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IN THIS ISSUE

LENT AS WILDERNESS

A Lenten meditation by Patricia Richter

Page 1

FROM THE SLAVE TRADE TO HOMOPHOBIA: THE TRAUMA BEHIND AFRICAN INTOLERANCE

Eileen Crawford traces the roots of African homophobia to the slave trade.

Page 2

HEARTS ON FIRE, 2008 LC/NA AND RIC GATHERING

Phil Soucy previews the July Assembly at San Francisco State University.

Page 5

CROSSING BOUNDARIES: THE ETHICS OF STRUGGLE IN MARK, PAUL, AND THE ELCA

David Balch compares our acceptance of gay pastors with Paul's acceptance of Gentiles.

Page 6

LENT AS WILDERNESS

by Patricia Richter

Wilderness has an extensive and varied history in Scripture. The abode of demons, the place of wandering and loss, the place that cannot sustain life, is also the place of encounter with God, the place where God's purpose and intent are revealed. However ugly and frightening the demons may seem, confronting them seems to be a requirement before even Jesus is allowed to begin his mission.

In the Gospel for The First Sunday in Lent, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness; no accident, no discernible argument, a definite sense of purpose. It is worth noting that Jesus shares this wilderness initiation with many of his predecessors, most notably Moses and Elijah, who join him at the Transfiguration. Encounters with the Divine can happen anywhere. God is most assuredly not bound by our preconceptions, but perhaps the enforced separation from distractions enables—or forces—us to pay attention. Paying attention requires patience, stillness, simplicity, a willingness to let go of our agendas and our ego's gaping insistent maw.

At their best, the centuries-old Lenten disciplines of the Christian community have had this intent at their core. Fasting, prayer, acts of kindness and mercy are not intended as burdens, and especially not as the public piety denounced in Ash Wednesday's Gospel. Rather, they are aimed at setting us free, to notice and attend to what truly matters. As Luther put it in his exposition of the seven penitential psalms, you should follow the work which you choose and not the suffering which you devise. This is not a passive undertaking. We are working, but the work, however prosaic or exalted it may appear, is accepting the Spirit's guidance, confronting whatever bedevils us, remaining faithful through Lent and beyond.

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FROM THE SLAVE TRADE TO HOMOPHOBIA: THE TRAUMA BEHIND AFRICAN INTOLERANCE

by Eileen Crawford

African homophobia has become the newest form of intolerance to sweep across the African Continent. In the past few months, gays and lesbians in Somalia, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and elsewhere in Africa have come under attack. What makes this noticeable is that in the West, particularly the United States, polls show the highest ever acceptance of homosexuality. According to Gallup, the general trend is an increased support for people who are homosexual.

Most of us have struggled over homosexuality with questions of nurture, nature, choice, and lifestyle. Anguished questions have haunted our progress from denial to acceptance. We have all had to come to grips with our feelings and thoughts about our gay and lesbian relatives and friends.

In the United States, public attitudes toward homosexuality and gay and lesbian rights continue to evolve. In 1997, 45% of adults described homosexual relations as always wrong and 38% said they were not wrong at all. By 2006, the percentage of those who say such relations are always wrong declined to 32%, while those who feel they are not wrong at all have grown to 43%. However, many African clergy have yet to engage publicly in this debate.

A Vice of Other Peoples

African homophobia, certainly, is not much different from the homophobia of the United States of a few generations ago, but what makes it noticeable is the assertion by Africans that homosexuality belongs to other cultures. Many African leaders (Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, the Uganda house of Bishops) seem to share a common belief that homosexuality is somehow un-African and a vestige of European colonialism. Recurrent attempts have been made to deny any indigenous homosexuality in Africa, especially in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, Gelfand (1979) wrote that "the traditional Shone of Zimbabwe have none of the problems associated with homosexuality (so that) one must conclude that the Shone obviously have a valuable method of bringing up children, especially with regards to normal sex relations, thus avoiding this anomaly so frequent in Western society."

History does not substantiate this claim. For instance, the almost total segregation of the sexes in North Africa guarantees the occurrence of male and female homosexual behavior. Some have claimed that Arab slave traders introduced sodomy to North Africa. These same sources go on to state that homosexual behavior was unknown before the European conquest. Since there were no indigenous writing systems prior to the 19th century in sub-Saharan Africa, there are no analyses of the social structures of these socie-

ties prior to alien contact. What is inscribed of traditional African cultures was written by outside observers who did not reckon that their presence as observers was in itself a product of domination and discord.

The colonial power structure in essence created the study of the other called anthropology, sustained it, and made it safe to inquire into the lives of the observed. These observing Europeans become the only source of data on homosexuality in Africa. Most of what can be read about African societies and the source of most of the information and attitudes so apparent in contemporary Africa, was inscribed to a large degree in the last decade of the 19th century or later, but was obviously influenced by even earlier writings.

