

# Gospel Blazes in the Dark

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Steven C. Kuhl

## Preface

With unreserved affection and unbounded appreciation, the Crossings Community presents this Festschrift, this “festival of writing,” in honor of Edward Henry Schroeder on the occasion of his 75th birthday. The title, *Gospel Blazes in the Dark*, comes from the hymn that was composed for this occasion by musician David Gooding and lyricist Jerome Burce. In the first verse, Burce writes:

Gospel blazes in the dark  
Flinty words supply the spark  
Splendid teachers fan the flame  
Of sudden hope in Jesus’ name  
For genuine salvation.

Those words have provided me with an apt image for describing this volume and Ed’s impact on so many people over the years and throughout the world.

Years ago, as a youth director in St. Louis, my youth group would gather around a campfire and sing “It only takes a spark to get a fire going.” One image I have of Ed is that he is like flint. Flint exists for one purpose: to spark a fire. Over the 50 years of his ministry—from Valparaiso University to Concordia Seminary, from Seminex to Crossings, from African to Asia, from

Europe to Australia, from North American to South America, from classroom to living room—Ed has been like flint. In itself, flint is not much to look at. It's not a jewel. But in the right hands, flint can be used to create sparks that can set the environs ablaze. In the hands of the Holy Spirit—and that is our testimony—Ed has been flint for us. The Spirit has used him—his words and all—to kindle in the hearts and minds and imaginations of those he has encountered the light, the warmth, the purifying presence of Jesus Christ and his gospel—indeed, “sudden hope in Jesus' name for genuine salvation.”

Of course, anyone who knows Ed is quite aware of how “tuned in” he is to the dual—sometimes contradictory, sometimes ironic, sometimes complementary, but always paradoxical—purposes that sparks can play. As he would note, a quick look through the Scriptures reveals that there is fire and there is fire. It is paramount, therefore, that one learns the art of distinguishing between fires: between that which burns and that which purifies, that which blinds and that which allows sight, that which scorches and that which warms up, that which destroys and that which clears the way for new growth.

In the language of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, that art is the art of distinguishing law and gospel, God's two modes of operating in the world. In a sense, theologians—indeed, all Christians!—are like forest-fire fighters. They fight fire with fire. They fight the fire that destroys (the humanly unmanageable fire of God's law, God's death sentence upon this sinful world) with the fire that saves (the fire under Christ's management, specifically, his death and resurrection). The first fire, the fire of the law, ultimately (that is, in its theological function, as Luther calls it) does nothing but destroy sinners, even though penultimately (that is, in its civil function, as Luther calls it) it does serve a useful purpose of restraining and channeling the activity of sinners,

thus, making some semblance of life and justice in this world possible. This is the paradox inherent in the law itself: the world can't live with it, ultimately, but it can't live without it, penultimately. The second fire, the fire of the gospel, ultimately and paradoxically destroys in order to save, kills in order to make alive. Ironically, Christ conquers God's rightful judgment upon us by beating that judgment to the punch: by inviting us to be consumed in the fire of Christ's death, so that we may be reconstituted anew in his resurrection. Ultimately, this second fire manifests itself when Christians yield their last breath to Christ in the certain hope of the promise of the resurrection to new life. Penultimately, it manifests itself in a life of repentance. When Christians confess their sins to Christ, they, paradoxically, become guilty in order to be forgiven, endure wrong in order to make right, suffer loss in order to bring the neighbor gain. This is the life of faith.

This law-gospel theological imagination is what this festschrift celebrates. In a sense, the book is a glimpse of the extent to which the spark God has struck through the flint we know as Ed Schroeder has become a blaze in what we call the Crossings Community. The Crossings Community itself was started in 1985 by Ed Schroeder and Bob Bertram (of blessed memory). More details about the community and its theological work can be accessed at <https://crossings.org>. Crossings became for Ed the chief way he continued his vocation as a teacher after Seminex dispersed its faculty and students to other institutions. That *diaspora* signaled to Ed a new calling which took him all around the world as God's flint. Whenever God opened a door, Ed went through—and often with his wife, Marie, who is a piece of flint in her own right. Nowhere was out of bounds for Ed. He went to congregations, to seminaries, and to conferences. He went throughout the United States, Asia, Africa, Latin America,

Europe, and Australia. As a result, the Crossings Community consists of Christians from all over the world, from all walks of life, from various Christian traditions, who find the law-gospel hermeneutic indispensable for understanding their life as Christians in the world. For example, many of the people in this volume have never heard of each other, let alone met. Yet, they are one in their confession of Christ. Indeed, I, as an editor of this volume, had never heard of some of the contributors before they sent me their articles via email. The book simply emerged when Crossings made a general plea for papers to honor and give thanks for Ed on the occasion of his 75th birthday. The invitation sparked a blaze of response.

The organization of the book is an attempt to reflect something of the breadth and depth of the impact Ed's ministry has had. Ed's passion for the gospel has touched people in all walks of life: people who work in the "Arts," people in their "Life's Journey," people who work in the "Church," and people who are deployed in various capacities in the "world." It's not that Ed has written or worked in all those areas of life. He hasn't. But that's not the point of the book. The point of the book is that he has sparked the theological imaginations of people who are deployed everywhere and, in that sense, has contributed to setting the world ablaze with the Gospel of Christ. For an understanding of the quality of that impact, I know of no better place to go than to the "Contributors" page in this volume. There you will see the testimony of the "contributors" themselves. They are most telling.

As you can imagine, a book like this is the product of many hands. Therefore, I wish to give thanks to several people without whose generous support and help the production of this volume would not have been possible. First of all, there are co-editors Robin Morgan and Sherman Lee. Robin has meticulously read through the texts to purge them of stubborn typos and

clumsy constructions and, yet, has been able to maintain the integrity of the authors' content and voice. Whatever is want in the editing process is due to my shortcomings. Sherman has carefully and skillfully overseen the technical and production aspects of the festschrift, working closing with our printer CDM Today. He has been able to take the raw edited texts and put them into a format that is aesthetically pleasing and reader friendly.

Second, I extend special thanks to Janet McKenzie, Father Fernando Arizti, the Roger Brown family, The Smithsonian Institute, and David Gooding and Jerome Burce. Ms. McKenzie, Fr. Arizti, the Robert Brown family, and the Smithsonian Institute have each graciously given us permission to reprint the artwork that Ron O'Grady so graciously walks us through in his article "A Walk of Art in America." That gesture of support on their part has added greatly to the value of this volume. David Gooding and Jerome Burce, for their part, have not only given us permission to reprint the text and score of their hymn, "Gospel Blazes in the Dark," but have granted congregations the right to use the hymn in their public worship services. This hymn was first sung on November 6, 2005, at a Festival Eucharist in honor of Ed and Marie Schroeder at their congregation, Bethel Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Missouri. We hope that it will be an enduring contribution to the church's song.

Third, I thank all the writers who contributed to this volume. As you will see, they are a diverse group—ranging from heady academics to thoughtful pastors, to reflective laypeople—with diverse concerns—intent on serving the needs of both the church and the world. Moreover, they span the generations and the world. Some were students *with* Ed, others were students *of* Ed, but all were enriched *by* Ed. Some met him on his turf, others he met on their turf, but wherever they met there was Christ in the midst of them.

Finally, I thank Ed Schroeder, himself, for his “flinty words [that ] supply the spark.” He is unique among those “splendid teachers [who] fan the flame of sudden hope in Jesus’ name for genuine salvation.” For him we say: Soli Dei Gloria! To God alone be the glory!

