5:10).

The problem of boundaries becomes a particular issue in his discussion of marriage between believers and nonbelievers (1 Cor 7:12–16). Here he acknowledges that boundaries are not ironclad. Mixed marriages already existed, and he does not suggest that believers separate from their spouses. Although he insists that believers either remain unmarried or marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:29), he counsels those who have unbelieving spouses to remain married (7:12), offering two reasons. First, the unbelieving spouse "is sanctified," and the children are "holy." The believer is not polluted by the unbeliever; instead, holiness extends outward. Second, Paul offers the motivation, "Wife, how do you know if you shall save your husband?" (7:16). The advice recalls Paul's division of the world into the categories of the saved and the perishing (1 Cor 1:18; cf. 2 Cor 2:15). The passage indicates an interest in evangelism within the church. It probably also offers a window into how evangelism took place in the Pauline churches. Evangelism was the result not of organized programs, but of the spread of the gospel within family networks.

A second window appears near the conclusion of the discussion of the "spiritual gifts" (*pneumatika*) in the church's corporate worship in 1 Cor 12–14. Having emphasized that the "building up" (*oikodomē*) of the church is the determining criterion for the exercise of the gifts, Paul turns to the unbeliever (*apistis*) or the "non-member" (*idiōtēs*) who might come into the worship. Two responses are possible when those outside the church encounter Christians exercising these gifts. The undesirable response is that the unbeliever may say, "You are mad" (1 Cor 14:23). One desires, rather, that the unbeliever be convicted by all, be judged by all as a positive response, saying "God is among you" (1 Cor 14:25). The expression is derived from Isa 45:14, the familiar image of the nations that come to Zion. In this instance the wealth of Egypt and Ethiopia and the Sabeans will bow down to Israel. They will bow down and say, "God is with you alone, and there is no other." This

allusion is further evidence that Paul sees the events of his ministry as a realization of the hopes announced in Deutero-Isaiah. He envisions the turn of the nations to God. As outsiders see the harmony of the believers in worship, they will fulfill the prophet's expectation of the coming of the nations to Zion. Paul anticipates that the outsiders who come to the worship may conclude that God is present in the group. Evangelism would take place under these circumstances.

Evangelism in Philippians. In Philippians, Paul expresses his concern for the advance of the gospel (1:12). At the conclusion of the Philippian hymn he looks forward to the day when "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," alluding to Isa 45:23 (LXX). The story of Christ becomes the basis for the conduct of the believers, who "work out [their] own salvation" (Phil 2:12) by living in conformity with that story. Those who live out the story will be "in full accord and of one mind" (2:2; cf. 1:27–30; 4:2). By living in harmony with each other (2:14), they will be "blameless and unblemished, children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [they] shine as lights in the world" (2:15). Paul alludes to the statement in Dan 12:3 that "those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky." This assumes the fulfillment of the prophetic expectation that the righteous will be shining lights and lead others to the truth. The images of light and darkness indicate the separation of the church from the world and the impact of the church on the "crooked and perverse generation." Christian unity will influence the hostile outside world. When believers are blameless, Paul will not have run in vain (2:16). Like the servant of Isa 49:4, Paul hopes that his community will be light to the nations. Evangelism probably occurred when Christian communities provided a model of a common life that was unknown in the ancient world outside the circle of the physical family.

Conclusion: Paul's Understanding of the Mission of the Church

As the one called by God for a specific mission, Paul did not assume that his mission was the task of everyone. Consequently, he did not instruct them

to conduct organized programs of missions or evangelism. Nevertheless, one cannot doubt that churches grew and evangelized under his tutelage. Their growth was the result of their radical separation according to which they did not identify with the world, but maintained a separation from it. The community has been rescued from the present evil aeon (Gal 1:4), to which the rest of humanity belongs. His converts are siblings. He distinguishes between believers and "the rest" or "those outside." They belong to the world that crucified Jesus. Only in their separation could they be lights to a world of darkness. He assumed that Christians at work, in the home, and at worship would have a positive impact on others.

Allan J. McNicol

PREPARING FOR BAPTISM

Becoming part of the story of the people of God

"The time is past that we could assume that our children would learn the basics of the Christian faith simply by osmosis. We must be more intentional about grounding them in the faith. Preparing for Baptism will make this task easier. ***Written in an engaging style and in simple language.*** *I recommend it highly."*

Ron Highfield
Pepperdine University

Also available in Spanish!

Written for:
Prison Ministry - Small Groups - Evangelism and Outreach - Campus and Youth Ministry - Teen and Adult Bible Classes - Baptismal and Graduation Gifts - New Member's Classes - Hospital Visitation

Order from:
Christian Studies Press
512-476-2772
866-AUS-GRAD
www.austingrad.edu

AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

$3.50 per copy
(postage not included)
Discounts for bulk orders available

Psalm 22:
The Prayer of the Righteous Sufferer

R. Mark Shipp

There are several psalms which have pride of place in the Judeo-Christian appropriation of the Psalms over the ages: Psalm 1, Psalm 23, Psalm 51, Psalm 100, Psalm 148, among others, come to mind. Psalm 22 has a special place in such a litany of psalms, as it serves as an interpretive and structuring guide to the passion narrative in Matthew and Mark. Jesus himself quotes Psalm 22:1 referring to his own suffering and experience of the absence of God. The cry of Jesus from the cross ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") is not a cry of despair, but Jesus' identification with the righteous sufferer of Psalm 22.[1]

Some Textual Difficulties

Any study of Psalm 22 must begin with a close look at the text. Even a glance at modern translations will show that there are several places where they do not agree and where the attentive reader must make decisions concerning the original text.

The first of these occurs in v. 1. It may be that in antiquity, as in our own day, the opening words were "off-putting." We do not like to think about

[1] This paper is dedicated to Michael R. Weed, my longtime colleague and friend. Michael, more than anyone else, has taught me to read scripture theologically and with a view to its impact on the Church.

God abandoning us. The Greek includes a phrase not present in the Hebrew: "O God, my God, pay attention to me!" It is possible that this phrase was either an ancient gloss, or else was included because the phrase "Let your ears be attentive" or "pay attention to my cry" is common in the psalms and prophetic literature.[2] Instead of an accusation ("Why have you abandoned me?"), the Greek of Psalm 22 begins with a petition.

Perhaps the most well-known textual problem is in v. 16, where the Hebrew text has "like a lion my hands and feet." It is not obvious what a lion has to do with the psalmist's hands and feet. This is made doubly difficult, because the Greek of Psalm 22 reads "they have dug out my hands and feet." Most English translators read with the Greek instead of the Hebrew, understanding "they have dug out my hands and feet" to mean "they have pierced my hands and feet."[3] While this makes for a satisfying Christological reading of Psalm 22, it is not reflected in the original text, nor is it in any way quoted or alluded to in Matthew 27.

While the difficulties are almost insurmountable, hands and feet "bound" or "shriveled" seems to convey the best sense.[4] The fact that the text is nowhere alluded to in Matthew 27 is perhaps not surprising if the original did not mention "piercing hands and feet."

Two more textual difficulties are significant. The first is in v. 20, where the Greek translates the Hebrew *yehîdatî*—"my only"—by *monogenē mou*, "my uniqueness," or "my only one." It occurs in Genesis 22:2, 12, and 16

[2] See especially Ps 5:2, 10:17, 17:1, 55:2, 61:1, 66:19, 86:6, 130:2, and 142:6, and many times in the prophetic literature.

[3] The Dead Sea Scrolls may come to our aid here. The Hebrew says *ka'arî*, "like a lion," which is also reflected in one scroll from the DSS, but other scrolls have *kru* and *kry* (note that the DSS had no vowels). *krh/y* I means "to dig," hollow out," followed by the LXX. It is also unclear how one digs or hollows out hands and feet.

[4] Some have suggested a hypothetical verb *krh* IV, "to wrap," as in the binding of hands and feet, which may make sense in this context. Roberts (A New Root for an Old Crux, Ps. XXII 17c," *Vetus Testamentum* 23 [1973]: 247–252) has suggested a *krh* V, "to be shrunken or shriveled," while Peter Craigie *Psalm 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco: Word, 1983] suggests a *klh* III, "to be exhausted." See ESV, NIV, NASB; but compare with NRSV, which has "shriveled," following Roberts, instead of "pierced."

with reference to Isaac being offered as the "only (son)" (*yeḥîd*) of Abraham.[5] Given Matthew's use of the psalm in the passion narrative, and the use in Genesis to depict Abraham's sacrifice of his only son, the statement in 1 John 4:9 has special meaning:

> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son (*monogenē*) into the world, so that we might live through him.

My suggestion is that one of the major reasons Matthew uses Psalm 22 in his passion narrative is the possibility of reading the ambiguous Hebrew with "my only (son)" in the Greek.

Verse 21b has long been a crux in the understanding of Psalm 22. A glance at the translations will underscore the problem:

> NIV: Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
> ***save me*** from the horns of the wild oxen.
> RSV: Save me from the mouth of the lion,
> ***my afflicted soul*** from the horns of the wild oxen!
> ESV: Save me from the mouth of the lion!
> ***You have rescued me*** from the horns of the wild oxen!

The issue here has to do with the structure of Psalm 22 and our understanding of the theology of the lament psalms in general. In terms of structure, the question is where the "shift" from lament to praise occurs, as often happens in the individual psalms of lament: at v. 21b,[6] or v. 22?[7] If the "response" section of the individual lament indicates that God has *heard* the psalmist's cry, and at some point will deliver the psalmist in the undisclosed future,[8] then the fact that God has *answered* the psalmist from the horns of the wild

---

[5] It is rare, occurring only 12 times in the Hebrew Bible.

[6] "Then from the horns of the wild oxen you answered me."

[7] "I will declare your name to my brothers." If v. 22, the shift is completely abrupt, but not unusual, as we see also in Psalm 6 (the radical shift between vv. 7 and 8). If in v. 21b, then the parallelism is interrupted, because the A and B lines no longer exactly correspond. This is not really a problem, as also vv. 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 do not exactly repeat the thought in synonymous parallelism either.

[8] Most verbs in the response sections are imperfects, indicating action which has not yet occurred.

ox is highly significant. The answer is that the God who was perceived as far off (vv. 11 and 19) is now close to the psalmist in his distress. More will be said about this below.