This would include the often cited remark of Edward Gibbon that "the negroes in their country were exempt from this moral pestilence." However, a century later Sir Richard Burton recorded homosexuality as widely practiced and accepted. Stephen Murray's

The role of the African clergy in regard to homosexuality should be teaching and demonstrating that sexual orientation has no bearing on a person's state of grace or competence to be included in the priesthood of all believers.

overview of homosexuality in traditional sub-Saharan Africa examines dozens of traditional societies from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Sudan, as well as the Amazon troops in Dahomey, to show that various homo-

sexualities existed at the time of European colonization.

Around the world, people tend to view homosexuality as a vice of some other people. Thus the recurrent British claim that Norman conquerors introduced homosexuality to the British Isles. Various French accounts view homosexuality as Italian, Bulgarian, or North African. Similarly Eastern Bantu claim that pederasty was imported by the Nubians. The Sudanese blame Turkish marauders, and so on. Suffice it to say that the belief that homosexuality is foreign, "other," exogenous to the history of whatever people are under review, has genuine social consequence.

An Issue of the Church

Significantly, homosexuality is the deepest issue dividing the church today. Whether the faithful look upon their gay and lesbian fellows with acceptance and love or turn their backs in fear and loathing depends on how much they know about homosexuality and how it is manifested in their personal fears and in their willingness to learn about such things. The role of the African clergy in regard to homosexuality should be teaching and demonstrating that sexual orientation has no bearing on a person's state of grace or competence to be included in the priesthood of all believers. However, herein is the problem.

Lesbians and gay men of Africa must struggle to affirm their identities because they are expected to deny their sexuality for the sake of survival in African culture. Religious beliefs, historical circumstances, unfounded assumptions, and narrow biblical interpretations are the sources for much of this rejection.

The Rev. Macaulay, a gay Nigerian Christian theologian says that he has spoken to over fifty African gays and lesbians in the past two years. These conversations reveal that they feel their lives are worthless in a society that provides little protection against the hatred for their sexual orientation. Powerful organizations like the church could make an enormous difference or reinforce the stigma.

There is a pairing of hard-line conservatives, who state that homosexuality is an objective disorder and thus morally unacceptable, with African clergy, who seem to say that homosexuality is contrary to the creative wisdom of God.

The Pairing of African Clergy With Fundamentalists

I have become increasingly concerned about the public dialogue regarding the Church and homosexuality. There is a pairing of hard-line conservatives, who state that homosexuality is an objective disorder and thus morally unacceptable, with African clergy, who seem to say that homosexuality is contrary to the creative wisdom of God. This pairing of the fundamentalist agenda with African theology is a particularly troubling paradox.

On the one hand, we must view the participation of African clergy as ennobling; they are received in our midst gladly and with open arms. (Overlooked, unfortunately, is the fact that many of the fundamentalist conservatives are white, heterosexual, and not particularly interested, until now, in their African counterparts.) On the other hand, once in the family, our new entrants, the African theologians, often begin to build walls among the people they wish to serve by using the bible to rationalize the oppression of others, indeed to kick them out of the family. An explanation for this behavior may be found in the historical accounts of their victimhood in the African holocaust known as slavery, European imperialism, and European colonization.

Beginning With the Slave Trade

Let me state my interest at the onset. I am an Africanist, a seminarian, and a trained psychotherapist. My research and degree are in African literature. I taught African literature and culture for over twenty-three years. In my psychotherapy practice I work primarily with individuals who have suffered severe psychological, physical, and sexual trauma. I am also a seminarian at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. As I see it, my role in this issue of African homophobia is to speak out about these alienating attitudes with compassion and understanding in order to assist our African brothers and sisters to develop new narratives based on hope and reconciliation.

The task is clear. We must begin to clarify how the African slave trade, European Imperialism, European Colonialism, and their legacies have worked together to produce a post-traumatic stress syndrome that feeds the homophobia evident in Africa.

People, individually and collectively, need to be acknowledged for what they have suffered as well as for what they have accomplished, before they can let down their guard and become receptive

to new information and informed attitudes. Church leaders need to become aware of human capacities for destructiveness as well as for growth, joy, and creativity—we are *simul justus et peccator*. The purpose of this article is to engage in a dialogue with our African brothers and sisters about the past that recognizes the mutable role of victim and perpetrator, so that we retain our capacity to be reflective and compassionate.

The White Man's Burden

African peoples understand the outrageous genocide that is their history and its racist sequel. Starting in the 15th century, Leo Africanus was commissioned to write a detailed survey of Africa. His work became an important source of "knowledge" about Africa for the succeeding centuries. Thus began the viewing of Africa through the stranger's eye.

Soon it became *de rigueur* for a son of the properties—often lacking in traditional views, fixed goals, or income—to "go out to Africa" on expeditions, to explore, name, and claim African territories on behalf of the wealthy and of scientific associations. All these "discoveries" were received in the West with great enthusiasm. Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior of Africa*, first published in 1799 and in print ever since, featured "ethnographic" studies of bare-chested maidens and plate-lipped young warriors. These studies were received in the West with almost pornographic enthusiasm.