Steven C. Kuhl  
President, The Crossings Community

## Contributors

**Rev. Dr. Steven E. Albertin** is pastor at Christ Church, The Lutheran Church of Zionsville in Zionsville, Indiana. Previously he served in pastorates at Epiphany Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana and Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, Indiana. He received his M. Div. from Concordia Seminary In Exile (1976), his S.T.M. in systematic theology from Christ Seminary – Seminex (1978) and his D. Min. from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (1995). He was a student of Bob Bertram and Ed Schroeder at Concordia Seminary and Seminex in St. Louis who fitted him with the Law-Gospel lens that would bring focus to his work as pastor, preacher, and teacher in congregational life. Indeed, Steven has been heard to say things like, “few have law-gospel lenses as finely ground as Ed: see how he is able to magnify Christ and his benefits for us.” He has published two collections of sermons *Against The Grain* (1999) and *Through Cross Colored Glasses* (2003) through CSS Publishing. He currently serves on the Crossings board and is a contributor to *Sabbatheology*. The paper printed here was first presented at the annual SALT Conference April 2001.

**Rev. Dr. Jerome E. Burce** cut his theological teeth in classes taught by Ed Schroeder and Bob Bertram at Christ

Seminary–Seminech, St. Louis. Ordained in 1980, he has answered calls to Papua New Guinea, Connecticut, and Ohio, and presently serves as senior pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church, Fairview Park, a 1600 member ELCA congregation in the Cleveland area. Jerry's publications include *Proclaiming the Scandal: Reflections on Post-Modern Ministry*, a book that emerged from a D.Min. project at Hartford Seminary. He began writing for the Crossings web site (*Sabbatheology* series) in 2002 and has served on the Crossings Community's Board of Directors since 2003.

**Dr. Marie A. Failing** is a Professor of Law at Hamline University School of Law and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Law and Religion. Ed Schroeder was her freshman theology professor at Valparaiso University. As an editor and sometime writer on Lutheran views of law, she has continued to seek his counsel on many "left-hand" matters involving law. Marie received the J.D. from Valparaiso University School of Law and her LL.M. at Yale Law School; and she teaches and writes in constitutional law, legal ethics, and on issues relating to minorities and the poor. Among many non-profit associations, she serves on the board of Church Innovations Institute and the Editorial Council of the Journal of Lutheran Ethics.

**Mr. David Gooding** is a composer, performer, arranger, lyricist, and music director with well over 300 productions to his credit from the West Coast to Broadway. He is also a voice teacher, specializing in rehabbing injured voices. For over a dozen years he was resident Music Director/Composer for the Cleveland Play House and maintained long associations as Organist for the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell, at Lake Erie College as Professor of Music and as Music Director for The Temple. Currently, He is Organist/Choirmaster for Fairmount Temple, Shaker Heights, and the Director of Music Ministries at Messiah Lutheran Church in Fairview Park, Ohio. David was honored with an Emmy for his work as Music Director for NBC-TV's *Hickory*

*Hideout* and in 1995 was the recipient of the Cleveland Arts Prize in Music. With lyricist Paul Lee, he composed two critically acclaimed operas for young people, commissioned by Cleveland Opera, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *A Tale of Peter Rabbit*. His third commissioned opera, *An Aesop Odyssey*, for which he was also the lyricist, received its world premiere in 1997. The three operas have already reached an aggregate audience of over 400,000 people in live performances around the US. Gooding's liturgical compositions are published through Cantorello Press. His resume as a church musician includes a 12-year stint at an Episcopal parish in Lakewood, Ohio. The Crossing Community commissioned David to write a hymn in collaboration with lyricist Jerome Burce in honor of Ed Schroeder. The result is a hymn entitled "Gospel Blazes in the Dark" to a tune entitled "Crossings." That hymn, along with the musical score, is published in this volume with permission granted for use in congregational singing by Swithin Gate music, Inc.

**Rev. Dr. Michael Hoy** is the Senior Pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and Dean of the Lutheran School of Theology in St. Louis. He has a Doctorate of Theology degree in the field of Theology and Ethics from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He also holds a Master of Divinity degree from Christ Seminary-Seminex and a Master of Theology from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Mike has served as a member of the Crossings Community board since 1993, as president of the board from 1995-1999, as Crossings *Sabbatheology* editor from 1997-2001, and, currently, as the editor of the Crossings *Newsletter*. Through an invitation associated with the missionary work of Ed Schroeder, Mike gave a Crossings lecture tour in Australia in 1998. Mike was a student of Bob Bertram and Ed Schroeder at Seminex, and a teaching assistant for both in the Lutheran Confessions. Ed is a dear friend and colleague, often teaching

for the Lutheran School of Theology of which Mike is the dean. Ed has especially shaped Mike's life through their numerous interactions and sharing. Mike recalls one time when Ed commented about the "thin line" of the promising tradition as an assurance that the good news is always coming through somewhere in the church and world as a theology of the cross, though oftentimes in what looks to be but an insignificant remnant. That insight has stayed with Mike and provided him encouragement in difficult days and times of trial. The paper printed here was from a presentation at the ecumenical workshop of Lutheran, Episcopal, and Reformed traditions in October 2005 on "Doing Ethics on the Edge," addressing church-controversial ethical issues.

**Rev. Tim Hoyer** is an ELCA pastor serving Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Lakewood, New York. He served as pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Norwich, New York, for ten years; and pastor of the Conqueral Parish (three congregations) in Nova Scotia for three years, and pastor of the Conqueral/Midville Parishes (the three congregations plus one more) for four years. Tim's earliest connection with Ed Schroeder is familial. He is Ed's nephew by virtue of Ed's marriage to Marie, a member of the Hoyer clan. Tim's formal theological connection is through Seminex in St. Louis, where he had Ed for a teacher. Tim graduated from Seminex in 1982. He is a Sabbathology writer and occasionally has an article posted on Thursday Theology on the Crossings website.

**Dr. Albert E. Jabs** – Dr. Albert E. Jabs is a layman who lives in Lexington, South Carolina and has 45 years of experience as a professor of history and the social sciences at both private and public colleges and universities. Much of his teaching has focused on multi-cultural education in predominantly African-American colleges/universities in the United States. He has known Ed Schroeder for almost half a century, beginning with his

days as a student at Valparaiso University, and, through Ed's networking, Al and his daughter, Krista, served on the faculty at Lithuania Christian College for a semester in 2000. Like Ed, Al, too, has the heart of a missionary, using his extensive global travel as an opportunity to cross the Easter Story with all that he encounters in the crossroads and crisis of life through writing, presentations, and service projects. His latest mission project took him to Romania in July of 2005.

**Rev. Norb Kobelitz** is retired pastor in the ELCA and a long time colleague and friend of Ed Schroeder. His connection with Ed and Bob Bertram goes back to Valparaiso days (1962-66), when they called him to assist them in the planting of a new mission start, the Church of the Ascension, and to teach a New Testament course in a new curriculum they pioneered based on the lectionary. That curriculum is the "parent of Crossings," as Norb describes it. Over the years he also has served pastorates in Valparaiso, Indiana, Oklahoma City, and Pinella, Florida. His ministry in urban Oklahoma led him into the middle of the civil rights movement, where he stood shoulder to shoulder with black, striking, garbage workers in acts of "civil disobedience." (More details of Norb's ministry in Oklahoma are available at [www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org) in the Lent 1998 Issue of the Crossings Newsletter.) Norb is a regular contributor to the Sabbatheology ministry of Crossings, a ministry that provides text studies on the upcoming lectionary readings, "programmed" to clarify the gospel's diagnosis and prognosis of the human situation before God, the self and the world.