The last significant textual problem occurs in v. 29, "All the fat ones (*dishnêy*) of the earth," which is followed by most English translations. The NRSV translates the phrase with "those who sleep in the earth" (*di yishnêy*), which is parallel to "those who go down to the dust,"[9] that is, the dead. The NRSV provides a better reading, as it is unclear how "fat ones" equal the living or the dead.

The Structure of Psalm 22

While the structure of ancient poetry is difficult at best, there are patterns and commonalities between this and other lament psalms.[10] Individual laments have three sections. First, an *introduction*, in which the psalmist's problem is laid out in general terms and the theme of the psalm is expressed. This may be in the form of a petition, a complaint, or even a thanksgiving. Second is the *complaint*, in which the psalmist articulates his problem to the Lord. The complaint may be further subdivided into a variety of components,

[9] Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, Anchor Bible Psalms I (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 143.

[10] There are *many* attempts at structuring Psalm 22. These are a few: 1) Gerald Wilson (*Psalms, Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 413–423) suggests the psalm is in four section: v. 1, "thematic introduction"; vv. 2–11, "the silence and absence of God"; vv. 12–21, "vicious attacks by the enemies"; vv. 22–31, "promise to praise." This structure appears to follow thematic concerns, rather than form-critical analysis. Mark Hamilton, "Psalm 22," in *Timeless: Ancient Psalms for the Church Today,* R. Mark Shipp, ed. (Abilene: ACU Press, 2011), 163 suggests a different four part structure: Address (vv. 1–2), the psalmist's plight (vv. 3–18), call for help (vv. 19–21), and promise to praise (vv. 22–31). Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 79–83, on the other hand, sees only two sections: vv. 1–21, the prayer; and 22-31, the praise. Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, 198, with many older commentators, suggests the following liturgical structure: lament (vv. 2–22b); response (v. 22c); thanksgiving by the lamenter (vv. 23–27); thanksgiving by the congregation (vv. 28–32). The presence of a radical shift to praise is indicative to Craigie of the liturgical use of these laments. Regardless of the original setting of the pieces of these lament psalms, they have come to us in one piece, lament to praise, and so must be taken as a unit.

but must include a complaint and a petition. The third section is the *response*, in which God is praised for having heard the psalmist. Also in the response the psalmist commonly makes vows to sacrifice and issues calls to praise.[11]

Psalm 22 is a typical individual lament, with introduction, complaint/petition, and response/call to praise. However, It is atypical in its repetition of all of its component sections. Based upon my analysis, I suggest the following for the structure of Psalm 22:

Vv. 1–2: Introduction/Address to God: This two verse introduction is also the first complaint, in which the psalmist questions God's distance, failure to respond, and apparent disinterest in the psalmist's plight. The psalmist has internal and external issues, but his fundamental problem is with God.

Vv. 3–21a: The Complaint Section:[12] In this complaint, the psalmist repeats each of its elements twice, to emphasize his lament. First, the *contrast motif* (vv. 3–8 and 9–10), then the first *petition* (v. 11, with a second petition in vv. 19–21a), then the *complaint* (vv. 12–15, with both external threats—enemies as wild animals—and internal distress, repeated in vv. 16–18).

The *Response Section* also repeats almost every element. V. 21b is the response proper ("then from the horns of the wild ox you answered me"), followed by an initial *vow to praise* (v. 22, repeated in v. 25). This is followed by a *call to praise* (v. 23), followed by the reason for praise (v. 24). A call to praise ends the psalm as well, but this time it is universal (vv. 27–31).

Psalm 22 is a highly structured lament of the individual. Let us turn now to look at some significant theological movements in the psalm, based upon the structural analysis above.

---

[11] Tom Long suggests, in his book *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, that the text itself should suggest how we structure and preach our sermons. (*Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 43–52. While Long uses the two part structure of Psalm one to illustrate his point, it is also applicable to the lament psalm. Since individual laments are in three sections, the first one introduces the theme, and the last one ends with praise, we have a convenient three point sermon already organized for us.

[12] I follow, in broad outline, Craigie's "liturgical model" (Craigie, *Psalm 1–50*, 198) and include in my "complaint section" the lament, the petitions, trust statements, and contrast motifs.

The Theology of Psalm 22

Vv. 1–2: The Introduction/Address: Psalm 22 is unusual in its "cry of dereliction," "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This terminology occurs only one other time in the Old Testament, in Lam 5:20, relative to the destruction of Jerusalem:

> Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days?

The cry of dereliction is unsettling, suggesting to the reader that it is possible for God to "turn his face" from us, to abandon us. One might counter that the abandonment is perceived, but not real, meaning that God will inevitably come to deliver in the nick of time.

But what does the "nick of time" mean to the one who suffers? What did it mean to Job? Lament psalms are honest, faithful cries to God. What does it mean to say "It may *feel* as if God is absent, but he really is present," to the one who experiences God's absence in pain, loss, death, or persecution? To the one who laments, such abstractions are meaningless. So we are left with the honest and righteous cry of the laments—"Why are you so far away"—regardless of whether the absence and silence of God are "real" or only perceived. The introduction brings us immediately to the problem of all faithful people who suffer: the problem of the absence and silence of God.

One thing to keep in mind, as Mays reminds us, is that the cries to God in the lament psalms are faithful cries. It is addressed from the very beginning to "*my* God," the claim and confession of relationship. It is not some estranged or distant deity who is invoked; it is the covenant God of Israel's history (vv. 3–5), whose covenant commitment is to hear all who cry out to him (Ex 2:23–25; Deut 26:7).

Vv. 3–21a: The Complaint: I recently had a discussion with someone who informed me that the lament psalms were composed by a "bunch of whiners." We are also told from the time we are young that we should not complain. The perception many have about lament psalms is that they are inappropriate and faithless whining, since we are the people who live A.D.,

not B.C., and should be characterized by praise. To tell someone "You should not lament" strikes me as strange as a father telling an injured child, "Stop that crying! It's not right!" Believers are not special because they lament—everyone laments. What is different about the believer's lament is that it is addressed to the Lord. It is our faithful cry to our Father, when all we have left to offer is our lament. To fail to bring our laments to the Lord, on the other hand, is faithless.

The "contrast motifs" in vv. 3–8 and 9–10 distinguish between a holy God, "enthroned on the praises of Israel," who answered the cries of Israelites in the past, and the sad, un-holy, state of the lamenter, who is mocked rather than "enthroned by praises." The theological thrust of the passage is "You responded to those in the past who cried out, but now I cry out and you are silent and far off."

Despite the apparent absence and silence of God to the psalmist, he makes his first petition in v. 11. This petition recalls the introductory statement (that God is distant and silent to the psalmist). "Why are you far off?" in the introduction is seconded by this first petition, "Do not be far away."

The complaint is repeated, as are the other movements of this psalm. The problem is two-fold. First is the problem of the enemies, who are depicted as savage beasts, circling and rending the psalmist.[13] Second is the problem of his physical distress. It is tempting to think of the enemies as the same ones who mock his plight in vv. 7–8, and, if so, there may be a connection between the physical distress of the psalmist in vv. 14, 15, and 17, and the presence of the enemies.

In the conventional wisdom of the ancients, suffering was a consequence of sin, and so the suffering of the psalmist was a sure sign of God's rejection and punishment (cf. John 9:2). On the other hand, the suffering of the psalmist could have been brought about *by* the mockery and enmity of the enemies. It does little good to speculate which distress came first, the physical or the

---

[13] Equating enemies with wild beasts occurs occasionally in lament psalms, which portray the foes as ravenous lions (e.g., Pss. 7:2, 10:9, 17:12), or as dogs (59:6).

social. To the psalmist, suffering is *holistic*, involving all parts of the human: physical, social, emotional, and spiritual: his *self* is "poured out," his *bones* are separated (his body in distress), his *heart,* the seat of the will and deliberation, is melted, and his *strength,* his power of action, is dried up. When the psalmist suffers, his entire being suffers. One thinks in this regard of Job and his three friends.

The second petition (vv. 19–21a) makes the request explicit. Whether the problem is social or physical is immaterial. The psalmist requires saving. As with the introduction and the first petition, part of the psalmist's problem is the absence and silence of God, so he first cries out for God to not be far off. Second, he cries out for the Lord to deliver and save him from his enemies.

As often occurs in lament psalms, once a petition is made, once the cry to the Lord for help is uttered, the God who is "far off" becomes the God who is "near." This may help explain the abrupt shift from lament to praise in many of the lament psalms.[14] God, whose covenant commitment is to be near to all who cry out to him, has been invited into the pit with the psalmist. The depths where God was *not* are now the depths where God *is*. This presence of God with the psalmist in the Pit is what enables him to shift from lament to praise. Whether the physical ailment or affliction of the enemy has yet been removed is doubtful, but praise ushers forth from the psalmist, because the one who answers him on the horns of the wild ox has joined him in the Pit.

The *response section* repeats all of its major movements as well, underscoring the lament and the praise elements. It is important to remember that

[14] I suggest here that the common understanding of the "shift" from lament to praise in most individual laments was liturgical, that is, laments did not originally have the praise hymn as their conclusion, but this was supplied by a priest or appended at a later date, is not necessarily the best way of approaching lament psalms theologically. Note, for example, Peter Craigie's comment on the liturgical nature of lament psalms:

> The words [i.e., the response] come in such a striking contrast to the preceding lament and prayer, that one must presuppose the declaration of an oracle (Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19; Waco: Word, 1983), 198.

the verbs in the vows and the calls to praise are all in the Hebrew equivalent of our future tense. Deliverance has likely not yet come, but is still to occur at some undisclosed time, in God's reckoning. Also, the movement in individual laments is from isolation to re-incorporation into the community of faith. When one laments, one apparently laments alone, but there is no "individual hymn of praise" in the book of Psalms. Restoration to community is anticipated in virtually all of the lament psalms.

Another feature to underscore is the universal nature of the final call to praise. Not the psalmist alone, but the entire cosmos is called to join in the hymn of praise. First, the call goes out to "those who seek the Lord," presumably Israel (v. 26). Then the ends of the earth—the "families of the nations," all the Gentiles—are called to worship (vv. 27–28), followed by the living (v. 29a), the dead, (29b),[15] and finally the unborn (vv. 30–31) are all called upon to worship and praise the Lord. We are reminded here of Psalm 148, the Great *Hallel*, where the heavens, the earth, and the underworld are all called upon to praise God.