Simultaneously an estimated twelve million African, men, women, and children were forcibly transported across the Atlantic Ocean for servitude in the Americas. The demand for free labor in the Americas resulted in the purchase, kidnapping, and shipment of Africans by Westerners, who entered into commercial relations with African traders and rulers. At the height of the Atlantic slave trade, various European nations fought one another over captives and profits. This led to revolts by captives and defensive strategies on the part of the African mercenaries and their European trading partners. Needless to say, this produced a entire culture of violence.

Thus was created a system of African rulers, traders, and military aristocracy intent on protecting their interests in the slave trade in a variety of ways. They discouraged Europeans from venturing beyond the coastal areas for fear of dangerous conditions within the heart of Africa. Africans were given guns to fight the subsequent wars of trading partners. As the slave trading network stretched deeper into Africa's interior, African rulers were faced with exploring various strategies either to support or work against the slave trade.

When Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807, she had to contend with opposition from both European slavers as well as African rulers who had become accustomed to the wealth gained from selling slaves. Their wealth came either through the direct sale of their own people or from taxes collected as the slave cartels passed through their territories. This slave trading business--in spite of Britain's abolishing it--continued for many more decades. For as long as there was demand in the Americas, the supply was available. For example, the numerous wars that plagued Yourabaland,

for half a century following the fall of the Oyo Empire, were largely driven by the demand for slaves.

The slave trade would have a profound economic, social, cultural, and psychological impact on African societies and peoples. The most profound impact was in human resources, which became a natural set-up for the subsequent imposition of European imperialism. African people sought salvation, from the effects of the inter-communal wars that were being waged to procure slaves (kidnapping, distrust of one another), in the European colonialists, who were the new ruling class. By 1900, European nations had added almost ten million square miles of African territory, almost one fifth of the land mass, to their overseas colonial possessions. Europeans ruled over 90% of the African continent.

One of the justifications for the "scramble for Africa" was the stated intention to stamp out the horrors of the slave trade once and for all. As David Livingstone, the missionary-explorer put it "we are here to introduce the three c's to these benighted people: commerce, Christianity and civilization. Rudyard Kipling would call it "The White Man's Burden:"

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
Take up the White Man's Burden—
The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of famine
And bid the sickness cease.

Africans became the porters for the black man's burden of mapping out spheres of influence: the Maxim rifle, slave gangs labor in the bowels of the earth, the lash, and imported diseases.

African Responses

African voices were not silent and African responses were not passive. Shrewd opportunists attempted to negotiate for themselves and their tribal nations the best terms possible through alliance formation and joining with the Europeans in conquest of neighboring territories. Others acquiesced in European domination over their territories. Circumstances could vary considerably and this would affect the choices Africans made to determine whether or not to resist. Further, many groups could and did change from one category to another. A group might acquiesce or even join an alliance with Europeans. Then, when the reality of white domination began to be felt, it might turn to resistance.

All of these responses dating back to the beginning of these incursions may best be understood as responses to the overwhelming trauma of the acquisition and selling of slaves, the incursion of Europeans into their territories, and the subsequent denigration of African sovereignty. In trauma, everything is a matter of life and death. The uncontainable and the unmentionable flood the memory. Fears of extinction interfere substantially with all empathetic concern for the human other. These traumas live on in body memory, transmitted from generation to generation through the gaze,

the rhythms of voice, and the whole panoply of non-verbal expression.

With white intrusion, Africans were faced with the necessity of choosing how to survive. How is the loss of millions of one's people inscribed on the psyche? Beset by wars and the need for making alliances, how were Africans to regard the new white chiefs? As just another jumble of buccaneering?

By the mid 19th century, debilitated by wars and beset by the machinations of the various European nations, Africans entered into negotiations with these same intruders reasoning that the suppression of the slave trade was in their best interests. Unaware of the pyramids of power that were being created in the West, African chiefs soon found themselves enmeshed in a series of brilliant fiefdoms, namely England, France, Germany, Belgium, and other European powers.

Thus, Africans became colonial subjects and Africa a Dark Continent open to the light of European expansion. Further, what may have been seen as uncontainable now became more than possible as Africans came to realize that they and their fellow-Africans, already degraded by slavery, must now accept the land claims of the Berlin Conference of 1884-5, arranged on their behalf by European powers. It was not felt necessary to invite any African leaders, chiefs or tribal leaders to this land grab. African societies now increasingly are left to see themselves as victims of the colonial enterprise.

Psychic Scar Tissue

Under such conditions people must develop some way of dealing with the new situation. Most often they harden themselves toward others and themselves. They develop a kind of necessary forgetting. Notice the denial, disassembling, and revisionist historicism about the African involvement in the Atlantic or Arab slave trade.

The slave trade had a profound impact. Scholars of the era say that this epoch did more to undermine African development than the colonialism that followed it. Of course, victims of this sort of trauma want to get as far away as possible from the stigmatization of shame and otherness. It is far easier to focus on the extremes of imperialism and colonization as if these historical moments occurred in isolation. But what lies underneath is a fragmented identity, seen as "less advanced and primitive."

