

ThTh Annual Report to the Crossings Board of Directors

Colleagues,

OK, so I'm lazy here toward the end of August—and I'm double-dipping. The annual meeting of the Crossings board of directors happens this weekend here in St. Louis. Though long retired from the board I'm asked to give an account of my stewardship with Thursday Theology for the past year. Since I'll be presenting this report to them on this very Thursday, I might as well pass it on to the 675 of you (latest statistics) on the Crossings listserve and call it this week's ThTh post. Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

Crossings Board Meeting August 23-24, 2007 St. Louis MO

"Thursday Theology" Report

- 1. Thursday Theology postings have appeared weekly since last year's board meeting. Today's is #480.*
- 2. In the 52 ThTh posts since last year's board meeting, 30 were from my hand, 22 came from 16 different guest contributors—D Ahl, M Averyt, G Barker, J Burce (2), N. Dietz, B Heinrich, M Hoy (2), T Hoyer (2), S Krueger (2), D Lueking, R Morgan (2), C Nesson, F Niedner (2), D Schedler, G Simpson, B Yancey. If there are no glitches,*

ThTh #500 should appear 20 weeks from today on January 10, 2008.

- 3. The postings often generate more work. Frequently after confecting a Thursday essay, I wind up with requests from the readers for theological counselling/consultation. APPENDIX I below gives some examples.*
- 4. There continues to be no overarching plan, no "mission-statement," for ThTh postings. The editor's whimsy and theological predilections (and occasional dyspepsia?), plus random items that cross his desk and attract his interest, determine what the Thursday product will be. Ad hocery prevails. What this bodes for the long (or short) range future of ThTh is in the board's hands.*
- 5. Nostalgia and a bit of history.*
 - 1. The first ever Sabbatheology was posted to a handful of Crossings folks on Saturday January 27, 1996. There was no listserve, just names from my email address book of folks I thought might be interested. How and when the listserve came to be I no longer remember. That first Sabbatheology was a "ThTh" sort of Schroeder's musings (or mumblings) about something or other. Marie says she has it on a floppy disc somewhere, so I'll see if I can find it and copy it below.*
 - 2. Before long the ST postings became Crossings-style 6-step text studies for the Sunday Gospels in the Revised Standard Lectionary—posted 8 days before the specific Sunday. Yours truly continued such postings until SabbTheol #88—on November 15, 1997. Robin Morgan and Mike Hoy (Mike then still dean at Capital University's campus in Dayton OH) took over as ST producers. A short while thereafter I had heart surgery to replace a defective aortic valve. Robin and Mike began their ST commitment with*

Advent I (Year of Luke) on November 22, 1997.

- 3. On May 14, 1998 (a Thursday)—for reasons no longer clear to me—Thursday Theology #1 appeared. If you wish to see it, it's archived on our website under the ThTh listings.*
- 4. See APPENDIX II for the text of the first issue of "Sabbath Theology" (initially two words, but before long elided to "Sabbatheology"). It is not archived on our website. The 1996 posts archived there are "Lectionary Text Studies," and ST #1 doesn't fit under that rubric.*

*Respectfully submitted,
Edward H. Schroeder
August 23, 2007*

APPENDIX I

Requests for Theological Consultation

Sample #1 from an ELCA teaching theologian

*Date: Wed, 18 Jul 2007
Dear Ed,
First, I want to thank you for the way you continue to teach and inspire, including many of us out here whom you have never met. I read your Thursday theology #473 (July 5, 2007) with much interest for a couple of reasons The real reason I'm writing is because I am intrigued by the connection you (and Bob Bertram) are making between promise and mission. And, if you're willing, I would very much appreciate a conversation with you about it.*

Sample #2 from a scientist in the North Carolina University Triangle

*Date: Mon, July 9, 2007*Ed, I need a theological consult. Yesterday afternoon my wife and I got into a discussion of intelligent design as we were driving back from the beach. Actually, it may have been more of a diatribe on my part. Saturday afternoon, the CSPAN-2 featured a lecture by Michael Behe (biochemist and advocate of intelligent design). My initial take on the whole ID movement (a couple of years ago) was that it smacked of idolatry. In my simplicity, I see God as infinite and man as finite. Thus, it is impossible for man to know the mind of God. Yet, when the ID advocates are trying to find foot prints to prove that God created the universe, they seem a lot like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden trying to discern the mind of God. To me, knowledge that God created heaven and earth is a gift of faith, not something discernable by scientific method. Do you have any thoughts on this matter?