**Rev. Dr. Steven C. Kuhl** is a pastor in the ELCA and presently serves as Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at St. Francis Seminary of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Previously, he served pastorates at Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL and Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Mukwonago, WI. In 1982 Steve received the M.Div. Degree from Christ Seminary-

Seminex, where he studied with Ed Schroeder and Bob Bertram and became enamored with the "Promising Tradition" that characterized their teaching. In 1984, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Seminex in St. Louis, he traveled with Ed, Bob, and others to visit the "Seminexes of Asia," specifically, kindred spirits in Japan, Korea and the Philippines. The focus of the trip was to learn, through first hand dialogue, how the law-gospel hermeneutic crossed into the Asian missiological and liberation context. That trip also strengthened his regard to Ed as a teacher, mentor, and friend. In 1993, Steve received a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. His dissertation reengaged him with his Minnesota farm-boy roots and is entitled *Christ and Agriculture: Toward a Theologically Useful Understanding of the Crisis of American Agriculture Utilizing the Theologies of Culture of H. Richard Niebuhr, Martin Luther, and St. Paul*. Steve has served on the Crossings Board of Directors since 1993 and as the Crossings Board President since 1999. He is an occasional Crossings' *Sabbatheology*, *Thursday Theology* and *Newsletter* writer and has also published in other venues. Most recently he published an article in *Preach* (January/February 2005) entitled, "The CORE of Ecumenical Preaching." Steve resides in Southeastern Wisconsin with his wife, Kelly, and their two children.

**Mr. B. Sherman Lee** is by day an information architect for a brokerage firm and by night a member of, both, the Faith Place and Crossings Board of Directors, as well as a lay church musician, lay theologian and a lay preacher. He is all the time a joy-filled husband and father of two adorable children, making their home in the St. Louis Area. Sherman first connected with Ed Schroeder through Crossings Workshops and Courses and has been a student, friend, and colleague ever since. Upon Ed's retirement, he also co-edited and co-published *A Crossings*

*Celebration: Ed Schroeder and His Ministry* (a.k.a. the 1993 Ed Schroeder Festschrift) with Irmgard Koch and Pastor Robin Morgan in thanks for Ed's teaching ministry, which didn't really stop, but took on different forms.

**Rev. Dr. Marcus C. Lohrmann** is the Bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. His first encounter with Ed Schroeder was in a Systematic Theology class at Seminex in St. Louis. He recalls, "My worst grades in seminary (two "B"s) came from Ed Schroeder. He insisted that I learn not just to talk *about* Christ but to *necessitate* Christ. No "A"s from Ed until you can learn that. I did, and that learning has been at the heart of my teaching and preaching ever since." Marcus holds two degrees from Seminex, a M.Div. (1977) and a D.Min. (1985). Ed also supervised his D.Min. thesis, entitled "Ministry to Inactives: A Call to be Saints." Inactivity, Marcus discovered, has more to do with an "inactive faith," than with not showing up on Sunday. Ministering to the problem of "inactive faith" is the central pastoral task. With that in mind, Marcus has served as pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in St. Louis, MO, St. John's LC in Hicksville, Ohio, and Olivet LC in Sylvania, Ohio. Some of the most formative experiences Marcus has had came from mission trips he took with Ed. In 1988, he went to Hong Kong with Ed, at the invitation of theologian and missiologist Jonathan Chow, to "cross" the kind of authority Matthew's Jesus exercised with that Confucianism. Today, in his capacity as bishop, Marcus still travels to distant places to share the gospel. He continues to thank Ed for his encouragement to take on the calling of a bishop. Marcus, a noted critic of the way things were being done in the church, was elected against his intentions to be bishop, and was tempted to turn down the job. Ed and Marie noted the example of the reluctant Augustine to take on the mantle of a bishop, conversed with Marcus about what

it means to be a bishop in the style of the Augsburg Confession and, then, prayed and laid hands on him. He is now in his second term as bishop and grateful to have Ed as a teacher, mentor and friend.

**Rev. Dr. Joest J. Mnemba** is a Roman Catholic diocesan priest in Malawi. He became acquainted with Ed Schroeder and Bob Bertram when his bishop, Patrick Kalilombe, sent him to Christ Seminary-Seminex (Seminary-in-exile) in St. Louis to receive his doctorate in Systematic Theology. Fr. Mnemba finished his doctoral work at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago when some of the Seminex faculty and students moved to join that seminary community. He has served as a Lecturer in Human Sciences and Systematic Theology, Kachebere Major Seminary, Mchinji, Malawi. The paper printed here was first presented as a public lecture seminar in Chancellor College on the 27th of January, 1988, under the same title.

**Rev. Robin Morgan** graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a B.A. in English in 1977. Presently, she is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and most recently served a community called Faith Place, a new city ministry in urban St. Louis. Her ministry in that community is the focus of the article published in this volume. Her foray into theology began when she signed up for a Crossings Class with Ed Schroeder. As Robin often says, she was "enamored by the law-promise message and kept wanting more." Convinced of the necessity of this theological outlook for everyday people, she received her M.Div. degree from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 1995. Pastor Morgan and her husband, Hal, have three grown children. The couple lives in St. Louis with their basset hound, Ezzie, and their standard poodle, Beau.

**Rev. Ron O'Grady** is an ordained minister of the Christian Church, Disciples in New Zealand. Always active in ecumenical

work, he was Associate General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia from 1973-1981. During that time he and Prof Masao Takenaka of Japan founded the Asian Christian Art Association. In 1990 Ron was founder of ECPAT International, the agency which monitors and combats child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking. He has written a number of books on Christian Art and human rights.

**Rev. Dr. Robert C. Schultz** is a retired pastor of the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He received a B.D. from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in 1952 and a Doctor of Theology. from the University of Erlangen in Germany in 1956. Bob has also studied at Harvard Divinity School (1961-1962) and at the Menninger Foundation (1966-1967). Over the years he as taught at various schools including Valparaiso University, St. John's University, DeAndreis Seminary, and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. He has served as a parish pastor for a number of years and is still active in interim ministry. Bob's friendship with Edward Schroeder began over fifty years ago when they were students at Concordia Seminary in 1949 and, then, in Erlangen in the summer of 1954. From 1957-1961, they were colleagues and office-mates in the Department of Religion at Valparaiso University. Their friendship has continued over the years. In his own work, Bob have focused on the interrelationship between theology and pastoral ministry, wrestling with questions like: How do different versions of a theological doctrine affect the total pattern of pastoral ministry? How does our understanding of the subject of ministry affect our use of various theological formulations? This concern for integrating the theological and the pastoral dimensions of the Christian faith is evident in the essay he contributed for this volume.

**Rev. Dr. Gary M. Simpson** has served as a Professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota since 1990.

He recalls: "My first conversation with Ed Schroeder was on March 22, 1973. We argued. I was never the same again!" As an M.Div. student, Gary took numerous courses with Ed and, as a senior (1976), was a Schroeder Teaching Assistant for the courses in the Lutheran Confessions. He completed his Doctor of Theology in 1983 at Christ Seminary-Seminex with Ed as his Doktorvater. Over the years Gary has published journal articles in *Word & World*, *Dialogue*, and *Religious Studies Review*, contributed chapters to numerous books, and published three books. His most recent title is *War, Peace, and God*, published by Augsburg in 2005. Gary's has served as a parish pastor in Alameda, California; St. Louis, Missouri; and Portland, Oregon and has a keen sense of the congregation as the locus where for theology and public life intersect to bring hope and new life into the world. "Just as each Christian has a vocation in the world, each congregation also has a vocation. This means that traditional congregations, which are often ethnically grounded, must think about their mission and place in the community in a new way."

**Mr. Mervyn Wagner** is a layman who lives in Adelaide, South Australia. He has more than 30 years' experience in Christian education, at parish, district and national levels of the Lutheran Church of Australia and as a teacher in Lutheran schools. Mervyn has post-graduate degrees in theology and education from Adelaide and Concordia (River Forest) Universities, and has published many articles on Lutheran education in Australia and the United States. He works as a teacher and, through Emmaus Educational, as a consultant in Christian education. Mervyn first met Ed Schroeder when he organized an introductory Crossings seminar for him in 1994, the year Ed spent teaching at Luther Seminary in North Adelaide, South Australia.

# Gospel Blazes in the Dark: A Poem

By Jerome E. Burce

Composed for a celebration of Edward H. Schroeder's 75th birthday, and, omitting stanza 2a, for such further use thereafter as any may wish to make of it.