African leaders of the Independence Movement of the 1950s and onward struggled to escape from the past by focusing on future hopes and dreams. The blanket of silence, however does not remove the historical memories of the trauma. European administrators of Africa, like Lord Lugard, insisted on revisiting the trauma by blaming the victim. Lugard wrote, the African "in character and temperament is a happy, thriftless, excitable person, lacking in self-control, discipline and foresight...full of personal vanity, with little sense of veracity...his thoughts are concentrated on the events and feelings of the moment. His mind is far nearer to the animal world than that of the European or Asiatic."

One need not detail the many mindless, racist remarks about African systems of coping with obvious trauma. The point is that this

persistent and organized traumatization resulted in an extreme reaction. It is difficult to love your neighbor as yourself when your neighbor and you are both in traumatic denial.

Needed is a hero, a strong man to counter the sense of helplessness. Europeans such as Cecil Rhodes, the man who straddled Africa from Cape to Cairo become the desired strongman for many oppressed peoples. Rhodes who profited greatly by exploiting southern Africa's resources is infamous for having declared "All of these stars...these vast worlds that remain out of reach. . . If I could I would annex other planets." Is it any wonder that many Africans have come to idealize strength and power while at the same time organizing their identities around their histories of persecution.

Homosexuality Seen Through the Slave Trade

Psychotherapists know that the more shamed traumatized individuals have been made to feel the more rigid, authoritarian, and even cruel, they can become with themselves and others. Helplessness and shame are at the heart of trauma, and until it is thoroughly acknowledged, recognized, and grieved for, it will be retold and reenacted on ourselves and others.

Is this not what we are witnessing in responses of African clergy to their homosexual brothers and sisters? Is this not the result of shame and powerlessness? Not only does legislation prohibit homosexuality in many African countries, but its very existence is denied within the culture. This blindness is an illusion. It is commonly said in Africa, "It is better to have the corpse of my child than for me to accept that my child is gay. Splitting off the unmentionable is an age-old approach. African responses to the trauma of the slave trade are echoed in African responses to homosexuality. Dissociating dimensions of ourselves as a people and creating an "other," whose experiences, while the same as ours, are seen as non-human in the other, will do little to affect change.

The issue is how we finally begin to cease enacting and reenacting our historical trauma on ourselves and others. Martin Buber writes that redemption is possible when we see traces of the divine in the other. Will homosexuality continue to divide Africa or will African clergy come to realize the large scale work required for reconciliation. That is what is required of us in the First Commandment: to love God and no other and to love our neighbor as ourselves. As we trust in God to set our hearts right and we keep this commandment, all the complex issues around our relationships with our homosexual brothers and sisters will fall in place. This is the beautiful and comforting promise.

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HEARTS ON FIRE, 2008 LC/NA & RIC GATHERING

by Phil Soucy

In July 2008, Lutherans Concerned/North America (LC/NA) will convene *Hearts On Fire*, its largest and most diverse biennial LC/NA Assembly and the Convention of Reconciling In Christ organizations. More than 500 people are expected to attend the activities being held on the campus of San Francisco State University (SFSU) from July 3-6.

Full details, as well as registration for the assembly and pre-events, are available online at www.lcna.org/assembly, with reduced prices for Early Bird Registration through March 15. Registering early saves money.

Principal speakers at the assembly include the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire; the Rev. Kelly Fryer (M.Div., MTh), Executive Director of ARE: A Renewal Enterprise; The Rt. Reverend John Selders, Bishop of the Church of God and organizing pastor of Amistad United Church of Christ, Hartford, Connecticut; and the Rev. Gladys G. Moore, Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life and the Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts.

Six hours of assembly will be devoted to conducting the business of LC/NA. During these sessions, the Executive Director will report on the State of LC/NA, its goals and activities; the Board of Directors for the next biennium will be elected; and the priorities set for the coming two years. Everyone registered and attending can fully participate in these important sessions because a one-year membership in LC/NA is granted to those not already members.

In addition to the events during Assembly and Convention, there will be pre-events from 1:00 p.m. on July 2 until noon on July 3, providing deeper aspects of the LGBT movement. There is an additional \$50 registration fee for the pre-events to cover facilitation, dinner and breakfast. Housing is one extra night.

Of particular interest is the pre-assembly launching of a continuing ministerium for LGBT clergy and ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the Lutheran Communion. The launch event will be a retreat-style gathering designed specifically for, and attended only by, LGBTQ-identified clergy and ministers to offer mutual support for one another and to look toward the future together. Ministers from any denomination and any degree of "outness" are invited to be a part of this nurturing and challenging retreat. Sanctuary and confidentiality will be an integral part of this ministerium.

Other pre-assembly events of interest are:

Youth & Young Adult Forum: youth and young adults, 16-22, who are or want to be activists and advocates for the LGBTQ movement, will be given an opportunity to meet, collaborate, and

rock the Lutheran church. Principal topics include worship, leadership development, and advocacy planning.

