

Crossings

Advent/Christmas



*Seminary Press Christmas card designed
by Martin E. Marty, 1958*

C is for Conference

Advent spells the hope of what is coming. And what is coming are all things new, especially in the Good News of Jesus the Christ.

And there are other Advent-like events on the horizon of the coming year of our Lord, 2007.

Honest-to-God Gospel for Today's Church and World is less than two months away. January 29-31, 2007, is the first-ever mega-Crossings Conference, with some very prestigious keynoters: Rudolf Keller (from Germany), Kathryn (Kit) Kleinhans (Wartburg College, Iowa), Edward Schroeder (St. Louis), and John Strelan (from Australia). To boot, there are a host of other presenters who are pretty prestigious church figures in their own rights: Prof. Robert Kolb, Bishop Marcus Lohrmann, and Prof. Fred Niedner to name just a few.



Crossings co-founder, Ed Schroeder

The real secret of this Conference may be in the subtitle: "Why Luther's Distinction of Law and Gospel Matters Now More than Ever." If you believe that is so, then you will want to be there. If it has you curious why that is so, then you will want to be there. If you are a regular reader of Crossings newsletters or the Crossings Sabbathologies or Thursday Theologies, you will want to be there. And maybe if you

have questions about why this Law/Gospel distinction makes for "Honest-to-God Gospel" you will want to be there. We just hope you don't miss out. Already 60+ have registered, and we're hoping for a whole lot more. You can sign up on-line on the Crossings website, www.crossings.org.

R is for Reminiscing

(by Schroeder, one of the "goldie-oldies," yet always "new")

A few months ago, in a visit to an ailing Ed Schroeder, I had the audacity (maybe stupidity) to weave in a request. He was dealing with the effects of a stroke that had left him with double vision, headaches, nausea, and noticeably shaky hands. I had told him that it was my hope to begin to publish some of Ed's thoughts on his own theology for the Crossings newsletter, beginning with the beginning of Crossings itself. What was it like when Crossings was just a baby, maybe just a fertile embryo in the minds of its founders? I apologized, of course, for even suggesting it at this time in our conversations. But lo and behold, within a matter of weeks, Ed wrote back with his "reminiscences of Crossings' early history" (his words). "Mike, I don't know exactly what you had in mind to get from me for the Advent 2006 newsletter, but let this be a starter." A starter it is, indeed! I know Ed takes his cues from his and our Lord in sharing it.

What you may be surprised to learn is that some of Crossings' birthing was not in the midst of calm ecclesiastical waters. No, these were turbulent times, what we would even call "a time for confessing." Some of the best theology emerges during such times as these. They are often messy times, even for the confessors themselves.

But then, wasn't our own Lord born in the dark and turbulent times of an alleged imperial Pax Romana, King Herod not far away, in a stable much like the world (and our hearts) that is messy, unkempt, uncouth—unfaithful, even? Yet The Word would emerge that night, and some of the poorest of our world, shepherds on a hillside, would be the bearers of its tale. And we are all the more blessed for its advent... and its birthing in our midst.

Crossings is like that.

mhoy

The earliest document I know of with the word Crossings in the caption is dated January 6 (Epiphany—it was a Sunday), 1974. It was Bertram's proposal for what some of us might do if Mis-

souri Synod Pres. J.A.O. Preus continued his apparent program of picking off the notorious liberals on the Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) faculty and thereby resolving the problem of alleged false doctrine being taught by that faculty. I remember a short (3-page) version and a longer (5-page) version of Bertram's proposal. [It is available on-line on the Crossings website, "Crossings, Inc. (Saint Louis): A Proposal," under "Works by Bob Bertram."] As I recall, there was no specific focus on "Crossing" the theology of the pericopes into the daily work world of Christians in secular society. Seems to me the extent to which Bob spelled it out was in the direction of the semester-long courses that Crossings began to offer when Seminex left St. Louis in 1983.