The Use of Psalm 22 in Matthew's Passion Narrative

Gerald Wilson suggests in his commentary that Psalm 22 in the passion narrative has such a gridlock on our psyches that it is difficult, if not impossible, to read the psalm on its own terms, for its own theology and message.[16] Mays adds a further caveat:

> Because of the close connection of Psalm 22 with Jesus, it became the predominant custom in the early church to take the psalm as Jesus' words and relocate it completely in a Christological context. This results in understanding the psalm in terms of Jesus. But the canonical relation between passion narrative and psalm invites us also to undertake to understand Jesus in terms of

[15] See note 5 above. Reading "those who sleep in the earth" with the NRSV.

[16] Wilson, *Psalms, Volume 1,* 424. Note that by the time of Justin Martyr, ca. 155 A.D., the original context of the psalm has been lost and completely relocated in prophecy concerning the death and resurrection of Christ (see *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* [Trans. Thomas B. Falls; Selections of the Fathers of the Church, vol. 3; Washington: Catholic University of America, 2003], 148–160.

> the psalm, that is, to view him through the form and language of this prayer. That would be to follow the example of the apostles and evangelists by using the psalm as a hermeneutical context.[17]

Wilson also says that it is only by reading the text in its own theological and cultural context that Matthew's and Mark's use of it can become clear and meaningful. It is possible, on the other hand, to so relegate Psalm 22 to Iron Age irrelevance that it ceases to have meaning for other contexts.

Psalm 22 has three to five quotes or allusions in Matthew 27 (only three in Mark 15).[18] These are, in Matthean order, dividing the clothing and casting lots for it, in Matt 27:35 (Ps 22:18); "Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—let him rescue the one in whom he delights," in Matt 27:43 (Ps 22:8); and the cry of dereliction, in Matt. 27:46 (Ps 22:1). In addition, there may be other allusions, such as the crowd mocking Jesus (Matt 27:39; compare with Ps 22:7, the enemies shaking their heads and mocking), and Reumann includes "the one who cannot keep himself alive" (Ps 22:29c), which he says has an allusion in Matt. 27:42.[19]

I pointed out earlier that other imagery or terminology used in the psalm make it uniquely qualified for appropriation as the messianic psalm *par excellence*. Psalm 22 was read as a psalm of David by the 1st century A.D., suggestive of Messianic application. The translation of *yehidatî* ("my only one") as *monogenē mou* in the Greek was suggestive both of Jesus as God's only son and of the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. The psalmist being cast upon God from birth (Ps 22:10) may have been suggestive also of Jesus' special relationship with the father from birth. Along with the direct allusions and quotations, there could not be a better psalm with which to organize the passion narrative. The point is, Matthew used the entire psalm, and not just a

---

[17] Mays, "Prayer and Christology: Psalm 22 as Perspective on the Passion," *Theology Today* 42 (1985), 323.

[18] Richard Bauckham suggests that there are five in Mark's passion narrative [*Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 256]. Psalm 69 also has one or two allusions, as does Isaiah 53.

[19] John Reumann, "Psalm 22 at the Cross: Lament and Thanksgiving for Jesus Christ," *Interpretation* 28 (1974), 42.

few select quotes, in the constructing of the passion narrative, including the characterization of the suffering of the lamenter, his persecution, his cry, and finally his triumph and praise.[20]

Matthew is the Gospel interpreter *par excellence* of the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms and Isaiah, as prophetic of Jesus Christ. The Psalms, no less than the prophets, were understood to be "hymnic prophecy." The laments of David and the Royal Psalms were fertile ground for application to the ministry, the death, and the resurrection of Christ.[21] New Testament passages clearly make allusion to the prophetic function of Old Testament texts, in some sense prefiguring or pointing to the suffering and exaltation of Jesus:

> Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look! (1 Peter 1:10-12)

He said to them, "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? (Mark 9:12)

The Old Testament prophetic texts, including select psalms (with 24 quotations or allusions to Psalm 22 in the New Testament), were understood to predict or foreshadow the sufferings and glory of Jesus Christ.

---

[20] See Keith Campbell, "Matthew's Hermeneutic of Psalm 22:1 and Jer. 31:15," *Faith and Mission* 24 (2007): 46–58. Also, Mays has an insightful article on the identity of the lamenter in Psalm 22, and how the entirety of the psalm pictures a special sufferer only adequately captured in a royal messianic figure and ultimately in Jesus the Christ. See Mays, "Prayer and Christology," 329. Some aspects of the psalm which were apparently not picked up by the Gospel writers, but which subsequently were interpreted in light of Jesus include the piercing of the lamenter's hands and feet in Psalm 22:16c, which seems an obvious application, unless the "piercing" word was in reality not present in the earliest texts.

[21] Campbell, "Matthew's Hermeneutic," 47–48.

Something further must be said about the cry of dereliction in Psalm 22:1 and Matt 27:46. Many have suggested that the quotation of Psalm 22:1 from the cross is a kind of "shorthand" for identifying the entire psalm.[22] Thus, in the first century, everyone would know that quoting the first line of a work was a reference to the entire work, much like referring to "Onward Christian Soldiers," the opening phrase of the classic hymn, is a way of referencing the whole. In this way, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is a way of referencing the entire psalm, the final third of which is a hymn of praise. In other words, the cry of dereliction from the cross means "suffering, and subsequent glory," for the whole psalm is in view. It refers, then, to confidence and praise, not to lament at the apparent absence and silence of God.

This interpretation can be open to the challenge that Jesus did not truly enter into the lament and did not truly suffer with us in all our afflictions.[23] Others suggest that to so interpret Psalm 22:1, and its application in Matthew 27, is to damage the meaning of the lament, that God had indeed turned his back on the psalmist, and on Christ, and thus the cry is real. Those who adopt this position may be open to the criticism that God cannot abandon his only son, that it is impossible for the Godhead to be split in this fashion.[24]

A third alternative is, I think, an attractive one. That it, that Jesus takes up the righteous cry of the sufferer, that he laments in every way as we do.[25] He enters into the Pit, he suffers the same persecution from enemies, the same physical distress, the same apparent silence and absence of God, that afflicts the psalmist in Psalm 22. As I mentioned earlier, it does little good to speculate whether God actually is silent and distant; what is the difference to the sufferer whether God *is* distant, or is merely *perceived* as such? We live on the ground, under the sun (Eccl 1:3, 9, 14, etc.), and are often enough

[22] Mays, "Prayer and Christology," 322.

[23] See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 204–205.

[24] *Ibid.*, 203–204.

[25] See in this regard Reumann, "Psalm 22 at the Cross," 43 and Mays, "Prayer and Christology," 325. Bauckham, (*Jesus and the God of Israel*, 256, has perhaps the finest discussion of how Jesus gathers into himself and his lament all our laments.

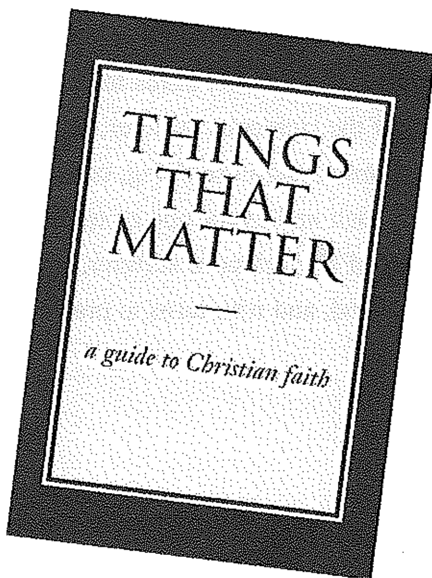
people of the lament. Jesus takes up the paradigmatic prayer of the righteous sufferer, like Job, who cries out to God in his anguish and loss and rails to him about his absence and silence. Job is never chided or condemned for his cries; rather, God commends him in the closing episode (Job 42:8) for speaking about him what was true! Jesus takes on the persona—in fact, becomes the persona—of the righteous sufferer, who cries out in his physical, social, and spiritual distress, and in so doing, calls God the Father his the lament and identifies with each and every one of us in our suffering. Psalm 22 is, then, the ultimate cry of the righteous sufferer, who makes his cry to the Lord, who is answered by God, and who turns to praise and calls the ends of the earth to join in that praise.

Written by the faculty of Austin Graduate School of Theology

Small Groups
Evangelism and Outreach
Campus and Youth Ministry
Teen and Adult Bible Classes
Baptismal and Graduation Gifts
New Member's Classes
Hospital Visitation
Prison Ministry

Order from:
Christian Studies Press
512-476-2772
866-AUS-GRAD
www.austingrad.edu

$3.50 per copy
(postage not included)
Discounts for bulk orders available



"Simple, yet substantive.
I have often wished for an introductory guide to Christian faith to share with an earnest inquirer or a new Christian. Things That Matter *is such a tool. It's excellent! Simple, yet substantive. I heartily recommend it!"*

Harold Hazelip
Lipscomb University

AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

What Should Christian Do?
Revisiting John Howard Yoder's *What Would You Do?* [*]

Jeffrey Peterson

The human communities that Augustine described as the "earthly city" all depend for their existence on the use of lethal force and the threat of its use. Killing, that is to say, is integral to the life of every enduring earthly polity, including all those in which the church of Jesus Christ, the visible manifestation of Augustine's "city of God," subsists during its earthly sojourn. Christians have long, and rightly, been troubled by this fact and have reflected on our proper disposition toward such force in a world thus configured as we await the consummation of the kingdom of God. This reflection is deposited

[*] I am pleased to offer this essay in honor of Michael Robbins Weed, recently named the Billie Gunn Hocott Professor Emeritus of Theology and Ethics at Austin Graduate School of Theology. Michael has long taught a version of the case examined here in classes on ethics. While I've benefited greatly from discussing it with him over some years, as also many other theological questions (and a few questions of lesser import), he is absolved of responsibility for the views presented here. I wish also to honor Michael's beloved partner in Christian education and in life, Mary Elisabeth (Libby) Weed, whose work as the Elementary Principal and Vice President for Education at Brentwood Christian School has blessed the lives of my children. Earlier versions of this essay were presented as papers at a conference on "Theology and the Christian University" (Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas, 23–25 March 2006) and at the Christian Scholars Conference (Rochester College, Rochester Hills, Michigan, 21–23 June 2007).

principally in the pacifist and Just War traditions of Christian social ethics. The present essay is a modest attempt to commend the latter.[1]

The Teaching of Jesus and a Christian Social Ethic: A Prefatory Note

In recent decades, John Howard Yoder and his followers have championed a thoroughgoing pacifism as the only position consistent with the Christian profession of faith.[2] Such a position exerts a particular appeal among Christians who look to Scripture as the sole or principal authority in theology. On its face, a pacifist social ethic seems able to marshal impressive biblical support, especially from the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount; such precepts as "do not resist one who is evil" and "turn the other cheek" appear able to withstand even the stringent demands of a hermeneutic based on direct command and approved example.