Sample #3 from a Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod pastor

*Wed, August 15, 2007*I'm a Seminex grad of 1978 and LCMS pastor. I need help. I am being accused by a fellow Missouri pastor because a choir from a Pentecostal church sang in our congregation. This other pastor is telling me that because this church is 'heterodox,' I allowed false doctrine to be taught through the songs. In my last two meetings with him when we were supposed to "dialogue" about our beliefs, he spent at least 40 minutes "lecturing" me. He is very angry with the whole LCMS, the synod president, our circuit and with the teachings at our Lutheran school. He said and I quote "The LCMS is the only true visible church on earth. That is the LCMS that is doctrinally pure and orthodox." Do you have any counsel for your one-time student?

Sample #4 From out of the blue

Sun, 15 July 2007 My name is . . . and I am trying to get in touch with Dr. Schroeder. I am an Episcopal Minister who has been dramatically influenced by the work of Werner Elert, so much so that my wife and I have moved to Berlin in order to learn German, and hopefully pursue a PhD either here or in the states. As someone who argues along an "Elertian" understanding of the Law, I have found myself in an interesting middle position between those who follow Robert Gagnon's theology on one hand, and those who reject the reality of the Law all together (which is most of my church). I was introduced to this theology through the teaching/works of Dr. Paul Zahl, former dean of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry. Through his works, Elert's, Forde and the like, I have had my whole paradigm re-ordered. Because our church is currently in the midst of crisis re: homosexuality, I would love to "talk" to Dr. Schroeder about how the Law/Gospel distinction can be understood in light of the current debates.

APPENDIX II

The First Ever Sabbathology

Jan. 27, 1996

Sabbath Theology #1

Just to put a few more bits/bytes into the message to make the whole effort worthwhile, this bon mot: German researchers attempted to uncover what specific behaviors contributed to people's longevity and success. They found that those who kiss their spouses every morning have fewer accidents on their way to work. In addition, "good morning kissers are absent [from work?] less often due to illness than non-kissers. And more amazing, kissers earn from 20% to 30% more and live almost 4

years longer!" A word to the wise...

And then a snippet from the good Jebbies at Georgetown U. From the Woodstock Report (Dec.1995). Ray Kemp, S.J., says in the interview of his "Preaching the Just Word" seminars: "One preacher said to us in a recent retreat, 'I have been aware for the last ten years that I have been preaching pious platitudes. WHAT I HAVE REALIZED THIS WEEK IS THAT MY OWN HEART AND SOUL HAVE NOT BEEN CONVERTED TO A RENEWED APPRECIATION OF THE GOSPEL. God is seeking to work in the world today through the instrumentality of the Church and through the instrumentality of, God help us, my own preaching.'"

How about this as an axiom? No one will do a very good job of preaching THE Gospel until the Gospel has been Good News to his/her own heart and soul. And for us Augsburg Catholic types, this variation on that theme: No one will ever rightly distinguish law from gospel until they have been struck in person (in heart and soul) with said Good News and thus moved—first internally for their own selves—from law to gospel. Knowing the difference is a HEART's experience, not a mind's comprehension. That's what Paul was talking about, wasn't he, when in the opening chapters of Romans he says the Gentiles did have knowledge of God, but did not acknowledge God. That pun, gnosis vs. epignosis, designates two differing venues, different locations, for the Aha! about God, about Gospel, about the Gospel's quantum difference from the law.

To one of my e-mail bemoanings from Australia in 1994 about my students' opaqueness in catching what the Good News was all about, Bob Schultz told me that same thing in other terms. It now comes home to me again as I hear of the lousy (non-Gospel, anti-Gospel) preaching of two dear friends, former students. The Seminex-alum reporting this to me asked: "How can that be? They were in the same classes with the rest of us, and it got

through to me!" The obvious answer is: It did get into their heads; it didn't get into their lives, their own personal histories. Now that I've composed this much, I'll cc. the message to a passel of folks, esp. Bob Schultz, and others to whom I doubtless owe letters. Cheers y'all!

So much for Sabbath-day theology on 1.27.96.

Peace & Joy!

Ed