Finding the I in the Middle of Racism: designed to help sort through the complexities of racism and discern meaningful ways of addressing its personal and communal impact. This pre-event is a part of LC/NA's commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization.

In the next two years through the summer of 2009, synod, church-wide, and national assemblies will take place in the United States and Canada. It's important to be prepared to create change within all of our Lutheran denominations. This legislative organizing and training will do just that. If you are on fire to help create the change you seek and interested in legislation, this pre-event is for you. Participants can expect to spend time preparing and planning for the strategy to make policy change."

Couple Care: conducted in the style of a 24-hour retreat, an outreach to all couples, of all ages and in all of life's stages. Intentional care for couples can literally give life to a couple, renew life for an entire family and change the life of a community. Recommended for all committed couples.

As always, this LC/NA assembly is framed in the context of worship, drawn from a rich variety of traditions, including our unique Lutheran liturgy while highlighting some of the gifts and talents of our own membership. Worship starts with a celebration of the God who binds us together, uses inclusive language and ends with a festival of sending. In between, we do the work of the people. From the time begin each morning with Bible Study to keynote presentations to workshops through our evening worships we are doing the work of the people. Worship will offer styles people are comfortable with, but will also push them to experience new styles that can broaden their understanding of worship. The worship experiences throughout the Assembly are designed to empower us for work which extends well beyond the walls of San Francisco State University through our homes into the church and the world.

Lodging on-campus is in the Village at Centennial Square. The Village offers an apartment-style community that incorporates a fitness center and several eating and convenience store options. Participants staying on the SFSU campus will choose double or a limited number of single occupancy rooms in a furnished apartment with a kitchen and two bathrooms.

Limited housing will be available before and after *Hearts on Fire*. If you so choose, you can come up to a week early, tour the city, and participate in a pre-event -- all before the actual Assembly begins!

CROSSING BOUNDARIES: THE ETHICS OF STRUGGLE IN MARK, PAUL, AND THE ELCA

by David L. Balch

Biographical Vignette: Stephen V. Sprinkle

In 1994 in Fort Worth, Texas, Dean Leo Perdue appointed Stephen Sprinkle the Director of Field Education and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Brite Divinity School—knowing that he was gay. In 1996 Texas passed laws regulating relationships between pastors and parishioners; therefore, at Brite the faculty organized seminars informing students of the legal consequences of sexual relationships in the parish. During one of those seminars, a Brite student decided to charge his senior pastor with pedophilia, and that pastor responded by making charges against others, including the charge that Prof. Sprinkle is gay, which was true. Steve deliberated at length, including consulting the faculty, and decided to come out of the closet. Choosing between denial and telling the truth, Steve chose the latter, even in the Bible belt.

I often say that during the following decade, all of us at the divinity school, students, staff, faculty, and administrators, not only *talked* about theology, but *did* theology. It was a very exciting time. When I ask Steve about the same journey, however, he calls it hell. As a friend who accompanied Steve, I became more and more aware that my life and body was not the one at risk. The highest university officials sought his dismissal, and several denominational executives betrayed him, all the while hugging him and protesting their deep concern. Dean Perdue doggedly protected Steve, until he left the Deanship and Presidency, and then it became open season on Steve. An Interim President persuaded one student to add negative evaluations of Steve to a report generated by a larger committee, but the other students were outraged when they discovered the editing. In the end, there was "success": supported by the faculty, Steve was awarded tenure.

Was it worth it? I'm not sure what Steve would say. The struggle inflicted deep wounds in many that heal slowly. In this case, the tensions never really came to an end. None of us could any longer simply mouth the popular slogan, that, because we are baptized, "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). At Brite we learned the cost of such a radical—spiritual and political—confession. Some of my colleagues were silent through those repeated conflicts; when Steve needed their support, they disappeared into the closet. Words about acceptance and equality, said glibly in class lectures or written eloquently for scholarly journals, seemed impossible to speak out in public when the situation in the seminary or in the church grew tense.

Official Church Policies: Roman Catholic and ELCA

Would it not have been better for Steve to remain silent, one might wonder. Would it be better for GLBT candidates for ordination in the ELCA not to tell? Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict

XVI, has made silence official church policy. In 1986 he issued the Letter, which warns "homosexual activists" of violence to come¹. Catholics were instructed not to contradict the church's official teaching and to renounce gay life or suffer the consequences. The Letter concludes by directing bishops to remove any support, material or spiritual, from ministries that serve lesbians and gays, and from all ministers who dissent from the church's anti-homosexual teaching. More recently the Vatican issued *Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons* (1992),² which states, "as a rule, the majority of homosexually oriented persons who seek to lead chaste lives do not want or see no reason for their sexual orientation to become public knowledge. Hence the problem of discrimination . . . does not arise" (no. 14). Good Catholics who are homosexual are to be discreet and closeted.