There are nonetheless serious exegetical questions to be answered by advocates of a pacifist interpretation of New Testament teaching. Perhaps the place to begin is with a point of definition regarding the term *pacifist*, which is not merely a synonym for *pacific*. Without question, Christ pronounces his blessing on "peacemakers" (Matt 5:9), and Christ's apostle urges Christians, "If it is possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all" (Rom 12:18 NRSV). A genuinely *pacifist* interpretation of the gospel goes far beyond this, taking literally the Sermon on the Mount's instruction to "turn the

---

[1] Among recent introductions to the Just War tradition, I have found especially helpful Daniel M. Bell, Jr., *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church Rather than the State* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009); Oliver O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Darrell Cole, "Good Wars," *First Things* 116 (October 2001): 27–31. On the mediating position of "Just War pacifism," see James P. Sterba, "Reconciling Pacifists and Just War Theorists," *Social Theory and Practice* 18 (1992): 21-38, and Michael Neu, "Why There is No Such Thing as Just War Pacifism and Why Just War Theorists and Pacifists Can Talk Nonetheless," *Social Theory and Practice* 37 (2011): 413–33.

[2] See especially John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich./Carlisle, U.K.: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1994 [1st ed., 1972]); Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

other cheek" (Matt 5:39) and obliging a Christian to forswear all use of force, or certainly all lethal force—even force used to pacify one person disturbing the peace of another.

Formally, the ethical teaching of Christian Scripture stands at the other end of a continuum from the mathematically precise axioms of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Scripture does not convey its ethical teaching through abstract philosophical propositions applicable to every imaginable contingency. It rather offers concrete, specific precepts relevant to the particular audience addressed or situation considered. The Sermon on the Mount addresses disciples living under the governance of others (cf. Matt 2; 5:41; 8:5–13; 22:15–22; chap. 27) and offers them guidance for negotiating the common situations of daily life as disciples of Jesus.

As John Kloppenborg notes, "Mediterranean society was in general agonistic and expected conflict (in particular between males)."[3] In Matt 5:39, Jesus instructs a disciple upon receiving a blow to "the right cheek" (*tēn dexian siagona*)—that is, most likely, a backhand slap, a public challenge to one's honor—to offer the other as well; in v. 40, he tells a disciple sued for his inner garment (*chitōn*) to surrender his outer garment (*himation*) as well. From such vivid precepts disciples can (and should) distill principles that govern broader circumstances and more complex relationships; e.g., a disciple of Jesus doesn't make preservation of personal honor or defense of material possessions the priority in relating to others. But we shouldn't read Jesus' concrete precepts as comprehensively stated rules invariably applicable outside the situations they address.

As Richard Bauckham observes, "Jesus' ethical teaching becomes specific … most often with reference to personal life." Bauckham cautions that "love must take different forms in public and private life" and elaborates:

[3] John S. Kloppenborg, "Associations in the Ancient World," in *The Historical Jesus in Context* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison, Jr., and John Dominic Crossan; Princeton Readings in Religions; Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 328.

> The individual is obliged to forgive personal injuries against himself, but this principle will not be enough to guide him in situations where the interests of several people are involved, where other people have been injured or need protection, or where (as a parent, for example) he has a responsibility for the moral education of the person who has done wrong.[4]

The New Testament nowhere offers specific guidance to disciples of Jesus entrusted with the responsibility for civil government (as Christians were only in the fourth century AD). Neither does Scripture advise Christians on how to respond when governments solicit our advice regarding the policies to be adopted for the protection of ourselves, our families, and our neighbors (as Christians are now routinely asked to do in participatory democracies). Pacifism may be an appropriate answer to this question, but we should be clear that a pacifist social ethic is as much a deduction from the scriptural data as any other.

Further, we may note that if the Sermon on the Mount as a whole were interpreted as pacifist exegetes interpret the command not to resist evil, then we would have to conclude that in Matt 6:5–6 Jesus prohibits all public prayer by his disciples and confines worship to the individual disciple's prayer closet. In 6:25–34, Jesus' prohibition against worry over our material needs (let alone wants) would mean that (e.g.) modern Christians would be barred from exerting ourselves to find and retain employment; in the event that (through no effort on our part) we found ourselves offered a job, we could not legitimately consider the financial benefits of a position in deciding whether to accept it. It is better to recognize with Dale Allison that "the hyperbolic is characteristic of Jesus" and to recognize the presence of hyperbole in the Sermon's precepts.[5] It is an interpretive mistake to take one of these precepts and absolutize it.

---

[4] Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics: How to the Read the Bible Politically* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 8.

[5] Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York and London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 77.

There are other exegetical difficulties involved in a pacifist reading of Jesus' teaching. Yoder himself recognizes "serious scholarly opinion to the effect that 'resistance in kind' [in Matt 5:39] is meant specifically in reference to legal recourse against an evil which one has suffered."[6] Yoder offers no rebuttal to this interpretation, nor does he seem to recognize the extent to which it undercuts a pacifist interpretation of Jesus' teaching: nowhere else does Jesus categorically forbid his disciples to employ force.

Interestingly, Yoder regarded scriptural example—specifically, divine example—as more important than scriptural commands:

> We do not, ultimately, love our neighbor because Jesus told us to. We love our neighbor because God is like that. It is not because Jesus told us to that we love even beyond the limits of reason and justice, even to the point of refusing to kill and being willing to suffer—but because God is like that too.[7]

It seems hermeneutically problematic to carve out too great a divide between the exemplary character of God and the teaching of Jesus, which is presumably integral to the biblical revelation of "what God is like." Of more immediate relevance to our inquiry, in abandoning the command of Jesus as central to the Christian ethic, Yoder has abandoned the clearest scriptural basis for a definition of love in terms of pacifism. As we shall see, Yoder's definition of "love of neighbor" seems to require preferential regard for a person threatening or employing violence rather than for a person being threatened.

Getting Down to Cases

As Yoder recognized, more than exegesis is needed to commend a pacifist Christian social ethic. The bulk of his work on the topic involves engagement with historical theology, dogmatics, and ethics. His 1983 book *What Would You Do?* considered the aspect of the subject most likely to en-

---

[6] Yoder, *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Scottdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1971), 53 n. 6. Yoder cites Stuart D. Currie, "Matthew 5:39a—Resistance or Protest?" *Harvard Theological Review* 57 (1964): 140–5, but offers no analysis or rebuttal.

[7] Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 52.

gage a nonspecialist audience, the practical implications of his "pacifism of the messianic community."[8] This consideration took the form of his own treatment of a standard case: "What would you do if a criminal … pulled a gun and threatened to kill your wife … or daughter or sister or mother [?]"(13).[9] I offer this examination of Yoder's treatment of the case in the hope that it will not only aid in assessing how effectively he commends his pacifist convictions, but also raise broader questions about the choice to be made between the pacifist and Just War traditions by Christians who seek to stand under the authority of Scripture.

Yoder's discussion moves back and forth with some freedom between the question whether an individual Christian may use lethal force to protect a threatened innocent and the same question addressed to a society, i.e., the question of war. I suggest that we can proceed with greater clarity if we focus the discussion at the individual level. This will mean giving only brief attention to the question at a societal level, but it should be possible to indicate the direction in which the argument tends.

We have, then, good reason to consider carefully the case that Yoder offers in order to explore how to be faithful in situations not explicitly treated in the scriptural witness, including those situations in which Christians are called on to exercise political judgment so as to extend love to a distant

[8] John H. Yoder with Joan Baez, Tom Skinner, Leo Tolstoy, and others, *What Would You Do? A Serious Answer to a Standard Question* (Scottdale, Penn., and Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1983). Parenthetical citations in the text refer to this book, which as far as I know is his most concentrated discussion of what the pacifism of the messianic community looks like on the ground, as it were. For other engagements with the question strewn throughout the vast Yoder corpus, one may consult yoderindex.com, which is anticipated to offer complete online searching of Yoder's works by January 2013. My thanks to John Nugent for this information, and to Lee Camp for forwarding my inquiry to John.

[9] Yoder's exploration of the case occupies pp. 13–42; he then collects considerations of the question by other pacifists (45–111), notably Leo Tolstoy (45–49) and Joan Baez (62–68). The aim of Yoder's volume was evidently to advocate a pacifist response to the question rather than to foster a balanced consideration, as there are no selections from G. K. Chesterton, Paul Ramsey, or other non-pacifists who treat some version of the case.

neighbor. Yoder apologizes early in his essay for the "plodding analysis" that represents "the only way to move the question from the visceral to the rational level" (13); on the contrary, I will suggest that at some points Yoder's analysis is not plodding enough. Indeed, the question being addressed needs to be stated with greater precision at the outset. The question is not, as the title of Yoder's book has it, what any one of us *would* do, for any of us might fail to do what is right on a given occasion. The question properly treated by an ethicist, rather than a psychologist, is "What *Should* You Do?"—what is one justified or unjustified in doing, what actions is one obligated to take or prohibited from taking, in the event a violent person threatens harm to a loved one?

Here a second qualification of Yoder's case is needed. He notes that posing the question only in regard to a loved one "distorts the real nature of the argument" (19). He says it invites "an altruistic form of egoism" as "I defend *my* wife or *my* child because they are precisely *my own*" (20, italics original). Yoder criticizes this way of posing the question because it "does not suggest that I would have the same responsibility to defend the wives and children of Vietnamese … who are being attacked by my countrymen" (20). His point is well taken, as the biblical tradition commends to us the protection and care not only of those to whom we are bound by ties of kinship and acquaintance, but also of the those with whom we have no ties beyond our common membership in the worshiping, or indeed the human, community, those who themselves have ties to no one: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (Jas 1:27, NRSV).