Prior to all this, of course, was the "new religion curriculum" at Valparaiso University beginning in 1957, brainstormed by Bob Bertram with Bob Schultz (who arrived at VU in 1956), and Ed Schroeder (who arrived in 1957) becoming the curriculum-creating subcommittee. That's spelled out in great detail in Bob's own "History of Crossings" on the Crossings website. And prior to that was Doc Caemmerer and the reformation of preaching the gospel in the LCMS in the 1940s and 1950s at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In my mind the impact of Caemmerer shows in the 6-step sequence for text studies that has become the Crossings tradition. Caemmerer had only three: what is the malady pinpointed in this text? What is the text's goal? And what is the means by which to get from malady to goal?

In Crossings' six steps Caemmerer's first step was expanded to three levels of diagnosis (initial, advanced, final) and that in keeping with the understanding of sin portrayed by the Augsburg Confession and its Apology. The means by which to get to either of Caemmerer's two goals for any particular sermon, the crucified and risen Christ, became step 4 in Crossings. And his two types of goals—"Lord, increase our faith" and "Lord, increase our love"—became the Crossings steps 5 and 6.

Now back to Seminex in January 1974. Exactly 14 days after Bertram's initial Crossings proposal, almost to the hour, John Tietjen was suspended as president of Concordia Seminary by the Seminary Board. The initial purpose of that meeting on Epiphany evening had been to brainstorm how those of us

Help Needed!

Volunteers are needed to help at the Crossings conference January 29-31:

- 1) Photographers and/or digital cameras to help photograph the events.*
- 2) Audio recorders to record all proceedings (digital voice recorders preferred).*
- 3) Hosts and hostesses willing to plan and arrange the three receptions.*
- 4) Assistance with transportation.*

In addition, if you can be extra generous with donations, we need extra funding to:

- 1) Scholarship out-of-country attendees*
- 2) Underwrite cost of CDs (more than expected!)*
- 3) Underwrite honorariums*
- 4) Underwrite receptions and worship service*

If you are game to help with any of these, and/or want more details, give Cathy a call at 314-576-7357 or email her at clessmann@charter.net.

on Preus's "hit list" might continue our callings even though we too had been dismissed from our positions as Seminary faculty. That had already been happening with Arlis Ehlen and Paul Goetting, I think, as well as with the "forced retirement" that the Board was proposing for half a dozen senior faculty colleagues who were on the "wrong side" as far as Preus was concerned: Repp, Piepkorn, Caemmerer, Sauer, Bouman, maybe Wuerffel.

Within 24 hours of Tietjen's suspension the student body addressed the Seminary Board, declaring a moratorium on class attendance "until such a time as you designate who the false teachers are that we should no longer listen to." Twenty-four hours after that the faculty joined the students in that decision. So it was not more isolated faculty villains being selected for sacrifice, but the whole faculty majority (45 folks) who four weeks later were summarily dismissed by the Board for not returning to work under the newly-appointed interim seminary president who was the major voice in the heresy charges against all the rest of us.

Thus Seminex was under way, although on that Epiphany weekend nobody was talking like that. And when Seminex then did become the direction for our continuing teaching and continuing learning, the Crossings option was put on the shelf. It didn't fit what the facts now were.

In the last couple semesters that Seminex was operating in St. Louis, Bob offered a couple seminars on The Word of God and Daily Work, and I'm not sure, even at this point, whether the word Crossings was used in publicizing what this seminar was going to do.

Bob wrote an extended early history of Crossings in 1996 [also available on-line on the Crossings website, "A History of Crossings" under "Works by Bob

Bertram."]. As I recall, Bob links Crossings to large sections of his own personal theological development. And that's not inaccurate, though I was a much more public figure of the operation during the ten years I was executive director, 1983-1993. Bob traces Crossings back to his own graduate studies at the University of Chicago in the late 1940s and his initial years of teaching at Valpo. I was one of his students during those "early years" at Valpo, doing a philosophy major, and I don't remember the word Crossings being used as descriptor for the way we were studying theology, but as he says in his own historical narrative, "never ask a 75-year-old professor to reminisce."

A few days ago I turned 76. "Never ask..."

*S is for 'So
you want to know
more?'"*

Here's how I once described it when someone asked: In the late 1970s two seminary professors in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, listened to the plea of some lay Christians. "Can you help us live out our faith in the world of daily work?" they asked. "Can you help us connect Sunday worship with our lives the other six days of the week?" That is how Crossings was born. It is a community of Christians studying both the Word of God and the workplace in order to bring them together, to make them "cross." Those two professors, Robert W. Bertram (who died in 2003) and Edward H. Schroeder, retired from seminary teaching, continued their work with the community, although official leadership has passed on to the next generation.