*All-*

1. Gospel blazes in the dark  
Flinty words supply the spark  
Splendid teachers fan the flame  
Of sudden hope in Jesus' name  
For genuine salvation.

2. Thus are servants, called by God,  
Sent with feet adorned and shod  
With the winsome news of peace  
In Christ who makes the warfare cease  
That we 'gainst God keep waging.

*Students and all who have sat at Dr. Schroeder's feet—*

2a. Note our joy, dear God, we pray  
Take the thanks we sing today  
For your gift of fiery Ed  
By whom our bleary hearts were led  
To see the Light astounding.

*All, cont.—*

3 Holy Spirit ever praised,  
By your lively breath be raised  
Saints to bless each time and place  
With lavish talk of honest grace  
and deeds of Godly kindness.

4 Grant that all who dare to preach  
Seeking glory grasp and reach  
For the nettle, piercing cross,  
That all but Christ they scorn as loss  
Him crucified their treasure.

5 Let them rightly parse your Word  
Law and Gospel clearly heard  
Fools to beggar, slaves to free  
From Adam's grim insanity  
That we, divine, must save us.

6 God for us when all is lost  
Mercy eating sin's deep cost  
This your glory saints adore  
For this creation's praise will soar  
From age to age unending.

7 Christ the end of holy wrath  
Christ for all the future's path,  
Fuel your church, excite the spark,  
That Gospel blazing in the dark  
Will fill the world with gladness.

## **A Walk of Art in America**

By  
Ron O'Grady

"Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not.  
given me seats in homes not my own.  
Thou hast brought the distant near  
And made me a brother of the stranger"

## Rabindranath Tagore

The moving words of the great Bengali poet Tagore came back to me as I started to think about Ed and Marie Schroeder.

The generation to which we belong has been specially blessed through our ability to travel widely, to experience at first hand foreign cultures and to meet people from a great diversity of backgrounds. Ed and Marie have taken full advantage of this gift and they seem to have explored more remote places of the planet than Marco Polo ever knew existed. It was inevitable that eventually our paths would cross as we travelled the ecumenical circuit. Once we talked, our many common interests, especially our love of art, soon created a bond between us.

I am especially grateful to them for their constant support in the production of the millennium book "Christ for All People". This collection of world Christian art owes much to the enthusiasm of Ed and Marie and regular emails recorded their latest thoughts. Yes, they knew the Peruvian artist Merida, in fact they had one of his works hanging on their wall. Yes, they had seen some interesting African art and had photos of a mural from Mua Mission in Malawi. Yes, Marie would be delighted to write a reflection on Pablo Picasso's painting of the crucifixion. Such people are the greatest gift an editor can have.

As a dedication to Ed and Marie I offer an outsider's reflection on Christian art in the United States based on our experience in producing the millennium book.

### Christianity and Art in America

The United States of America can lay claim to being the most active Christian country in the world. At least 85% of the population describe themselves as Christian and that represents

over 225 million persons. It is a marked contrast with European countries where churches are struggling with a declining membership and where Christianity appears to have little influence on society.

Despite the large numbers, Christianity in America has been verbal rather than visual with little tradition of Christian painting or sculpture. Scanning the work of America's greatest artists over the last 100 years it is difficult to find those whose art is an expression of their Christian faith or religious values. When we published our book of world Christian art, it was easier to find

Gospel Blazes in the Dark

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CONTEXT

Ed Schroeder...Seelsorger

By Albert E. Jabs

Ed, farm boy, like Amos from Tekoa, could trouble kingdoms—south, north, east or west. Yet, this farm boy/theologian could also shake hands around the gas station on Highway 66 from Chicago to St. Louis. The disheveled clothes and soiled hands did not make any difference to their communication. Bob Bertram called him a “whiz” Kid and I had a sense he had direct access to a higher power. After all he had walked and talked, and maybe ran, with the “wunder kind” types like Jaroslav Pelikan, Werner Elert, Bob Bertram, Helmut Thielicke, Martin Marty, and others. Yet, this farm boy, older brother of six other siblings, married up with Marie, and became a sojourner of various passages, and global travel...and by God's grace...is still at it.

A long distant runner in that small Illinois farm town, sojourner Ed and Marie, built missions all along the way including a far distant Indian/Burma area spot known as Manipur. As these lines are being written, who knows that our Lord may still be good to him, in spite (like David), of the lions, bears, and Goliaths they had to encounter along the way of mission. Like Martin Luther, I believe Ed envisions that God has placed him in a "schlachtfeld," a crucible in which Ed is thrown into a battle between God and the devil. In fact, what endears me to Ed was his vivid description of his battle with devious demons that had crept into the weakness of his hospital room. He was a true theologian at this point...Anfechtung, (temptation), Leiden (suffering), and so Ed, called on Christus Victor, the Resurrected Christ, to help him in that darkened hospital room. More could be said about such trials and tests.

Ed's story and my own story intersect at a number of points: Valparaiso University graduates, through which we were fired by the religious questions unleashed, ancestry out of minority status in Poland, links with the land, athletic background, life lone thirst for learning, and close knit family of Lutheran German origins. Possessed by a hunger to express Christ connections, we moved in both rural, global missions, and cosmopolitan circles. But Ed had an amazing cross country run with the Crossings workshops that was a distinctive opportunity. We both enjoy the 100 yard dashes and long distant runs which characterize much of our mutual ministry and our world travels and groundings before and after we hit the 70 plus turf.

Our stories of this mutual race are oriented around the Baptismal life and the church. As these lines are being written just a few days after another Mission in Romania, let me draw on a newly discovered resource hidden in Luke 17, in which the disciples call on Jesus to "Increase our Faith." In German, we would say: "Herrn: Mehre uns den Glauben!" Of course, Ed would

flunk me on my German ability, but the lesson here is that we really do need the strengthening of faith. For example, Teacher Ed and I would wrestle over the tragedies of the ethnic Germans. I have made a life time study of these challenges because my grandfather and other family members were abused, lost their farm, and were virtually homeless as refugees circa 1945.

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Understanding the Distinction between Law and Gospel as a Hermeneutical Principle: Valparaiso University, 1958-1960.

By Robert C. Schultz

### Introduction

1. 1 This paper was originally presented to the "Setting an Agenda for Lutheran Theology (SALT) Conference" in St. Louis, MO on April 15-17. Copyright © 2005 by Robert C. Schultz. All rights reserved.
2. 2 This paper is a somewhat playful effort to remember and reflect on significant elements in the context and process (as I now remember it with the assistance of documents from that period in my private files) that contributed to the assertion that any understanding of the Lutheran distinction between law and gospel is not only an organizing principle of Lutheran systematic theology, but also a "hermeneutical principle" that influences the interpretation of Scripture.
3. 3 My primary audience was and is the SALT Conference and its concern to identify future tasks in Lutheran theological work. This setting remains the context in which it should be read. The presence of some footnotes and broad assertions should not obscure the intertwining

of personal memory and conjecture. This paper was written to provoke discussion and suggest possibilities.

4. 4 Although I shall refer to a much larger time period, the purpose is to focus on the time (1957- 1961) when Schroeder and I were colleagues in the Department of Religion at Valparaiso University. Within that time period, I especially focus on the context and results of 1958- 1960. It was somewhere during this time, that we began to describe the distinction between law and gospel as a hermeneutical principle.<sup>1</sup>
5. 5 Given this context, this essay has been revised and made available as my contribution to the Crossings celebration of the work of Edward H. Schroeder. It is also intended as a stimulus to future work: I shall therefore note some ways in which I think we might usefully apply the distinction between law and gospel as an organizing principle in our theological thinking and our pastoral work.
6. 6 In the process of discussing this paper at the SALT conference, I became aware that my understanding of these years often depended on my personal perspective of events in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LC–MS) and that I could not assume that perspective without noting it in some detail. Given the nature and purpose of this paper, I allowed myself to be somewhat more personal in reporting my experience than some might find acceptable. In so far as I refer to others, I am more interested in describing my own best memories of my perceptions – both memories and original perceptions may have been in error. No conclusions should be drawn about anyone else than myself. The understanding reader will think of it as more of “blog” than a “paper.” Some things are mentioned because I suspect I am one of the few who still remembers things that should not be forgotten.<sup>1</sup> “The Distinction Between

Law and Gospel," Concordia Theological Monthly (October, 1961) is one result

of that process.