It is odd then that Yoder does not revise the case to take into account an anonymous victim rather than (or in addition to) a relative, even though he includes as an appendix to his own essay a brief comment by Leo Tolstoy that poses the case in just this form. Tolstoy asks, "How (to use the stock example) is a man to act when he sees a criminal killing or outraging *a child* [an anonymous child] and he can save the child only by killing the criminal?"

(45, italics mine). The anonymity of a potential victim in need of help is an important element to consider, so I suggest we modify the case accordingly.

Yoder's other objections to the case largely apply to the use of cases as such in ethical reflection and in general do not appear decisive or even especially weighty (14–19). In particular, it seems incongruous to find Yoder suggesting (19, italics mine) that the scenario under consideration

> excludes the possibility that the other [violent] party might have *reasons* for behaving in the way that I perceive to be wrong. There is no room for the possibility that the offender might be a Jean Valjean, only looking for bread for his hungry children in the home of someone who has more than needed. Nor is there room for the possibility that the offender might be an oppressed person (as in the theories of Frantz Fanon), whose *human dignity is dependent upon his rising up and destroying* a symbol of oppressive order (*an innocent symbol*, true, but that makes no difference for the psychic *need* of the former slave).

Valjean only stole, he did not kill or threaten killing, and so his example is not strictly relevant. Nor is it readily apparent how Frantz Fanon's revolutionary philosophy, developing the premise that "the colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence," might inform the ethic of messianic pacifism that Yoder sought to commend.[10]

At any rate, these considerations are enough to allow us to reformulate the case in a form sufficient to guide our reflections. With apologies to Bunyan, then, we join a latter-day Christian on the streets of the City of Destruction. Rounding a corner, Christian comes upon a police officer lying on the ground, fatally shot, sidearm still holstered. Some yards ahead, Christian sees a man pointing a smoking gun menacingly toward a young woman at point-blank range. Christian cannot tell whether the man has designs on the woman's property, her virtue, or her life, but he makes the obvious deduction that

[10] Quotation from Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004 [1961]), 44. A cynical reader might well take Yoder's comment as *ad hoc* pandering to the tastes of an academic readership; I confess I have difficulty finding an alternative interpretation.

the gunman has just killed and is on the verge of killing again. Further, with an uncanny prescience for which he is not otherwise noted, Christian intuits that the woman is an orphan, recently widowed, and thus falls under the scriptural obligation to assist those in need who lack the resources to provide for themselves. We are thus led to ask: (1) What are Christian's obligations to the gunman, and to the person whom the gunman is threatening? (2) In discharging these obligations, what specific actions is Christian either justified in taking, or prohibited from taking?[11]

Yoder's answer is that Christian may not intentionally use lethal force against the attacker, but short of this, he must do everything he can to secure her deliverance and, beyond that, simply trust God to provide a way for her escape. In the Just War tradition, however, the use of force, even lethal force, is on occasion involved in "the love of neighbor"—it is the way one must express love to a neighbor threatened by unjust force when one judges that no other course of action will secure the neighbor's protection.[12] Applying such a perspective to the individual situation of our case would suggest that Christian's primary responsibility is to defend the person unjustly threatened against harm, employing the minimum force needed to accomplish that objective. In evaluating these two approaches to the issues raised by the scenario, we might usefully consider a series of actions on an ascending scale of forcefulness that Christian might entertain in the seconds which he has to decide what he will do.

First, Christian might engage the attacker verbally (cf. 27–29, 32–36). On the simplest scenario, if Christian yells, "Stop! Leave her alone!" and the gunman retreats, that would discharge his obligation to visit the woman in her affliction. Yoder also suggests seeking "some way to disarm the attacker

[11] The case is of course contrived but not wholly unrealistic; comparable situations with the ethical dilemmas they entail are met by Christians with some frequency on the streets of St. Louis and Tbilisi, Detroit and Karachi, Memphis and Kinshasa.

[12] For this understanding of love of neighbor in the Just War tradition, see Bell, *Just War as Christian Discipleship*, 30–31, 73–74; Cole, "Good Wars," 29. On the proper meaning of the criterion of "last resort" for the use of force, see Bell, 183–95.

emotionally" (27–28) or employing "a ruse" (28). Employing deception incidentally treats the provision of the Sermon on the Mount requiring entire truthfulness on the part of Jesus' disciples (Matt 5:37) as a less than absolute command, and so raises again the question why the Sermon's prohibition of force (if indeed there is such) is not treated with similar freedom.

Second, Christian might offer passive resistance; as Yoder puts it, he "might interpose [him]self and let the intended victim escape" (28). In many situations involving a firearm, this will be impractical. In our scenario, for example, an attacker intent on harming the woman will most likely fell Christian as he attempts to close the distance between them, and our damsel will remain in distress. Christian's passive resistance will also prove inadequate to protect her should she be unable to escape by her own power.

Third, Christian might unholster the fallen police officer's sidearm and *threaten* to use it, as Menno Simons permitted his followers to carry a sword with them on a trip, though not to use it, in effect lying.[13] But again, this will prove ineffective if the attacker is brazen and calls Christian's bluff, firing on Christian first.

Fourth, as Yoder himself suggests, Christian might employ "nonlethal force" against the attacker (28). Yoder does not specify the form or level of force that might legitimately be used, but he does say

> I am more likely to find [an alternative to lethal force] … if I have disciplined my impulsiveness and fostered my creativity by the study and practice of a nonviolent lifestyle, or of Aiki-Do, the nonviolent variant of the martial arts" (28).

Aikido, it may be noted, involves the manipulation or redirection of force with the aim of turning its effects back on the one who initiates it. As a technique of self-defense (rather than a philosophy encouraging nonviolence),

[13] George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), 488.

aikido is not a *nonviolent* form of the martial arts, but rather a *defensive* one.[14]

If Yoder's reference to aikido is to be taken seriously, it involves Christian in the manipulation of force, and potentially lethal force. It is unclear what principle would allow redirecting force onto the attacker at the level at which he introduces it but disallow opposing the attacker with one's own force equal to that which he introduces, or with the level of force needed to protect the threatened person. In our scenario, it may also be noted that aikido will likely prove to be of limited usefulness in opposing an attacker armed with a gun.

If non-lethality is the criterion of legitimacy, then it would seem Christian is free to take the policeman's sidearm and shoot with the intent of disarming the attacker, or injuring and incapacitating him, rendering him unable to do harm in this situation. There are, however, practical difficulties involved in shooting only to injure, as the force required to stop an assailant from doing harm is often deadly, as illustrated by the common police policy of "shoot to stop," concentrating fire on the torso.[15] Police forces adopt this policy not out of bloodthirstiness—in that case, targeting recommendations would presumably include the head—but because focusing on a target's "center mass" proves the most effective way to prevent an assailant from doing harm.

---

[14] In the words of practitioner Erik Sotnak, "Aikido … is not primarily a system of combat, but rather a means of self-cultivation and improvement … At the same time, the potential of aikido as a means of self-defense should not be ignored. One reason for the prohibition of competition in aikido is that many aikido techniques would have to be excluded because of their potential to cause serious injury. By training cooperatively, *even potentially lethal techniques* can be practiced without substantial risk" ("Aikido Primer," http://www.alleghenyaikido.com/Primer.html, accessed 24 July 2012; italics mine). See also Adele Westbrook, *Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere: An Illustrated Introduction* (Rutland, Vt.: C. E. Tuttle, 1970), 361–2.

[15] Chris McNab and Hunter Keener report that "most police forces operate a simple formula for 'shoot to stop,'" targeting "the center mass of the assailant (especially the solar plexus)" and delivering "multiple quick shots into the target until the assailant is completely incapacitated" (*Tools of Violence: Guns, Tanks and Dirty Bombs* [Oxford and New York: Osprey Publishing, 2008], 52).

Further, it cannot be assumed, as Yoder appears to, that a clear line distinguishes force that will prove lethal from force that will not, or that this line will be perceptible to Christian in the moments he has to make a judgment and take action. Here, it seems, Yoder commits the same error he attributes to non-pacifists in the opening of his book, that of assuming that the defender has "total control of the situation" and presupposing that "if not omniscience, at least full and reliable information" is available to the defender (15). In this case, Yoder supposes Christian to possess certain knowledge of the precise point at which the use of force becomes lethal.[16] If such precise knowledge were available, cases of police brutality would presumably never issue in the death of the victim; the perpetrators would simply stop short of administering the lethal blow, thus sparing themselves the risk of a murder or manslaughter charge.

Fifth, Yoder does not treat the question whether, if time permits, Christian would be justified in calling the police, that is, in asking others to threaten and use force on behalf of the woman, and in his stead. If this option is open to Christian, if he can call out the *gendarmerie*, then he has not avoided the responsibility of using force. Rather, he has transferred the direct responsibility for its use (as well any guilt incurred by its wrong application) from himself onto the constabulary. Christian would not evade responsibility for the death of the gunman in the event that the police found this necessary.

So we come, finally, to the watershed: Is Christian himself justified in taking the police officer's weapon and firing at the attacker, employing force that he anticipates may be lethal? Yoder will allow Christian the use of non-lethal force to protect the innocent but insists he stop short of administering a lethal blow. The difficulty for the pacifist perspective, as Yoder articulates it, is to explain how stopping short of employing force likely to be lethal in cases where that is the minimum needed to protect a threatened person expresses love for her.

---

[16] See Rory Miller, *Force Decisions: A Citizen's Guide* (Wolfeboro, NH: YMAA Publication Group, 2012), 42: "There is no level of force that is completely safe."

The logic of the pacifist position treats as a matter of indifference the question whether the gun is pointed at the attacker or at his victim; Christian's only concern is to be sure that he does not wield the gun. Pacifism thus easily becomes a form of legalism, as pacifist engagement of the scenario does not focus on Christian's responsibilities *to these two persons*. The pacifist perspective rather commends the question, "What are the rules, and what action must I take (or refrain from taking) in order to ensure that I do not transgress them?" We do better to ask in such a morally challenging situation, "How do I seek the good of the persons for whom I have responsibility? How do I limit the evil visited on them in this situation?"[17]

On Yoder's analysis, it seems that once the potential of lethal force is present in a situation of conflict, Christian's obligations to the aggressor always trump his obligations to the potential victim. George Orwell famously criticized pacifism in World War II as "objectively pro-Fascist."[18] In our scenario a pacifist response appears to be "objectively pro-aggressor." Yoder is concerned that authorizing the use of lethal force will foreclose the opportunity for faithful witness to nonviolence by the victim in our scenario.