As Bob and Ed gained experience through the early years, two Crossings programs evolved. The first was the direct result of the original request. Weekend workshops around the world were geared to assist participants cross the world of work with the Christian faith. As the word spread, hundreds of congregations asked for workshops in their areas and Crossings Community members gladly obliged.



A Crossings workshop in Guadalajara, Mexico, 1990

Crossings International Conference

HONEST-TO-GOD GOSPEL FOR TODAY'S CHURCH AND WORLD

January 29-31, 2007

St. Louis, Missouri

Keynote Speakers:

Rudolf Keller

Kathryn Kleinhans

Edward Schroeder

John Strelan

Also Presenting:

Steve Albertin

Matthew Becker

Jerome Burce

Lori Cornell

Michael Hoy

Robert Kolb

Sherman Lee

Steven Kuhl

Marcus Lohrmann

Todd Murken

Fred Niedner

Carolyn Schneider

Robert Schultz

Stephan Turnbull

*More information and registration can be found at: <http://www.crossings.org/conference>
Or write the Crossings office: PO Box 7011 Chesterfield, MO 63006*

The second program was an outgrowth of the first. Semester-long Crossings courses were offered, some in seminaries and others wherever interested students were found. These longer study sessions ranged far and wide beyond the workplace and into the many areas of the secular world where God's people live: politics, economics, education, health care, popular culture, family life, the media, technology, etc. However, the goal was always the same, to "cross" the world with the Word of God.

Participants often say that the best thing about Crossings is the Bible study method, the "grounding" that anchors all Crossings work. First the Scripture is examined on its own terms, in its literary, historical and cultural context. Then in light of Scripture's promise to give us everything needed for life and godliness, the text is studied as problem-solving literature. What is our problem and does the Bible offer us a solution?

Students do not rest content until they have gotten to the bottom, to what Scripture says is the problem's deepest level. Likewise, we also look for God's solution to the problem just uncovered. Christians anticipate, of course, that Christ himself will be at the center of all such solutions, but we let the Biblical witness speak of the Good News in Christ and how He meets the exposed problem. This study mines the depths of the Good News that's available in the text

so that we can meet our problems head-on, cross them with that Good News, and take the solution out into the world for others.

S is for Sessions, Ed's *first workshops*

I published 18 years ago an article about Crossings' early history. Here are the specs for it: "Crossings: A Model for Connecting Scripture and Life," dated June 1, 1989, the full text of which may be found in the Crossings 1993 Festschrift in my honor on the Crossings website (under *Works in Honor of Ed Schroeder*).

Although few workshops connecting faith and daily work have been held since my (Ed's) retirement in 1993, even fewer (possibly none) Crossings courses have been offered since then. The regular website text studies keep alive the six-step paradigm that was the skeleton of those weekend workshops. Some of you readers attended one of those workshops, and others of you may have an inkling of how they proceeded. Here's a super-brief review.

First session: "grounding" in the Biblical text to be studied during the workshop, usually one of the pericopes from the lectionary for that weekend's Sunday.

As Bob Bertram liked to say, a depth-probe at a “slice of life” offered in the Bible. And for that slice we followed the six-step matrix.

Second session: “tracking” the world of daily work of the seminar participants. Either in-depth-probe of one of the seminar participants, or several, or in some cases with small breakout groups, everybody, to open for public discussion the slice of life that each person brought to the seminar from their world of daily work.

Third session: “crossing,” weaving the individual slice-of-life stories of the participants into the Biblical slice of life with which we started.

The other over 200 of such workshops were held during my 10 years as executive director. Bob was often involved, and a number of the ones he held were overseas. The full roster of 248 workshops from 1974 to 1994 is in a separate document, available if desired.



Robert Bertram (far right) with Minjung theologian Byung Nu (center) and a student (left) at a Crossings workshop in Seoul, Korea, 1984.