Some have understood the document "Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in the ELCA"³ to formulate a similar policy. Last summer, however, at the 2007 Churchwide Assembly in Chicago, eighty-two LGBT Lutheran ministers introduced themselves to the ELCA⁴. Later, after considerable discussion, the members of the Assembly voted to encourage its bishops to refrain from the discipline of ministers in same-gender relationships⁵. Ethical questions occur to all about how to proceed.

The Ethics of Struggle in Mark, Paul, and the ELCA

In *Survey of Christian Ethics*, E. L. Long⁶ categorizes three ways Christians have formulated ethical norms: 1) by reason (Aquinas, Tillich), 2) by prescription (Calvin, Wesley), and 3) by relationships (Augustine, Luther, Barth, H. Richard Niebuhr). After outlining means of deciding what is ethical in the first half of the book, in the second half, Long outlines how Christians have implemented ethics. Again, he suggests three categories: 1) by institutions (Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin), 2) by power and influence (Reinhold Niebuhr, Martin Luther King, Gandhi), and 3) by intention (Franciscans, Jesuits, the Taize community, Wesley, Mennonites).

At the end of his book, Long does not advocate choosing one best means either for deciding what is ethical or for implementing the choice; he advocates rather a mixture of norms and of means to implement them. Here I want to commend and encourage Goodsoil for what I perceive as their combining and employing the first and second means, combining institutional power with Niebuhrian influence. First, I'll comment on institutions, second on Niebuhrian influence.

I assume that the readers of *The Network Letter* are committed to the God revealed to us through the cross and resurrection of Christ, and therefore, to Christ's body, the church into which we were baptized. We experience the church in the ELCA, through its institu-

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tions: individual congregations, synods, its church-wide expression, colleges, and seminaries, often with particular heritages in Scandinavia, Germany, or increasingly, we hope, elsewhere also. Each of us is dedicated to particular institutions, in my case to the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, where I teach, to the Oregon synod where I am rostered, and to the Society of Biblical Literature, which fosters original contributions to exegesis. These institutions give me an opportunity to proclaim Christ crucified and to celebrate God's presence when we gather to commune over a meal with Christ and each other.

Without these institutions very few of us would have faith⁷. Without the families and local congregations in which we were raised, we would not have learned the Biblical stories. Without endowed educational institutions, we would not have experienced amazing teachers in colleges, seminaries, and graduate schools. In my case, without the Fulbright Grant program paid for by the U.S. government, I would not have been able to travel to and live in Germany to study with Ernst Käsemann, and very probably would never have become Lutheran. These institutions, orders of creation, (like marriage and the state), are not as static as Luther and some of our contemporaries imagine, but they invoke our respect and devotion. Without them few of us would have either faith or education.

Nevertheless, both individuals and institutions can turn in on themselves, and become more concerned with survival than with addressing our present evolving situation in a creative manner, particularly when this involves change. In those situations Niebuhrian prophetic influence is healthy. God characteristically sent prophets to call God's people into a transformed future. Jeremiah called Israel into a future without the sacred "ark of the covenant of the

Lord. It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed" (Jer 3:16), even though God chose to be present above that very ark in the past, as stated in holy scripture, the Torah (Exodus 25:10-22).

Both individuals and institutions can turn in on themselves, and become more concerned with survival than with addressing our present evolving situation in a creative manner, particularly when this involves change.

Even more astounding, the old story of salvation will not be recounted. The exodus from Egypt will no longer be celebrated: "it shall no longer be said, 'As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt.'" Rather, God's new act of bringing Israel out of the north, out of Babylon, will be acclaimed (Jer 23:7-8; contrast Exod 20:2). Deutero-Isaiah proclaimed, "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isa 43:18-19a)

Similarly, David Rhoads characterizes the Markan—Jewish—Jesus as "Crossing Boundaries."⁸ In the first century, the Jewish nation was a temple state under the imperial domination of the Roman Empire. God dwelt in the inner sanctuary of the temple, now without the ark.

Any society or religious community has these two possibilities within it. "Order can be creative or oppressive. The transgression of order can be creative or destructive."

Various Jewish sects/parties carefully interpreted the book of Leviticus as a way of preserving the holiness of the temple and its purity of worship. The range varied between the strictest Essenes, on the one hand, and the peasants, on the other, who followed many of the regulations only when they went to the temple. This system served Israel well, enabling it to preserve its minority culture from absorption into the dominant Greco-Roman world.

"By contrast, Jesus [as a Jew] makes an onslaught against these purity rules and regulations.... Jesus counters the purity rules that preserved and protected the holiness of the nation."⁹ Jesus transgressed the boundaries of purity, while leaders of the nation protected those boundaries. Rhoads quotes Jonathan Z. Smith's¹⁰ contrast between the two models, noting that Smith resists valuing only one of them: one erects boundaries and preserves holiness, the other breaks out and crosses boundaries.