> If this person shares my values, … [i]t would be certainly improper for me as a third party in the conflict to deal with her enemy in a way she would not desire. At least some Christian women would not want to be protected by lethal violence (18).

Yoder is doubtless right in the last sentence quoted, but here his conclusions are skewed by his failure to adopt Tolstoy's version of the case with the anonymous victim. If the victim is anonymous, I cannot know whether she shares my values and whether her death therefore would have the force of a martyrdom. Martyrdom is a vocation that must be voluntarily embraced; no one can choose it for another.

---

[17] Cf. Bell's critique of legalism in the "public policy checklist" strand of the Just War tradition, in comparision to virtue as focus of the "Christian discipleship" strand (*Just War as Christian Discipleship*, 78–86).

[18] George Orwell, "Pacifism and the War" (1942; see http://www.orwell.ru/, 24 July 2012).

In the case of an animal attacking a defenseless person, most Christians would not hesitate to intervene with the force needed to prevent the animal from doing the person harm, even if this resulted in the animal's death.[19] As a person is of greater moral worth than an animal, it is right that we should be more reticent about using lethal force against a person than against an animal; but when a choice is inescapable, it is unclear why we would extend protection to a human attacker and withdraw it from the person he threatens.

Recognizing the possibility that lethal force may on occasion be needed to protect another does not license Christian to employ force as a first resort in a situation of conflict or threat. The rule that the Just War tradition commends is the use of the minimum force needed to protect the defenseless person from attack, and this is a matter requiring the exercise of judgment. Christian is still obliged to protect the threatened innocent without resort to force if he judges that possible, and all of Yoder's suggestions for creative nonviolent intervention remain necessary for Christian to consider before resorting to force. These constitute preferential options for Christian, and indeed for any prudent and morally sensitive person, Christian or not.[20] They do not, however, relieve Christian of the regrettable necessity of intervening with force to protect those for whom he has responsibility when no other avenue of protection seems available. Such Just War authorities as Thomas Aquinas and Calvin recognize a special vocation of some Christians to renounce the use of force (e.g., ministers), but not a universal Christian obligation to forswear its use in all situations.[21]

From Individual to Social Ethics

Can we move from a justification of lethal force used to protect an individual to such force used to defend a community, even a community on the

[19] I owe this observation to Michael Weed. Albert Schweitzer is the only exception that comes readily to mind.

[20] In the social sphere, the invaluable guide to nonviolent means of redressing wrongs is Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (3 vols.; Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).

[21] Cole, "Good Wars," 30.

2011-2012 ©

scale of a modern nation-state? Yoder says we cannot (cf. 21–25), but it is not clear that his objections withstand scrutiny. To return to our case, suppose that rounding the corner Christian encounters not one lone gunman but an armed gang organized to menace a neighborhood whose residents lack the resources to protect themselves. Would Christian be justified in organizing a defensive militia, arming and organizing them in a way sufficient to deter the aggressors, or to engage them if they persist in their predations? If the use of potentially lethal force has been granted as an option that Christian must consider in order to protect the helpless, then it would seem defensible if he assembles a standing force to oppose a persisting organized threat menacing the helpless in the aggregate. Further, if the peace of Christian's community, or some segment of it, is menaced by a gang headquartered on the other side of a national border, it would seem he might quickly find himself organizing an army, and with good reason.

If this line of reflection commends our assent, we are starting down the path sketched by Michael Walzer:

> If you were attacked on the street and you defend yourself, that is a just war in miniature. And if I come to your rescue, that is also, in miniature, a just war. If you hear cries of help from children in a … neighboring house and you run into the house to … protect them from a drunken father, that is the domestic analog of a humanitarian intervention….[22]

If we accept Walzer's analogy, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Christian may find himself obliged to participate in the organization and maintenance of a standing army, a navy, an air force, or even a nuclear deterrent as a defense against organized communities (e.g., countries) with potentially hostile intent possessing, seeking, or likely to acquire such military ca-

[22] Michael Walzer in "War: Program Transcript" (*The Infinite Mind*, vol. 321), 12 (accessed via books.google.com, 7 July 2012). See also Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (3d ed.; New York: Basic Books, 2000), esp. 51–55.

pabilities and only likely to be restrained by the prospect of such force being used against them.[23]

Yoder appears inconsistent in holding that a common legal framework distinguishes the case he explores from the situation of nations at war (cf. 22); a nation's domestic legal framework is itself constituted through the monopoly on the legitimate use of force ceded to the modern nation-state.[24] It is unclear why on Yoder's account a nation-state may legitimately employ force *within* its boundaries to secure its people against *internal* threats but not *beyond* those boundaries against *external* threats to the populace. In either circumstance, it is the option of force that in the extreme case compels acquiescence in the decisions of the political community.

Such an approach by no means justifies an uncritical nationalism or a blanket endorsement of all one's country's actions. I would hold, for example, that while the Allied Powers in World War II justly opposed the Axis (i.e., possessed *ius ad bellum*), the Allied response to Axis attacks on Pearl Harbor and London by ultimately targeting civilian populations in Lübeck, Hamburg, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki cannot be defended as right conduct in warfare (*ius in bello*). The Allies' cause was just, but some of the actions they took to prosecute the war were not.[25]

---

[23] This conclusion is strengthened by consideration of the nexus between the evolution of military strategy and the development of constitutional order that Philip Bobbit explores in *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History* (New York: Knopf, 2002), esp. 69–209. I would not confidently maintain that circumstances in the mid-1940s justified the American development of atomic weapons, but I would think a credible just-war case can be advanced for the maintenance of a US nuclear deterrent after the first successful Soviet test of a nuclear weapon on 29 August 1949, or indeed after the loss of nuclear secrets that made this test possible.

[24] See Bobbitt, *Shield of Achilles*, 829, "Prologue," n. 1, citing Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," in his *Essays in Sociology* (ed. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970 [1921]), 77–78.

[25] The most discussed of these actions, the use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, must be evaluated as one element of the Allied policy of area or "terror bombing" of civilian populations. One might make a just-war case for using atomic weapons on military targets sufficiently massive or fortified that their destruction would require kilotons or megatons of force, but the targeted use of such

Conclusion

It is the challenge of everyone who bears the name Christian to live "in the world" yet not be "of the world." Even as strangers and sojourners, Christians bear obligations to our neighbors in the cities and nations in which we reside. I find that I must question whether in *What Would You Do?* Yoder has adequately sketched these, including our responsibility to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile" (Jer 29:7).[26] Before Christian determines what he must and must not do, he will want to consider fully the reflections embodied in the Just War tradition.

---

weapons against civilians fails to satisfy the Just War criterion of discrimination (as does the tactic of terror bombing in general); see O'Donovan, *Just War Revisited*, 44–46. The most morally problematic aspect of nuclear weaponry is that, as Sean Malloy notes, the atomic bomb was "a weapon optimized for the destruction of cities and the killing of civilians," and the consensus among American war planners favored its use without prior warning on "a vital war plant employing a large number of workers and closely surrounded by workers' houses" (see Wilson D. Miscamble, *The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan* [Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 43). For the relevant history, see also Michael Burleigh, *Moral Combat: Good and Evil in World War II* (New York: Harper, 2011), esp. 484–505; Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties* (rev. ed.; New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 402–5, 424–7.

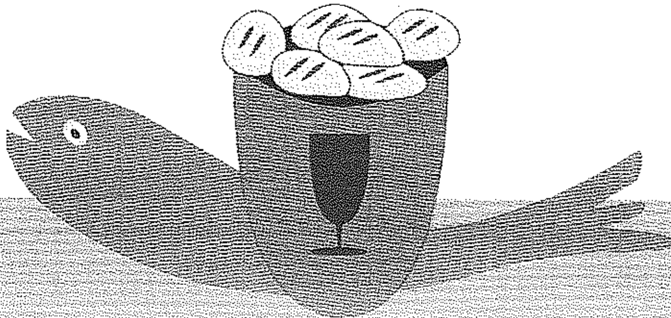
[26] For the importance of this text in early Christian social thought, see Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (Grand Rapids, Mich./Carlisle, U.K.: Eedrmans/Paternoster, 1994).

Allan J. McNicol

What does one expect to take place at the Lord's Table?

PREPARING FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER

Nourishing Spiritual Life Through the Lord's Meal



"Preparing for the Lord's Supper" explains the history and nuances of one of the most intriguing facets of the Christian faith - communion.

$3.50 per copy *(postage not included)* - Discounts for bulk orders available

Order from:
Christian Studies Press
512-476-2772
866-AUS-GRAD
www.austingrad.edu

AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

"Providing quality study materials addressing the Bible and the Christian Faith."

My Pilgrimage

Michael Robbins Weed

Christianity and the Restoration tradition influenced all of my growing-up years. My parents had both worked in downtown Austin off Congress Avenue on East 9th Street, my mother at the Firm Foundation publishing house and my father as a draftsman at nearby Miller Blueprint. They married in 1935 and attended University Church of Christ, where my father was baptized. My brother, Maurice, Jr., was born in 1939; I was born in 1941. My father, mother, and brother were all powerful formative influences on me, and my close friendship with my brother continues to this day.

During World War II, my father built buildings for the government. Our family, including my mother's father, a widower, lived in Ogden, Utah; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Lompoc, California. In Lompoc I recall German prisoners of war, accompanied by military police, trading finger-gun shots with my brother and me in a grocery store.

Before afternoon naps, Mother read to us from Hurlburt's Bible Stories. I remember my grandfather saying his prayers aloud on his knees beside the bed at night. At church, it was not uncommon for men to kneel beside the pew during prayers. Once, during a sermon, I remember answering a rhetorical question regarding whether one could stay home from church and be

Austin Graduate School of Theology
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 25 2011-2012 ©

pleasing to God with a bold “NO!”—to the amusement of the congregation and to my subsequent embarrassment.

After the war, we returned to Austin and attended what was then the University Church of Christ. It was there that I was baptized along with neighborhood friend Daniel Showalter by his grandfather and our family friend, G. H. P. Showalter, in 1953. My family later attended the Northside (now Hyde Park) church, where my father served for many years as an elder and Bible class teacher.