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Introduction

Images of Christ in Africa by  
Joest J. Mnemba

The picture that most African Christians have of Christ is that he is an "expatriate" or mzungu, like the missionary who introduced him. That is to say, he is the God of the West, a stranger to Africa. While Christ must always be an "outsider" (i.e. above any culture), under certain aspects it still remains true that if Christianity is to be really identified as local, then Christ must be understood, not as an alien, but as the one who was to come, the one who comes to fulfill the deepest aspirations of all human searching for God.

We have to remember that Jesus as a historical person is both particular and universal. As a particular individual, the man Jesus belonged to the Jewish ethnic group and culture; but as the one risen from the dead, as the glorified one, he is no longer limited to a particular culture.<sup>1</sup> Because he is a universal person, Africans have also the right and privilege to see him in terms of the fulfillment of African tradition. We can see him, therefore, as the fulfillment of ancestral dreams for a powerful mediator. What follows is an attempt to provide one way of depicting meaningful images of Jesus the Christ in the African context.

Lord of Creation (Mwinimoyo/Namalenga)

The image of Christ as “the Lord of Creation” is the one that seems to be most relevant to the African way of life.<sup>2</sup> Throughout Africa, people look at the World and the entire universe as sacred. The world is the domain of the spirits, whether it be in the forests, rivers, mountains, lakes or in the sky. In this respect, ancestors play a great role in the lives of the living. In particular, they are the progenitors of life acquired from God, which they in turn effectively share with their clan descendants. Parents therefore do not just give life to their children at one point, say at the moment of birth; they continue to give life.<sup>3</sup>

Here, it is not only human life that continues to flow from God. All other life that is necessary to sustain humanity – the life of plants, the sun and the stars, the life of plants and minerals [i.e. with their curative powers] – all flow continuously from God. Because of all this, Africans tend to believe in a common origin of life and a common destiny for all. There is therefore an inter-dependence between human life and the universe which supports him.

1 An excellent discussion of the motif “Christ and culture” can be found in H. R. Niebuhr , *Christ and Culture*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1951), pp. 116-41.

2 John Mutiso-Mbinda, “Anthropology and the Paschal Mystery” in B. Hearne (ed.) *The Paschal Mystery of Christ and of all Humankind*, (Eldoret, Kenya: Goba Publications, 1979), pp. 51-52.

3 J. G. Donders, *Non-Bourgeois Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), p. 11.

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XP-Word, Control-JC

## A Ground-Level Approach to the Doctrine of Justification

By Jerome Burce

“Use nickel words,” grouses Edward H. Schroeder, most recently to a set of academic theologians who, if they noticed the suggestion at all, would doubtless find it bemusing<sup>1</sup>. Persons who pay attention to Schroeder and have waded in his stream of essays over the years know well that he practices what he preaches. Indeed his genius—be it said that he possesses one—is an unfailing ability to parse the most abstruse of theological concepts with a slangy down-home flair, heavy on the Anglo-Saxon, that puts them within ready reach of the children and grandchildren of the farmers he went to church with as a boy. Of theologians doing serious work in America during the past half-century, none have spoken or written more plainly than Schroeder. Because of this few if any have approached his standard of intelligibility. A remarkable standard it is, high and lofty precisely in its quality of being so utterly down to earth, so happily accessible to the crowds of the theologically unwashed for whom the Gospel it serves was intended in the first place, and still is.

But such a thing merits more than remark. Applause would be in order, and, even more, emulation. Were all things right in this world—they manifestly are not—Schroeder would be widely hailed in theological circles as a master of faithful discourse. Of solid journeymen there are many, working theologians who attend closely to the content of their work, taking pains to ensure that their speaking and writing will not be dishing up “another gospel.” God be praised for them. God be praised all the more for Master Edward who trumps them all with discourse that is doubly faithful, true to the Gospel not only in substance but also in style. The journeymen will talk seriously about the

Incarnation. The master asks us to think not just seriously but also vividly about the “mangered Messiah,”<sup>2</sup> a locution that will cause lesser eyebrows to twitch. Truth be told, verbal antics like this once led Schroeder’s students to refer to him in seminary hallways as “Crazy Ed.” Almost all those students were too obtuse to catch the method in the madness; how, as in the present example, the manner of speaking tips us off to the content of the speech, in this case the divine madness that once upon the fullness of time landed the Son of God in a feeding trough.

This choice of example, by the way, is quite deliberate. Over the decades Schroeder’s style has consistently trumpeted John 1:14. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, “us” being the sods with calluses on their hands and transgression in their Greek- or English-mangling tongues. With such as these God deigned to speak, and in their own patois no less. No wonder John says that the Word was full of grace; full, not half-full; with a double grace, of form as well as substance, style as well as content, if indeed, in the case of God’s grace in Christ, one can separate the two. Here the content requires the style and the style becomes a piece of the

1 Edward H. Schroeder, “A Book Review. The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology by Mark C. Mattes” (Internet: [www.crossings.org/thursday/Thur021005.htm](http://www.crossings.org/thursday/Thur021005.htm), 2005)

2 Schroeder uses this expression frequently. See, for example, “The ‘Peace & Justice’ Mantra” (Internet: [www.crossings.org/thursday/Thur120904.htm](http://www.crossings.org/thursday/Thur120904.htm), 2004).

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# Barth by Way of Bonhoeffer's Confession of Christ

by

Gary M. Simpson

Early on, Edward H. Schroeder sharply criticized Karl Barth. The same can be said of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer, as everyone knows, was deeply indebted to Barth. The same, however, cannot be said of Ed Schroeder. Ed's critique cuts into the Barthian project by means of the Reformation's law-and-promise hermeneutic—Ed's proverbial "the Augsburg Aha!" Dietrich's critique cuts into the Barthian project by means of Christology—a Christology implicit within "the Augsburg Aha," especially in *Confessio Augustana*, Articles III and IV, on Christology and justification respectively.

That Ed Schroeder's seventy-fifth birthday coincides with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's forthcoming one hundredth birthday in 2006 offers a twofold opportunity. First, we can challenge the current "Bonhoeffer revival" by way of Dietrich's characteristically Lutheran inquiry, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?"<sup>1</sup> Second, we can engage Ed's critique of Barth in order to unfold Ed's lifelong confession of Christ, which never wastes another characteristically Lutheran inquiry, "Why Jesus?" Not only can we intensify Bonhoeffer's confession of Christ by not wasting Schroeder's "Why Jesus?" but we can also intensify Schroeder's critique of Barth by way of Bonhoeffer. My goal is to intensify, indeed, to execute our confession of Jesus Christ for us today. In my case the indigenous "our" and "us" names the thinning number of Westernized Christians who, nevertheless, are increasingly expanding in global dominance. To respond to these opportunities and challenges, I will 1) engage Ed's critique of Barth and how that critique invigorates Ed's own confession of Christ; 2) elucidate Bonhoeffer's critique of Barth's doctrine of Lordship; 3) expound Bonhoeffer's consequent Christ

confession that "God is a God who bears;" and 4) explore how Bonhoeffer's confession can intensify and expand Ed's, or better, our confession of Christ in a new era of mission by exposing, indeed, by executing the missional- ecclesial ethos of the God who bears.