This is not a Jewish versus Christian debate; any society or religious community has these two possibilities within it. "Order can be creative or oppressive. The transgression of order can be creative or destructive. Yet the two options represent such fundamentally different worldviews that 'to change stance is to totally alter one's symbols and to inhabit a different world.'"¹¹ The Jewish prophet Jesus' proclamation of the reign of God by his words and deeds, as narrated in Mark, created a new world. Jesus' prophetic words and actions did not leave Judean institutions as they were.

To emphasize this newness is not Christian anti-Judaism. The writers of mystical kabbalah in the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries and the Baal Shem Tov in the eighteenth also crossed boundaries within Judaism, again creating significant controversy and discontinuity, as well as a need to legitimate new worlds. Every religious community experiences continuity and discontinuity. According to Smith, "Each society has moments of ritualized disjunction, moments of 'descent into chaos,' of ritual reversal, of liminality, of collective anomie. But these are part of a highly structured scenario in which these moments will be overcome through the creation of a new world, the raising of an individual to a new status, or the strengthening of community. Change—in the strongest sense of the word, a society's conversion—is required when such moments meld into history."¹²

Paul observes that believers in the Corinthian house churches have economic and legal statuses that vary, but that all of them are called, not called *to* their social status, but *in* their status

The Reformation itself was a boundary crossing event, because Luther enabled lay people to begin reading the Bible for themselves. Controversies within North American Lutheranism in the twentieth century, that brought about a split within the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and the organization of three predecessor bodies into the ELCA, are recent events that exemplify both erecting and crossing boundaries. Scandinavian and German Lutherans did not always find crossing boundaries towards each other easy. Tensions also followed struggles around the ordination of women in the 1970s.

North American Christianity, which has been dominated by religious and political Fundamentalists is not the best model of following Jesus by crossing boundaries into the future. But can we make a case that crossing boundaries by ordaining those GLBT candidates who meet all other qualifications would be faithful to the boundary-crossing of Jesus, Jeremiah, and deuter-Isaiah? To bring about change, leaders need to persuade the people of God, as Jesus tries to do in Mark 2-3 and 11-12, and as Reinhold Niebuhr, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi did in the last century, and as Luther did in the sixteenth.. We cannot do this without controversy, but we can do it in a spirit that aims not only at change, but finally also at reconciliation and unification. Two case studies of Pauline texts illustrate this.

Paul and Boundary Crossing

1 Cor 7:21-22

Paul is often presented as implementing his ethics by intention: he gives imperatives to faith. Since Paul believes the *parousia* of Christ is imminent, and "the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31b), exegetes conclude that he is not interested in social-political change. When Paul addresses slaves who have come to faith in Christ, he writes, "Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever" (1 Cor 7:21).

Udo Schnelle similarly affirms: "Several aspects of this Stoic understanding of freedom are found in Paul. In 1 Cor 7:20-22, the apostle advises slaves to remain in their social class and gives as his reason, 'For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ.' Paul here defined freedom as inner freedom, a freedom made possible by Jesus Christ and having as its goal Jesus Christ alone. Social structures are irrelevant for this understanding of freedom, for they confer neither freedom nor slavery."¹³

However, the NRSV mistranslates (by supplying "your present condition"), and Schnelle overlooks fundamental social, institutional

transformation. Paul observes that believers in the Corinthian house churches have economic and legal statuses that vary, but that all of them are called, not called *to* their social status, but *in* their status: “consider your own call (*klesis*), brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise....” (1 Cor 1:26-27a). The Roman world was not the medieval world, where one was stuck in one’s parents’ social status by divine call.

So some Judean Christians persuaded Peter to retreat from crossing boundaries, from the new world that he had been celebrating, thus denying the new kingdom of God that he had heard Jesus proclaim and had experienced Jesus celebrate by eating with tax collectors and sinners in Galilee

People in diverse social classes, ethnic groups, and gender roles experience God’s call, a call which is from and toward God, not a call that locks them/us into particular social-legal, ethnic, or gender roles. Paul writes, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call [*klesis*] of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14), toward citizenship in heaven (3:20), from which we expect a Savior who will transform our bodies (3:20-21).

Galatians 2:11-21

But does Paul support social-political change, typically preceded by Niebuhrian power and influence? It depends. Paul opposes symbolic, ritual, institutional change that identifies all believers in Christ with one ethnic group, even when that group, Israel, has been God’s chosen people through salvation history (Rom 9:4-5). Paul opposes the male Galatians/Gauls’ move to be circumcised (Gal 5:1-12), that is, change from one ethnic/religious group to another. At this *kairos* in salvation history, God calls all ethnic peoples, Jews and Gentiles (Gal 3:28; Rom 1:14¹⁴). The Galatians’ symbolic/ritual/institutional change through circumcision would deny God’s present multiethnic call—to phrase it pointedly—to uncircumcised, pork-eating pagans.

Yet, in Gal 2, Paul advocates symbolic/ritual/social/institutional change. “Until certain people came [north to Antioch] from James [in Jerusalem], he [Cephas, Peter] used to eat [that is, celebrate the Eucharistic meal, I interpret] with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the [Judean Christian] circumcision faction” (Gal 2:12). Paul confronted Cephas, charging that this was “not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel” (vs. 14). Paul argued further that “if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor” (vs. 18).