In 1959 I graduated from Austin High School and entered the University of Texas. Two years later I transferred to Abilene Christian College (now University). There I studied under J. W. Roberts, LeMoine Lewis, Neil Lightfoot, J. D. Thomas, Carl Spain, Bob Johnson, Tony Ash, and Abraham Malherbe. It was at ACC that I met longtime friends Allan McNicol and James Thompson.

In 1965 I married Mary Elisabeth (Libby) Summerlin, whom I had met in 1963 on the steps of University Avenue Church in Austin and whose brother Phil had been my good friend in Abilene. I remember in the summer of 1966 attending a “brush arbor” meeting with Libby and my parents where the “river road” from Austin intersects the road from Elgin to Bastrop. Reuel Lemmons was the speaker.

In 1966, while serving as Director of the Bible Chair at the University of Arizona in Tucson, I completed a thesis on The Centrality of *Heilsgeschichte* in the Theology of Oscar Cullmann, a topic suggested by Abraham Malherbe, for my master’s degree from ACC. The next fall I entered Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. At APTS I studied church history under E. T. Thompson, who had been a chaplain in World War I and who reportedly woke up the student dorm at 6:00 every morning with a recording of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony. I also studied under Eugene March, Prescott Williams, and the inimitable Stuart Currie, who greatly influenced my pilgrimage and who later pointed me to Emory University.

During the summers of my APTS years, I worked at Sweet Publishing Company. Upon my graduation from APTS, I spent one year as an editor of adult education material at Sweet, publishing a volume in the Living Word Commentary Series on Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. It was during that year that our daughter Susan was born; it was also at this time that I met Wendell Willis and worked with him on several publishing projects. Also at Sweet in these years were David Stewart, Floyd Rogers, and Jerry Tindel, all of whom have been important influences in my life. Libby and I attended Brentwood Church of Christ at this time, and our association with this congregation has continued since then with the exception of the years I studied at Emory University in Atlanta.

In 1971 I entered Emory University's Graduate School of Religion and was a student there for three years, completing course work in ethics. There I studied under E. Clinton Gardner, Theodore Weber, Jackson Carroll, and James T. Laney, a former missionary to Korea who later became president of the university. Dr. Gardner served as adviser for my dissertation on Conscience in Protestant Ethics. Our son Jonathan was born during those years.

Our family of four returned to Austin in 1974, at which time I joined the faculty at the University Avenue Church's Bible Chair. On completion of my dissertation, I received the Ph.D. in Ethics from Emory University in 1978. We continued to worship with the Brentwood congregation, which became Brentwood Oaks in 1981 with a move to a new site. I was privileged to serve as an elder for this congregation for some twenty years.

Over time, the UT Bible Chair became the Biblical Studies Center, an accredited degree-granting institution through Abilene Christian University. The school eventually received independent accreditation as Austin Graduate School of Theology. My service with AGST has continued for thirty-eight years, during which I have benefited from association with many fine colleagues, including Tony Ash, Pat Harrell, Gary Holloway, Rick Marrs, James Thompson, Paul Watson, and David Worley.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my years at Austin Grad has been teaching and working with students and then later hearing from them as they go on to preach, teach, and live Christian lives. Another has been my work with *Christian Studies,* through which the school has consistently sought to show the practical side of theological study in the life of the church.

Throughout these years, my family has been a continual blessing to me. My wife Libby has been a source of constant support and encouragement. Our children, Susan and Jonathan, and their spouses, Pat Womack and Amber Richter Weed, are reasons for daily thanksgiving. And our grandchildren—Mary, Hannah, and Daniel Womack and Luke and Natalie Weed—give us great joy and hope for the future.

I move to emeritus status with confidence that Austin Grad is in excellent hands. Its president, Stan Reid, is a man I have greatly admired since he preached at the Northside church where my parents worshiped, and I believe that the school will continue to flourish under his leadership. The other members of the administration and the board are faithful Christians for whom I have immense respect. I hold in high esteem my faculty colleagues Allan McNicol, Mark Shipp, Jeff Peterson, Todd Hall, Daniel Napier, and Keith Stanglin.

I pray that our Father will continue to guide and bless Austin Graduate School of Theology as it moves toward its second century of faithful service.

A Written Legacy:
A Bibliography for Michael R. Weed

M. Todd Hall

In volume 23 of *Christian Studies*, the subtitle "Scholarship for the Church" was added to the publication. In part, this was a descriptive addition: *Christian Studies* is not, primarily, an academic journal. It is meant to offer, rather, scholarly thinking in service of the church. Additionally, the subtitle was added to provide direction for the future of the publication as senior faculty members approach retirement and prepared to deliver oversight of the publication to their colleagues.

The subtitle could also rightly be used to describe the academic career of Michael Weed. Michael's seminary education was formative for him. From brilliant teachers such as Stuart Currie, E. T. Thompson, and Prescott Williams, Michael learned that theology is a long-running conversation which is meant above all to nourish the life of the church. Michael relates the story of a discussion he once had with professor Currie about possibly pursuing further graduate work. "We would be happy if a few of our students continued on to pursue PhDs," Currie said in his southern accent, "but this is a seminary, and we mean to provide educated ministers for the church."

Drawing from his experience with professors dedicated to the service of the church, Michael has made this his life's work. His publications reflect this concern. In looking through *Christian Studies* (including its *Faculty Bulletin* iteration), I noted that Michael published an article in every volume.

This publication became his venue for exploring and critiquing church practices in light of socio-cultural developments vis-à-vis theology.

In addition, Michael has walked the fine line described by Pelikan in regard to the church's inherited faith: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living." Michael's faith was born from and nurtured within the restoration tradition. His deep affection for this tradition, especially as expressed within churches of Christ, has driven him to offer thoughtful—and thought-provoking—articles. In some cases, Michael has found himself driven, out of his love for this tradition, to perform the thankless task of the watchman, calling out danger from the walls. He has analyzed every issue from legalism to postmodernism, but perhaps his most insightful work has been his examinations of the entertainment culture and its impact on church practices. In each of these reflections, Michael has expressed his deep concern for the church's well being and faithfulness.

Those of us who have been blessed to know Michael as a teacher and friend have seen the *praxis* of his scholarship. Michael has engaged students pastorally countless times in his long teaching career at Austin Grad, whether in academic or personal crises. These moments were, for Michael, moments in which theology became incarnate. Many students, friends, church members, and colleagues have been blessed through his concern.

I began studying with Michael in 1998. My wife Jennifer and I took several classes with Michael through 1998 and 1999. During this time, I watched him engage theological issues with a precision and insight that I had not seen before nor have I since. It was during the summer and fall of 2000, though, that I saw Michael's theological acumen lived out in a pastoral crisis.

When Jennifer died in June of 2000, I began a long journey of exploration: it was an exploration of suffering, of grief, of hope, of God, of grace. My guide in this exploration was Michael Weed. I include, below, an email I received from Michael regarding a query about Christians and suffering. It is one of many.

Todd

You know there is not an easy answer to the questions you are asking. We live in a universe constructed for rational, social, and dependent beings to grow in wisdom—and, unfortunately, much of that is through suffering.

Actions have consequences—harsh words don't turn into compliments and bullets do not turn into snowflakes. This means that there is a lot of latitude regarding what can happen and much of who we are called to be is shaped in response to the consequences of our own actions—perhaps most of who we are is shaped in response to the actions—good, bad, irresponsible, etc—of others.

We had a member of my congregation killed this spring by a drug addict whose car jumped the divider and crashed head on into his truck with his two daughters in the cab with him. This was an event that is part of a whole scheme of events that unfolded over years. I have no satisfactory answer. I do know that, to me, the alternative, (a) no God, (b) God does not care—provides little comfort and leaves even more unexplained than my trust in a God who takes our suffering on himself. Thus, can we assume that a universe in which free beings are shaped in response to the consequences of their own decisions and actions requires the freedom to commit irresponsible and even evil actions which tragically shape our own lives and those of others? Again, a critical part of who we are is how we respond to those things which we did not cause—but which we nonetheless have to live with and suffer from.

Clearly, Christianity is not an artificial, "Blue Skies and Rainbows" religion. [This superficial understanding perhaps leads many to become bitter when tragedy strikes.] But then, Christianity invests our individual lives and actions with great significance. It is in such circumstances that we image God. Pilate presents Jesus in John 19,

> "Ecce homo, Behold the man"—betrayed by one of his own, abandoned by his followers and friends, mocked, beaten—standing in absolute obedient trust in God—here is John's picture of Paul's "Second Adam," the man we were/are called to be as images of God—faithful in spite of overwhelming odds. Yes, it is painful, lonely, occasionally despairing—but, "Our hope is not in ourselves—our circumstances, our abilities, our emotions—but in God who raises the dead!"
>
> Todd, again, I do not have an "answer." This is not a math problem. We live in a fallen world—inescapably subject to the intended and unintended repercussions of actions by countless thousands—millions—of others. No, I can't give an answer. I can only find hope in a God who does not abandon us but takes our agony and despair on himself.
>
> God bless you,
> Michael

This note illustrates Michael's deeply held *incarnational* thinking. It represents Michael's concern that theological reflection touch the ground where people live. I include this note out of gratitude, and on behalf of all of his students I offer thanks to Dr. Michael Weed for his ability and concern to connect theology to real life. Michael knows that theology, such as the question of human suffering, has real-life implications. He understands that the church's struggle with the culture around it, including the technophilic entertainment culture, can be seen, for example, in seemingly harmless modifications to the church's worship and architecture.

Included below is a select bibliography of Michael's academic work for the church thus far. The list is not complete, and if it were, it could not fully reveal the servant who has dedicated himself, above all, to the guardianship of the church. We who have benefited from Michael's keen insight and deep concern recognize in him a true scholar for the church.

Monographs or Books Jointly Authored or Edited

Basic Christian Beliefs, vols. 1 and 2 with Wendell Willis (Austin: Sweet, 1971).

Bible Handbook: A Guide for Basic Bible Study with Libby Weed (Austin: Sweet, 1974).

Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, in the Living Word Commentary, vol. 11, Everett Ferguson, Editor (Austin, Texas: Sweet, 1971).

The Minister and His Work with Wendell Willis (Austin: Sweet, 1970).