## I. Schroeder's Critique of Barth and Consequent Confession of Christ

Already in his doctoral dissertation Schroeder criticized Karl Barth's theological project.<sup>2</sup> Schroeder begins by investigating the formal relationship between dogmatics and ethics. But substantive issues soon emerge because substance influences, even determines, the formal. The formal relationship between dogmatics and ethics in Barth depends on his "Christology as the hub," which itself is "already conditioned by several [of Barth's] theological opinions" (759). Schroeder lists three related arenas: the human predicament, the qualitative difference between God and humanity, and the concept of faith.

1 See W. W. Bartley, "The Bonhoeffer Revival," *New York Review*, August 8, 1965.

2 A condensation of Schroeder's dissertation appeared as "The Relationship between Dogmatics and Ethics in the Thought of Elert, Barth, and Troeltsch," *Concordia Theological Monthly* XXXVI (December 1965):744-771. All page numbers in this and the next five paragraphs refer to this article.

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THE GOSPEL AND LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

By Mervyn Wagner

It is often claimed that what happens in Lutheran schools in Australia is “informed by the gospel.” This proposition begs two questions: 1) What do Lutherans mean by “the gospel”? and 2) How might that gospel “inform” what happens in Lutheran schools?

This essay focuses on these questions.

To ask what Lutherans mean by “the gospel” can seem almost sacrilegious. Isn’t having “the pure gospel” the Lutheran distinctive? Didn’t Luther rediscover “the gospel”? The element of truth in these claims highlights the need for Lutherans to continually ensure they do not betray their heritage by preaching or practising “another gospel.” This is something Ed Schroeder has sought to do throughout his long and varied calling as a church educator in many parts of the globe, including Australia. In addressing the questions that form the basis of this article, it is hoped that Ed’s commitment to seeing that the good news is always appropriately proclaimed is honoured. It is also hoped this offering contributes to The Crossings Community’s *raison d’être*, something introduced to Australia during Ed’s visits “down under,” that the gospel bear fruit in daily vocations, in this case in Lutheran schools.

## THE NATURE OF THE GOOD NEWS

Luther’s name and “gospel” are so closely associated that it can be something of a shock to learn that his Small Catechism does not include an explicit definition of what “the gospel” is. The word itself only appears in one place, but that provides a good starting point for our journey.

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith (Wengert, p 29).

We are familiar, probably over-familiar, with these words. This can cause us to miss the fact that these are radical words. They tell us that the gospel causes change. They also tell us that our understanding and reason cannot produce this change. Educators, whose vocation revolves around reason and understanding, are inclined to miss the significance of this latter point. As is implicit above, Luther's understanding of preaching and love of the gospel grew out of his distinctive experience and views regarding sin and the human condition in God's eyes. This means we can only maintain Luther's unique take on the gospel if we also accurately grasp, and carefully retain, his stand on original sin. This is a challenge because, by definition, our old nature tries to domesticate Luther's confession of human weakness before God. Regardless, it is only after we have correctly diagnosed the nature of the illness – the “bad news” of our terminal condition over against God – that the cure, or “good news,” can be truly discerned and

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The Foolish Value of Nickel Words

by Timothy J. Hoyer

“My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God” (1 Cor 2.4-5).

Nickels are cheap. They are almost useless. They are used to make up the sales tax of seven or eight percent of what one buys. You used to be able to buy a pack of gum for a nickel. Not anymore. Now it takes a quarter. A nickel can't get you anything. That is why the jars on store counters, with a sign

taped on them begging for help for a local kid with cancer, are filled with what people are willing to give up because they aren't worth much—pennies and nickels.

So, in this North American world where education is valued and big words make one sound important, nickel words are scorned. When Ed Schroeder says, "Or in nickel words," some think he is using cheap, useless words, and that he is insulting them.

But, in a world where one billion people live off of less than one dollar a day, a nickel is important. In a world where millions cannot read, where millions get no education, nickel words are the coin of the realm. In an upstate county in New York, where twenty-five percent of the people are functionally illiterate, nickel words are greatly valued.

Nickel words are important for telling others what one means. Most people know of the story where the doctor uses some big words, such as polymyalgia rheumatica, and the patient says, "In English, please, Doctor." Or the patient turns to his son, even after the doctor has used words with fewer syllables, and gives his son a look that asks for help. Only when the son uses words that the father is familiar with, nickel words, does the father understand.

The death and life of a man named Jesus also make nickel words important. Jesus came from a village that was looked down on as worthless as a wooden nickel, "What good can come out of Nazareth [the sticks or the wrong side of the tracks]?" Jesus claimed he could forgive people their sin, that he could get them on God's good side. The reason people were attracted to Jesus' claim of putting them on God's good side was because they felt they were on God's bad side. They, try as they might, could not get themselves on God's good side. They knew that. They were told that.

Life itself tells everyone that they are not on God's good side. Everyone on earth knows that their lives are always being judged, measured, valued, "weighed and found wanting." From the time a baby is born to the time a person dies after a long, long life, people have a value put on them. When people see a baby, they ask, "Is she a good baby?" A good baby is a baby that sleeps through the night and eats well and does not cry a lot. Children in school are graded on their every action—character, punctuality, attendance, reading level, tests, quizzes, homework, participation, how well they get along with others, the clothes they wear, the friends they play with, and how well they perform in sports. Next, when people work, their value is in their

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Is the Church Dying? A Given Necessity

by

Marcus C. Lohrmann

In wrestling with this rather daunting question for the past months (years?), I find it important to begin the discussion with the recollection of Peter's answer to the question about Jesus' identity and Jesus' response. Peter says:

"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven." (Matthew 16:16)

What follows is Jesus' word of promise, "and I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18). In the

midst of anxiety about the well-being of the church, the text directs us to trust in the Lord of the church.

At another time of great turmoil in the life of the church, the framers of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology to the Augsburg Confession were able to take that promise and run with it. In the face of such questions as, Where is the church? And What is the church? they answered:

It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one, holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel. (The Augsburg Confession, Article VII. From The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Kolb and Wengert, editors. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000, p. 42. Hereafter, "AC")

The challenge is to bring that promise to bear on the present anxiety surrounding those who understand themselves to be a part of that church but who, when they survey the present landscape, also find themselves recalling Jesus' words, "...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8b)

## THE CONTEXT FOR THE QUESTION

Is the church dying? For at least some of us, the question is not new. I suspect that the question is most often raised when our experience of the church seems to be so contrary to our understanding of what the church is called to be. Thirty years ago the church that I was a part of was clearly unraveling. While I confessed the Apostles' and Nicene Creed with the assertion, "I believe in the Holy Christian Church" the only manifestation or local incarnation of the church that I knew was the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. At that point, if you would have asked me, Is the church dying? I would have answered,

“Can’t you see? Yes, of course. I don’t see the Gospel in what is taking place.” Ironically, that experience thrust many of us upon the bosom of

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The Homiletical Bind: Preaching Law and Gospel in the Congregation

By

Steven E. Albertin, Pastor

Introduction

As I talk with my clergy colleagues both in and outside of my Lutheran circles, I sense that there is much confusion about the purpose of preaching. Well, I might call it confusion, but others would prefer to describe it approvingly as diversity. I am not an expert in homiletics, but as I read and listen to much of the preaching in my part of the world, especially to the more popular preachers of some reputation, I sense that much of it is indeed not much different from the latest motivational speech you might hear at any sales conference. They are often lively, humorous, informative, filled with clever anecdotes and stories and most of all, entertaining. The only difference between this preaching and just another self-help motivational speech is the occasional sprinkling of references to God and other such religious language.