INGS is for **IN** Global *[world-wide-web] Space?*

Seems to me that these last two items—the courses and the workshops (and possibly all the other things you put on the website under Bob’s and my names) are the printed-text stuff we hand on to you current Crossings leaders. If any of it is useful for the next chapter in the history of Crossings, you all will have to determine that. A CyberSpace Seminary (CSS)? As some of you know, that teases me most. Can you do workshops without having people together in one place at the same time? Is that format—weekend workshops—passé in American culture?

Same question also for “semester-long courses.” Are they too passé? What kind of theological inter-

actions can occur if you are not face-to-face with one another in real time? Especially if “hustling an Aha!” is the name of the game, and then practice, practice, practice cum mentoring is what happens in every course that follows?

When I look at the 20-plus-course curriculum of the good old days, I see the memory that with the first ten of those courses we were seeking to replicate what would happen in the best of all Lutheran seminaries in the student’s first year there. Ten times 3 credit hour courses equals 30 credit hours.

Our 30 hours divvied up to be 7 credit hours in Bible, 4 in Church history and 4 in contemporary theology. The other half of the 30 semester credits were in practical theology as we wrote our own papers and worked with classmates doing theirs. As some of you know we went beyond the original ten courses because insatiable Irmgard Koch had taken all of that first batch of ten and kept asking for more.

There was a lot of ad-hocery all the way along the line. Much of what we did was not generated by notions of a grand design.

How much of the ancient—yea, archival—stuff might be resource for a CSS? How about this?

For a first time round in brain-storming, I’d suggest sticking with the ancient pericopes for the ten courses, all of them major texts for major church-year anchor-points.

First course, #501 in the old sequence: The Aha! of Law and Gospel hermeneutics introduced with the Christmas story that everybody knows, Luke 2. Church history slices: St. Francis for past history and more recent—but possibly also passé?— liberation theologies. For CSS, these would need to be evaluated as to their usefulness for mentoring students into the Aha! and for moving them to work on some praxis piece of their own during the course.

Keynoter Rudolf Keller

The students' projects when presented for class discussion were always accompanied by readings supplied by students to bring us along. Thus ad-hocery and serendips abounded in what was the last half of every course. Students were also invited when they presented, to bring along their own "expert" resource for the topic they were presenting as well as their "favorite pastor."

You'll need to reflect on whether slice of past church history and then slice of contemporary theology is desirable—if the CSS curriculum **is** (or **is not**) seeking to match first year "normal" seminary education. But then what is "normal?" And even more important, what nowadays should be "normal" for Lutheran theological education?

Ed Schroeder

You can see that Ed has baited us for further reflection on this. We hope to have more reflections from Ed in future newsletters, if he'll take the bait himself. That's hoping for more new-ness to come... just like Advent!



Bob Bertram leading a Crossings workshop in St. Louis

Printing and mailing this quarterly is paid for by your gifts, thank you. If you are a reader but not yet a giver, we can wait. When you are ready to be both, we won't object.

I mentioned in my lead-in to this newsletter our four keynote speakers at the upcoming Crossings Conference. We published a feature article in the previous issue on one of our overseas speakers, John Strelan from Australia. In a recent phone conversation with the other keynoter coming from abroad, Dr. Rudolf Keller, we learned the following:



Keller is currently pastor in a rural congregation near Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, as well as Professor for Reformation History at the University of Regensburg. Typical of German academics, he holds two doctorates.

One of Keller's mentors at Heidelberg University was Martin Schmidt, who introduced him to the theology of Werner Elert. Albrecht Peters was also an important teacher for him there. Later Keller went to Erlangen University and wrote his dissertation under Gerhard Muller, Reformation Church historian. That dissertation and its sequel were major studies on Flacius and Chytraeus, late 16th century theologians, who themselves were Luther's and Melancthon's students. Keller says his enjoyment of Elert's theology has never ceased. Two years ago on the 50th anniversary of Elert's death Keller and Michael Roth co-edited a memorial volume on the enduring significance of Elert's theology. Keller wrote two chapters for that book.

In addition to his pastor/professor callings he continues to be active in working with Lutheran diaspora churches in eastern Europe. Keller is 58 years old. He and his wife are parents of two children, a 13 year-old son and a daughter age 9.

We are blessed to have Dr. Keller with us in January. Those readers who attend will double the blessings for all of us.

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