Churches of the New Testament with Wendell Willis (Austin: Sweet, 1971).

The Worldly Church: A Call for Biblical Renewal with C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes (Abilene: ACU Press, 1988).

Things That Matter, edited by Michael Weed and Jeffrey Peterson (Austin: Christian Studies Press, 2000).

Christian Theology and Ethics

"The Moralistic Experience: An Inquiry," *Restoration Quarterly* 15/2 (1972), 65–83.

"The Discipline of Freedom, "*Christian Studies*, 1 (1980), 19–27.

"The Layman, the Theologian, and the Church," *Restoration Quarterly*, 23/1 (1980), 17–26.

"The Authority of Jesus, or the Jesus of Authority?" *Christian Studies*, 2 (1981), 46–57.

"The Locus of Moral Consciousness," in *Christian Teaching: Studies in Honor of LeMoine G. Lewis* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1981), 256–272.

"The Twilight of the Gods: Pluralism, Morality, and the Church," *Christian Studies*, 3 (1982), 5–16.

"Mystery, Marriage, and Morality," *Christian Studies*, 4 (1983), 30–43.

"Friendship as a Moral Category" in Doctor Ecclesiae: Essays in honor of John Frederick Jansen, *Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Bulletin*, Faculty Edition, Vol. XCVIII June, 1983.

"Christian Ethics: An Introduction and Basic Readings," *Mission*, 17/6 (1983), 17–22.

"The Rise of Judaism: From Exodus/Sinai to Sinai/Exodus," *Christian Studies*, 5 (1984) 18–30.

"Ethos and Authority: Then and Now," *Christian Studies*, 7 (1986), 62–77.

"Christian Education: Convention or Commitment?" *Christian Studies*, 9 (1988), 23–35.

"Evangelism, Ethics, and Eschatological Existence," *Christian Studies*, 10 (1989), 48–60.

"Why Johnny Can't Pray, " *Christian Studies*, 12 (1992), 3–11.

"Worship and Ethics," *Christian Studies*, 13 (1993), 47–53.

"And They Were Silent: Reflections on Legalism," *Christian Studies*, 15 (1995-96), 29–40.

"The Magician's Bargain: Modern Technology and the Eclipse of God," *Christian Studies*, 17 (1999), 31–46.

"Confession and Intercession: Two Spiritual Disciplines," *Christian Studies*, 20 (2004), 51–61.

"From Mystery to Mastery: Christo-Paganism Then and Now," *Christian Studies*, 22 (2007-8), 59–69.

Contemporary Social World and Culture

"The Secularization of the Church: From Transcendence to Technique," *Christian Studies*, 6 (1985), 62–77.

"The Secular Church: American Church Adapts to Self-Centered Culture," *Christian Chronicle*, June 1985.

"Amusing the Saints: Edification without Transcendence," *Christian Studies*, 8 (1987), 46–58.

"Junk Food worship: Churches Must Avoid Spiritual Malnutrition," *Christian Chronicle*, May 1987.

"Christo-paganism seen as danger in cultural adaptation," *Christian Chronicle*, March 1993

"Academic Freedom and the Christian University," *Christian Studies*, 14 (1994), 57–63.

"Religious Experience and Spirituality: Biblical and Post-Modern," *Christian Studies*, 16 (1996-97), 55–68.

"Relevant thoughts on making corporate worship the time of our lives," *Christian Chronicle*, Nov. 1998.

"Community churches and upbeat religion," *Christian Chronicle*, March, 2000.

"Shallows and Depths: The Rise of (Post) Modern Images of Humanity," *Christian Studies*, 18 (2000/2001), 29–40.

"Tradition: A Stranger to the Modern World and Church," *Christian Studies*, 21 (2006), 5–13.

"Pietism, Pieties, and the Contemporary Church: Promise and Peril," *Christian Studies*, 23 (2009), 61–74.

"American Fundamentalists: The Left Behind," *Christian Studies*, 24 (2010), 65–77.

Restoration Movement/Churches of Christ

"Cruciform Life or Cruciform Church: A Review of *The Cruciform Church* by Leonard Allen," *Christian Studies*, 11/1 (1990), 55–65.

"A Tradition at Risk," *Christian Studies*, 11/2 (1991), 44–65.

"The Church Today: A Call for Wisdom in an Uncertain Future," *Leaven*, 2/3 (1993), 29–31.

“The Gospel in Urban Vessels: Churches of Christ Face the Twenty-First Century,” with Gary Holloway, *Discipliana*, 55/4 (1995), 109–121.

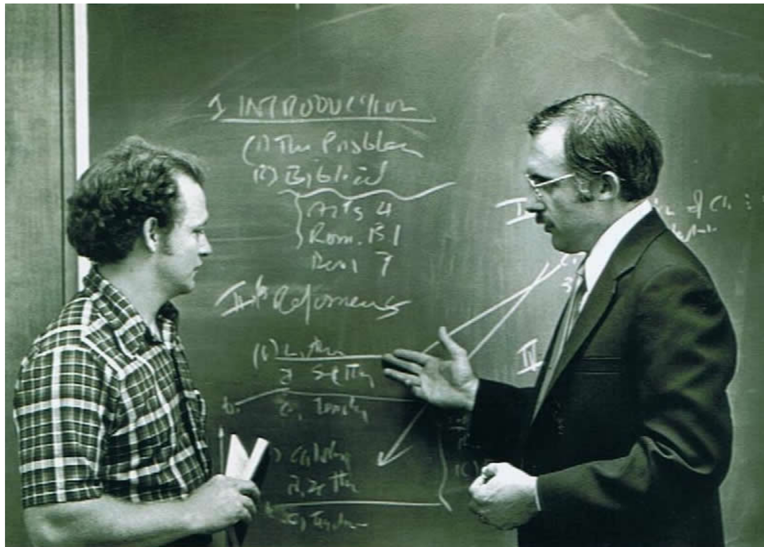
“Consecrated Pragmatism: Trends in Modern Worship,” *Christian Studies*, 19 (2003), 5–18.

“‘Anti-legalism,’ reaction against legalism is a growing trend—but equally toxic,” *Christian Chronicle*, April 2004.

“Honoring God’s Servant J. D. Thomas, July 20, 1910–February 16, 2004” *Restoration Quarterly,* 46/3 (2004), 249–252.

“Baptism: Mode and Meaning,” *Christian Studies*, 22 (2007-08), 69–71.

**For Michael Weed’s full bibliography, visit http://www.austingrad.edu/academics_weed_resource.html*



Michael with student Bobby Jeffcoat, circa 1980. Michael has endeared himself to students and colleagues in many ways over the years. One of the most enduring remembrances is Michael's "unique" chalkboard/whiteboard drawings and handwriting. This (unusually legible) picture is offered with fond remembrances and in anticipation of many more chalkboard discussions.

MTH

Changing the Culture

It is a strange assumption for a contemporary American to feel that he or she already has the equipment necessary to comprehend the gospel, without any modification of lifestyle, without any struggle—in short, without being born again. The point is not to speak to the culture. The point is to change it. God's appointed means of producing change is called "church;" and God's typical way of producing church is called "preaching."

William Willimon, *This Culture is Overrated*

Perseverance

Perseverance, translated literally, means: remaining underneath, not throwing off the load, but bearing it. We know much too little in the church today about the peculiar blessing of bearing. Bearing, not shaking off; bearing, but not collapsing either; bearing as Christ bore the cross, remaining underneath, and there beneath it—to find Christ

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom*

Distant Neighbors

Patriotism, it is conceded, has no special place in the Christian religion. Its founder never pronounced a single sentence in commendation of it. The reason is that the world was his field, and as patriotism is only an extension of the principle of selfishness, he deigned it no regard; because selfishness is now the great and damning sin of mankind. We are commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves … our neighbor is every person in the world.

Alexander Campbell, *The Destiny of Our Country*

God's Suffering Love

Speaking of Israel and of God the writer (of Isaiah) says: "In all their affliction, he was afflicted." In our affliction, God is afflicted. Over our sufferings, God suffers. Over our mourning, God mourns. Over our weeping, God weeps. I suggest that what the believer sees in beholding the suffering of the world … is no less than the suffering of God. What the believer sees when

beholding the rabbi from Nazareth on the cross is not only human blood from sword and thorn and nail, but the tears of God over the wounds of the world.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Trumpets, Ashes, and Tears*

Holy Troublemakers

Christians were never meant to be normal. We've always been holy trouble-makers, we've always been creators of uncertainty, agents of a dimension that's incompatible with the status quo; we do not accept the world as it is, but we insist on the world becoming the way that God wants it to be. And the Kingdom of God is different from the patterns of this world.

Jacques Ellul

The Church's Welcome

This is God's house. Be welcome to this House, whosoever you are—whether of this household or of another way, or wanderers or deserters—be welcome here. But you who are of the household, pray for us now, for us and for all sinners here or departed, that mercy draws us all one little pace nearer to Love's unveiled and dazzling face

Sign over the door of St. Peter's Church, near Suffolk, England

Words Incarnated in Example

The teacher who really teaches, that is, who really works with contents within the context of methodological exactitude, will deny as false the hypocritical formula, "do as I say, not as I do." Whoever is engaged in "right thinking" knows only too well that words not given body (made flesh) have little or no value. Right thinking is right doing.

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*

Freedom in Limitation

Art is limitation; the essence of every picture is the frame. If you draw a giraffe, you must draw him with a long neck. If, in your bold creative way, you hold yourself free to draw a giraffe with a short neck, you will really find that you are not free to draw a giraffe. The moment you step into the world of facts, you step into a world of limits.

G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

Contributors

M. Todd Hall is Director of the Library and Instructor at Austin Graduate School of Theology

Allan J. McNicol is A.B. Cox Professor of New Testament at Austin Graduate School of Theology

Jeffrey Peterson is Jack C. and Ruth Wright Professor of New Testament at Austin Graduate School of Theology

Stan Reid is President of Austin Graduate School of Theology

R. Mark Shipp is Pat E. Harrell Professor of Old Testament at Austin Graduate School of Theology

James W. Thompson is Professor of New Testament and Associate Dean at the Graduate School of Theology, Abilene Christian University

Michael R. Weed is Billy Gunn Hocott Professor of Theology and Ethics at Austin Graduate School of Theology

Wendell Willis is Professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University