I could also make similar observations about another kind of preaching that is very wide spread in my area. Central Indiana is also on the northern edge of the Bible Belt. And in the Bible Belt there is never a reticence to talk about God and Jesus and the more references the better. Even though such preaching seems to be so much more decisive and full of conviction than what one often hears from the pulpits of main-line Protestants, the best

and most popular practitioners of this kind of preaching also pay significant attention to the techniques and strategies of the motivational speech. Nothing works like preaching that is clever, humorous, anecdotal and filled with stories and illustrations. Add to this the Bible Belt hunger for preaching that is bold, decisive and filled with Biblical quotations, and you have got a winning formula.

To criticize such preaching runs the risk of sounding like “sour grapes,” especially when the critic is a pastor of a relatively small congregation. In this part of the country such preaching is most often found in large congregations that are successful entrepreneurs in the “big business of American religion.” But I will criticize them, because a preacher who is committed to the Lutheran tradition believes that Christian preaching must first of all be faithful to the Word of God. For Lutheran preachers that also means properly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God.

So much of the popular preaching of American Christianity, as it seeks to speak to a culture dominated by consumer and entertainment values, unwittingly adopts the perspectives and techniques of popular culture at the expense of the fullness of the Word of God. Such preaching will be visual and dramatic. Storytelling that is earthy, humorous or suspenseful is essential. Drama and film are often used to supplement preaching. Brevity is fundamental. Above all preaching must be “practical,” filled with down-to-earth examples of what the hearer is expected to do in daily life as a result of taking this preaching to heart. Ask these preachers how they distinguish Law and Gospel in their preaching and they wonder what you are talking about.

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## WHAT BINDS US TOGETHER?\*

By Norb Kabelitz

“On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, “Jesus Master, have mercy on us! When he saw them, he said to them, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.” (Luke 17:11-19)

1. The Church in which we have been baptized and made “clean,” of which we confess as an article of faith, is the “One holy catholic church.” The question raised by this narrative of the 10 lepers is this: are we more “one” in our “unholy” condition of leprosy (and sin), than we are after we have been cleansed, healed, made whole and “holy”? Why then, healed, do we go our separate ways? What ingredient is missing that could bring us together, hold us together, bind us together? Is it the unifying solidarity of our “sin” or of our being made “whole”, healed and “holied?” But having been made whole, why disunity among the ten? Does the Church experience greater unity in its need for Baptism or in the washing of Baptism? Is there a connection between being “One” and “Holy” or does being made clean and holy inevitably lead to distance and separateness? Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?

2. It took leprosy to bridge the separation between Jews and Samaritans. Had it not been for this shared misery neither would have been company for the other: for "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Yet, here is this Samaritan in the company of the nine, crying out their common misery and plea for mercy. Jesus wonders about this after the healing. Only this one? Where are the other nine? Here is a man who was acceptable to the other nine when he was contaminated with leprosy, but now that he is made well he is separated. Is it only our misery that binds us together? Are there other possibilities?

3. We have an old saying about how "Misery loves company." Why is it that we cannot love company until we have first become miserable? There are common bonds which bind us together, but so often we do not discover them except in a shared tragedy, misfortune, and suffering. The story is told by an explorer. His party was trapped by a forest fire but found refuge on an island in the middle of a wide river. The island was crowded with animals of every kind, driven there by the fire. The men were forced to spend the night surrounded by beasts of prey. Yet throughout their vigil, as the fire raged on the opposite bank, no living thing harmed

\* This Oktoberfest Homily was originally preached at St. Francis of Assisi Church Oklahoma City, Oklahoma at an Ecumenical Service on the occasion of 477th Anniversary of the Reformation, November 4, 1984. It owes its inspiration to an Ecumenical Writing by Edward H. Schroeder.

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Book-of-Life Life in the City

By Robin Morgan

This article first appeared in the Michaelmas 2005 issue of the Crossings newsletter.

Since I graduated from seminary in 1995, actually even before that, I've been embroiled in urban ministry. From an eye-opening beginning in the White Women/Women of Color Dialogue Group at LSTC through volunteering at and then being ordained in one city congregation to starting a new mission in another part of the city, I've been drawn into the excitement and pain of doing urban work. I've tried to get away more than once, tried to escape into what I perceived to be easier situations and yet, the Lord wouldn't let me go. I stayed and I learned.

I've chosen the Gospel lesson from St. Michael's and All Angels, Luke 10:17-20, as the grounding for this article partially because it's September, St. Michael season. However, the primary reason is because Michael was a warrior and those of us who do urban ministry know, everyday, that we are in a spiritual battle. I have no desire to expunge battle language from our Christian vocabulary as do some of my colleagues. Though such metaphors have been mightily abused by empires masquerading as the Christian community, when you've ducked down and out of the line of fire during a gang war a time or two, there is no doubt in your mind that a battle for our cities is being fought. Or maybe even more telling of the war being waged in our midst is the apathy and paralysis of so many good people when such stories are told.

So we join the seventy-two in Luke 10 as they return from the mission Jesus had sent them out to do. They come back rejoicing and tell Him, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." What must it have been like for them to experience this power for the first time? Jesus says to them, "I've given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, to overcome all the power of the enemy." They walked and spoke in His name and

evil had to get out of their way.

It amazes me how much more power we Christians have than we usually will let on or use. In July 2003 when we first started talking to people in the neighborhood where Faith Place (the first new Lutheran mission in the city of St. Louis in over 50 years) is located, we were thrilled by the response we received. People are hungry for Good News. Even if their desire is couched in something other than "God language," many folks are looking for answers to hard questions in their lives. Two of our volunteers spoke with a man who has been living with AIDS and had at one time been involved with a Lutheran congregation. When he heard what we wanted to do he said, "Thank God the ELCA is finally coming into these inner city neighborhoods." We rejoiced that we were bringing hope into situations that often had very little hope.

Faith Place has many success stories that encourage everyone who has been involved with our work. Our after-school program has drawn over 150 children from the neighborhood over the last two years. The combination of snacks, games, arts and crafts, Bible study and music, all in a safe environment off the streets, has continued to bring the kids back to our door. Our Wednesday evening worship service and community dinner have provided an opportunity for neighborhood folks along with people from other congregations to praise God together and get to

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From Comfort Zone to War Zone to Peace Zone

By Sherman Lee

This article first appeared in the Michaelmas 2005 issue of the

Crossings newsletter.

I remember my first visit to Faith Place for the inaugural board meeting. "Park in the corner lot; we'll have someone watching the cars," Robin cautioned me over the phone. My gut wrenched and I think I took a deep breath or two. I was no stranger to urban ministry; I had done my fair share of organizing youth group service events for soup kitchens, building renovations and so forth. I was also acquainted with urban crime: ironically while parked at an Advent Hymnfest, my car was vandalized for its stereo. I've never been totally comfortable in the inner city, but I've also not been ill-at-ease in it. I had "gotten my fingers dirty," or so I thought until Robin's warning.

Thoughts raced through my head: if we have to hire a parking guard for every event...how can the budget accommodate such an expense? Always having to worry about physical safety of all the board members and volunteers...placing my own body in possible jeopardy...and my time is already over-committed (as usual), do I really need to add another poker to the fire, especially one so potentially dirty and dangerous?

I've already promised Robin I would help. The church, our collective community in Christ needs to grow. This area desperately needs both care and redemption. I can't back out now, not over a little fear. I have to, at the very least, show up once. Contrasting Robin's warning, all the other neighborhood reports are upbeat and hopeful of the potential reception for such a ministry. I gotta go; I gotta show up.

Show up I did, and never had I been so keenly focused on my surroundings as when I walked from my car into Faith Place for that first board meeting. Obviously, everything worked out well: the board got off to a good start, as did the staff and volunteers, and, especially, relationships with the neighborhood

folks. After overcoming the initial awkwardness and starting to trust each other, the hope and joy became infectious. The parking lot guard was no longer needed. In fact, vandalism to the building dropped over time because the neighborhood saw the good things Faith Place was doing for the community.

