

Two Theology Classes in St. Louis

Colleagues,

Lighter fare, this time. Well, maybe.

This Thursday evening's class session will be the final one for Robin and me in a 7-week course sponsored by the Lutheran School of Theology in St. Louis [LST in STL] for the Easter Term 2000. The course is titled: "Encountering the Last Enemy." I put together the format which is appended below.

LST in STL, only a few years old, is a relative of Crossings. Here's how. For the decade 1983-93 Crossings offered semester-long courses in the St. Louis area, usually three each term, with credit-connections to Webster University here in town. Bob Bertram and I did all the teaching at that time. I was in town as chief honcho for the Crossings' daily operations, though out of town every other weekend for a Crossings workshop somewhere in North America. Bob during those years was a commuter to Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago from Monday to Thursday, but always back home in St. Louis for his Saturday morning Crossings class.

When I retired as Crossings exec and moved over to Global Missions volunteering for the ELCA, the semester-long classes stopped. But they soon re-appeared in a new format when Bob retired from LSTC and became a regular presence on the St. Louis scene. Through his initiative theology classes resurfaced under a broader umbrella, LST-STL, "An Educational Ministry of the Metro St. Louis Area Coalition – ELCA ." LST-STL offers three courses per academic quarter (one each "for personal discovery, for practical ministry, for professional growth"). It also arranges ecumenical encounters with Christians from other heritages, especially those with whom the ELCA has official connections. Bob and I still do some teaching, but we're now part of a faculty of a dozen or more. Historically, though not juridically, the Crossings

connection persists. Crossings patriarch Bob was the first LST dean. Michael Hoy, the current dean, left his post as Crossings President to take on the LST-STL job. You can guess what sort of theology is at the heart of LST-STL.

That may well be more than you really wanted to know. What follows is the outline for “Encountering the last Enemy,” the course concluding this evening, and the outline for the one I’m slotted to do in the LST Summer Session, “Why Jesus?”

Peace & Joy!

Ed

Footnote: *Saturday June 24 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Crossings board of directors the full day will be devoted to “show and tell.” The design of the event is to show how Crossings style theology gets done. Goldie-oldies Bob and Ed, as well as the takeover generation in the Crossings community, will be on hand for the program. All are welcome to join in the event. If interested contact Crossings office manager, Cathy Lessmann, at 314-576-0567 or email at info@crossings.org*

Lutheran School of Theology – St. Louis MO

Easter Term 2000

COURSE TITLE: Encountering the Last Enemy

Instructor: Edward H. Schroeder

Venue: Living Christ Lutheran Church, 2725 Concord Drive, Florissant, MO

Thursday Evenings – 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

Course description: An examination of the clinical realities of death and dying, and the added dimension that comes to this “fact of life” when the Good News of Christ’s resurrection becomes our resource for coping with death.

SESSION 1. April 6

The clinical realities of death and dying: How people die today in America

Guest Presenter: Dr. Valerie Yancey, Project Director for "Improving End-of-Life Care," Medical Intensive Care Unit (Barnes Hospital)

SESSION 2. April 13

Just what/who is this last enemy? The depth dimension of mortality in Christian theological analysis

Readings:

1. Luther's sermon on Psalm 90 (Selections)
2. E.H. Schroeder: "Encountering the Last Enemy"
3. R.W. Bertram: "Pardon my Dying"

NO CLASS MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 20

SESSION 3. April 27

Jesus' Easter and Resurrection theology as resource for coping with death

Readings:

1. R.W. Bertram essay: "The Lively Use of the Risen Lord"
2. John Updike's poem: "Seven Stanzas at Easter"
3. Kathleen O. Reed's poem: "The Eggtooth"
4. Luther's Easter sermons, esp. on I Cor. 15

SESSION 4. May 4

Death under the X-ray of other religious cultures—

Sample: Cremation theology and practice in Balinese Hinduism. What can Christians learn from this?

Marie and Ed Schroeder "show and tell" from their 3 months last year in Bali

[If time allows, a look at other theologies of death: Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Deepak Chopra]

Readings:

Schroeders' "Letters from Bali" 1999

SESSION 5. May 11

The denial—and glorification—of death in American culture
Tracking death in American movies and music. (Guest presenters)

Readings:

1. Selections from Ernst Becker's classic, "Denial of Death"
2. Miller's "Psychologies of death (e.g., Kuebler-Ross) the new American NORM for dying"
3. Beth Baker & Karen Reyes' essay: "R.I.P OFF – Death as Big Business. Who can you Trust?"
4. Samples from American pop culture

SESSION 6. May 18

Inserting the Easter Good News into American culture.
Christian ritual, Christian communal responses to the "other gospel" of American culture.

The funeral liturgy in the Lutheran Book of Worship, Easter hymns in LBW. J.S. Bach (B-Minor Mass & St. John Passion)

Readings:

1. Rick Mueller's sermon: "Immortality of the soul or resurrection of the body?"
2. James van Tholen's sermon: "Surprised by death."
3. Students supply additional samples from their experience—good and bad

SESSION 7. May 25

Final session: Christian art—painting and sculpture, poetry—using Easter to subdue the last enemy.

Samples: Catacomb art, Gruenewald, Duerer, Rembrandt, Siegfried Reinhardt, Dylan Thomas, Elizabeth Layton, Valerie Yancey's "Photo story of Jim's death." If possible, guest Fr. Terry Dempsey, director of the Museum of Contemporary

Religious Art here in St. Louis

Assignment: Students write their own obituaries for class presentation and discussion.

LST – SUMMER SCHOOL 2000

COURSE TITLE: WHY JESUS?

Course Description: Why not New Age? Or Moses? Or Muhammad? Or do-it-yourself religion? Today's world is "awash in a sea of faiths." So where does Jesus fit in amidst all those options? Christians claim that Good News, something "good" and something "new," came into our world in Jesus. Is that still true? For five evenings in July we'll check it out.

SESSION ONE

Why Jesus?

The answer given to that question in the NT documents vis-a-vis Judaism and Hellenistic Religions. What was "good and new" compared with these 2 options? What is "good and new" correlates with how "bad and old" the human dilemma is that calls for healing. Checking out the "good news/bad news" paradigms in 3 New Testament theologies: Luke, John and Paul.

Reading –

NEWSWEEK, March 27, 2000 issue. Cover Story: "Visions of Jesus. How Jews, Muslims and Buddhists View Him."

SESSION TWO

Why Jesus vis-a-vis New Age religion?

Checking NA religion for its diagnosis of humankind and prognosis of Good News Comparing that with one NT paradigm for bad news/good news

Reading –

Schroeder's essay: Answering the Why Jesus Question in Today's Pluralist World

SESSION THREE

Why Jesus vis-a-vis other religions of The Book: Judaism and

Islam? Checking Judaism and Islam for their diagnoses and prognoses Comparing that with another NT paradigm for bad news/good news

Reading –

Schroeder's essay: Martin Luther's Theology of World Religions

SESSION FOUR

Why Jesus vis-a-vis the Indian religions of Hinduism and Buddhism? Checking Hinduism and Buddhism for their diagnoses and prognoses Comparing that with another NT paradigm for bad news/good news

Readings –

1. M & E Schroeder: Letters from Bali 1999
2. Kosuke Koyama's essay: "It's the Buddhist, not Buddhism"

SESSION FIVE

Strategies for Christian witness in today's world "awash in a sea of faiths."

Readings –

1. Report from the Jan. 2000 conference of the Intl Assn for Mission Studies. Theme: "Jesus Christ Crucified and Living in Today's Broken World"
2. Selections from R R Caemmerer The Church in the World