And so I fell into a comfortable rhythm at Faith Place, going beyond board work and participating with the Faith Place Choir, taking photos and video, working on the website and other promotional materials. I even started dropping by about once a week on my way home from work, when one day I walked into a spontaneously formed Faith Place program: young men's basketball. As much as I can go with the flow (but prefer prudent planning), I immediately knew that the young men in the area were the "troubled ones" –gang members and drug users, mostly alpha males. I don't mean to stereotype here: I've seen similar behavior in different corporate settings, but there it's much more subtle. Here, however, it was in my face as I trod the steps up to the gym to observe this new development.

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Conscience, Commitment and Disobedience: The Case of Same-Sex Relationships

By

Marie A. Failing\*

It is Ed Schroeder's fault, really, that I am bothered by this question: how do we know when we are in conscience required to disobey the moral demand of the community? Some years ago, I asked him casually in an email conversation something like the following: could a good Christian rightly believe that he or she was called to a vocation or an office if the people among whom

he or she lived did not recognize that call? Ed's brief and clear answer: no. One of the contexts in which I was thinking about this question—I don't believe that Ed knew—is a public controversy threatening to split the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as other mainline denominations: the proper response of church and state to those in same-sex intimate committed relationships. Along with some few others in non-marital intimate relationships, they are judged sinful by many Christian communities and their relationships are not recognized by the state, but they cannot make their relationships "right" by either community by legal marriage.<sup>1</sup>

About that time, I was wrestling with legal cases involving unmarried couples suing landlords who refused to rent to them because landlords felt conscience-bound not to assist people living in "sinful" relationships. These couples generally argued that they were protected by state laws prohibiting discrimination based on marital status.<sup>2</sup> I wondered whether at least some of these couples could not mount a conscience-against-conscience argument: while the landlord's conscience would be troubled by renting to them, their conscience would be troubled if they were to abandon their relationship because it would be tantamount to abandoning one of their callings as a Christian.

This question of "calling against community" has stayed with me, unresolved, because the issue of whether same-sex relationships should be recognized as matters of conscience and calling is the toughest contemporary example I know of how we must wrestle with the relationship of the Church's teachings, moral discernment, and public life among those with vastly different religious commitments. After I explore how these relationships might be conceived as conscience issues and what I think conscience is not for Lutherans, I want to think

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1 On August 12, 2005, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed a resolution affirming the provision of "pastoral care for all people including people who are gay or lesbian, and . . . .[encouraging] the church to welcome gay and lesbian people into its life," but defeated the proposal allowing sexually active gay and lesbian ordination candidates in committed relationships to be ordained using a special exception process, See ELCA Assembly Acts on Key Sexuality Proposals, <http://www.elca.org/news/Releases.asp?a=3163> In a related action, the assembly rejected a proposal that would have allowed the church, under special circumstances, to ordain gay and lesbian candidates for ministry who are involved in lifelong, committed same-sex relationships.

2 For a further discussion of this conflict, see Marie A. Failing, "Remembering Mrs. Murphy: A Remedies Approach to the Conflict between Gay/Lesbian Renters and Religious Landlords," *Capital University Law Review* 29 (2001), 383.

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Lutheran Theology and Ethics on War and Peace

By Michael Hoy

The question we are asked to address is: "When the church is confronted with a potentially church-dividing ethical issue, how does the church respond?"

This question brings me some bemusement. For my experience of

many Lutherans is that they are deeply infected with the quietist breezes (maybe coming in off Lake Wobegone) of not engaging in any conversation on potentially church-dividing issues, though maybe they would welcome some gossip. The motto seems to be “do anything to avoid any real conflict; run away if necessary.” It reminds me of something one of my favorite mentors in parish ministry (+Richard Manns) once said, “if the situation gets too dicey, the people of the congregation will always vote with their feet.”

As you can imagine, this leads many a Lutheran not to engage in an open conversation about much of anything substantive beyond the sports, the weather, the family, and what they are bringing to the potluck next Sunday. Many a pastor is also aware of this push toward apathy in the parish and the general malaise and unwillingness to venture beyond the prescribed topics of safe conversation. I may be one of them.

Among American Lutherans—and I can only speak for what I perceive among ELCA Lutherans—it seems to me, the current malaise says more about the current spirit in America as a whole.

My point is that this malaise of spirit among many Lutherans is hardly representative of the promising tradition from whence it sprang. The promising tradition is clearly a risk-taking tradition. The Lutheran Reformers took risks ecclesiastically, politically, and theologically. And when we ask how so, or in the second question of the day, “What are the criteria for [theological]-ethical reflection?” we need to go ad fontes, back to the sources.

Every Lutheran bishop, every Lutheran pastor, and every Lutheran congregation understands that at the center of its confessional tradition are words to this effect: “the Holy Scriptures are the

Word of God” and “the Lutheran Confessions are true witnesses and faithful expositions of the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>2</sup> I underscore that these sources are primary because they help us to get back to The Source, Jesus the Christ. They are also primary, it would seem to me, for any theological and ethical reflection, and especially when the matter is so grave as to be “potentially church- dividing.”

1 This article was a presentation given at the Lutheran-Episcopal-Reformed Workshop, October 6, 2005, on “Doing Ethics on the Edge,” sponsored by Lutheran School of Theology and Episcopal School for Ministry St. Louis.

2 From the ordination and installation rites for clergy and bishops; also centered in ELCA’s statement of faith.

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The Cross-purposes of God in the Science and Politics of Food  
A Theological Appraisal of the Quest for a Sustainable American  
Agriculture

by Steven C. Kuhl

I. Food as Threat and Promise

Ed Schroeder and I have at least two things in common: first, we both grew up as farm boys—he in Illinois, I in Minnesota—and second, though we both became theologians, we never lost sight of that privileged upbringing. The following paper was first presented at a conference entitled “The Science and Politics of Food” sponsored by the Institute for the Theological Engagement of Science and Technology. 1 It is represented here to underscore a third commonality between Ed and I: namely, that there is no part of God’s creation does not beg for “care and

redemption” and no exercise of science and politics that doesn’t need to be re-focused through the lens of God’s judgment and promise.

The topic of the ITEST workshop is matter-of-factly described as “The Science and Politics of Food.” But that title is a sleeper. Only as we look inside the workshop brochure do we see hints as to why such a topic might arouse the interests of such a diverse group as ITEST. It has to do with the fact that “food has been a recurrent promise and threat” throughout the ages; and nothing arouses the interests of human beings more than threats and promises. The truth of that statement (about food as threat and promise) has been well documented in W. C. Lowdermilk’s classic study, “Conquest of the Land Through 7,000 Years.”<sup>2</sup> As Dr. Lowdermilk shows, the great civilizations of by-gone ages have literally risen and fallen on the basis of their capacity to feed their people. Historically, then, food is quite literally a matter of life and death— both individually and socially.

As the workshop brochure further points out, the contemporary concern with food is as promising and threatening as ever, even though the threats and promises manifest themselves in ways that are unique to our times. Food (or rather, the lack there of) is, as the brochure states, “a linchpin argument for population control.” At the time of this writing, controversy is already brewing over the positions being advocated at the upcoming Cairo (United Nations) conference on population growth. Moreover, food (or rather, the production thereof) “elicits great anguish from a fairly large number of people.” Although “scientific creativity” abounds “family farms” perish, not to mention the plight of migrant farm workers. Worst of all, we as a people are not

<sup>1</sup>This paper was first presented at the annual workshop of the Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology

(ITEST), October 14-16, 1994 and published in 1995 in the Proceedings from that workshop (entitled "The Science and Politics of Food") by S. Marianne Postiglione, RSM and Robert Brungs, SJ, eds. (ITEST Faith/Science Press: 3601 Lindell Boulevard, St. Louis, MO, 63108). It is reprinted with permission and minor changes.

2W. C. Lowdermilk, Conquest of the Land through 7,000 Years, U.S. Department of Agriculture/Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Information Bulletin No. 99 (August 1953, slightly revised August 1955).