Cephas, the spokesperson for the disciples when Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God in Galilee, has been sharing Jesus’ meal with pork-eating pagans, who had come to faith in Christ. They celebrated the eucharist together despite prohibitions in the book of

Paul insisted that the “truth of the gospel” had social/ethical consequences for the central question of his time, how Judeans related to other ethnic groups, especially to Rome, and he named Jesus’ key Galilean disciple, Cephas, a hypocrite for not following through on Jesus’ proclamation of the boundary crossing kingdom of God.

Leviticus, as interpreted by some other Judeans. But in the late 40s, only a decade and a half before other Judeans went to war with pagan Rome (66 CE), some more traditional Judean Christians made Cephas uncomfortable with his ecumenical openness, or to use Jonathan Smith’s words, with these “moments of ritualized disjunction, moments of ‘descent into chaos,’ of ritual reversal, of liminality, of collective anomie.” So some Judean Christians persuaded Peter to retreat from crossing boundaries, from the new world that he had been celebrating, thus denying the new kingdom of God that he had heard Jesus proclaim and had experienced Jesus celebrate by eating with tax collectors and sinners in Galilee (Mark 2:15-17).

One verb that Paul uses in Gal. 2:18 is crucial: *kataluo*, “to tear down.” Matthew puts this same verb in the mouth of Jesus: “Do not think that I have come to abolish [*katalu-sa*] the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish [*katalu-sa*] but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17). There are denominational differences within the New Testament between Paul and Matthew,¹⁵ and Cephas/Peter was in between, even tried to be on both sides of the denominational line. Paul is infamous for using the first person singular pronoun “I” in confusing ways, but when he writes, “if I build up the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor,” his meaning is clear. Paul argues that *Peter* has “torn down” prohibitions of Leviticus by celebrating the eucharist with pagans, but then withdrawn and again “built up the very things (Levitical prohibitions) that he once tore down,” thus proving himself a transgressor.

Paul was a Pharisee (Phil 3:5). Jacob Neusner researched all the texts that remain in the New Testament, in Josephus, and in the rabbis about Pharisees, and concluded that “67 percent of the whole [two-thirds!] directly or indirectly concern table-fellowship.”¹⁶ Neusner’s entire book *Invitation to the Talmud*¹⁷ concerns how to eat a meal! When studying to be a Pharisee, Paul had surely given intense attention to Lev 11, to what to eat, how to eat, and with whom to eat. Heart-rending stories in 2 Maccabees 6-7 reinforce these concerns. But when God called Paul to pro-

claim God’s Son among the Gentiles (Gal 1:15-16), he began participating in “moments of ritualized disjunction, moments of ‘descent into chaos,’ of ritual reversal, of liminality, of collective anomie.” He became like the pork-eating Gauls (“Friends, I beg you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are” [Gal 4:12].¹⁸) To the Corinthians he wrote, “eat whatever is sold in the meat market....” (1 Cor 10:25 & 27). This directly opposes God’s command, “you shall not eat ... the pig” (Lev 11:4, 7). James and other Christians in Jerusalem would have noticed Paul’s ritual reversal and put pres-

sure on Peter, who caved in, despite his memory of Jesus' own words and meals (Mark 2:15-17). The Judean Christian Peter was unwilling to exercise Niebuhrian influence in the face of criticism from Jerusalem.

None of these early Christian factions are exclusively emphasizing ethical intention, or individual moral rigor. This conflict is also not identical with some social questions that have disturbed and attracted us in the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, that is, questions about the emancipation of slaves or of the equality of women; Paul is not politically correct by our standards. It was, however, the key social question that inflamed the first century CE, which led to two wars of Judeans against Rome and later to a third war of North African Judeans against Rome, resulting in the death and enslavement of tens of thousands of them (Josephus, *War* 6.420 mentions 97,000 Judean prisoners after the 66-70 CE war against Rome). Paul insisted that the "truth of the gospel" had social/ethical consequences for the central question of his time, how Judeans related to other ethnic groups, especially to Rome, and he named Jesus' key Galilean disciple, Cephas, a hypocrite for not following through on Jesus' proclamation of the boundary crossing kingdom of God. Paul was likely martyred for the disturbing gospel he proclaimed and ritually enacted in ethnically mixed communities.

When, around 49 CE, in response to a revelation, Paul went up from Antioch to the first church council in Jerusalem, he brought along his Greek brother Titus, an uncircumcised, pork-eating pagan. That's confrontation, Niebuhrian prophetic influence. Judean Christians had to decide how to relate to Titus, whether to celebrate the Eucharist with him. According to the best manuscripts, Titus came away uncircumcised (Gal 2:1-3).

According to Acts, Paul repeated the confrontation years later (c. 58 CE), when he took a contribution from the Gentile churches up to Jerusalem. "He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Beroea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia [Ephesus]" (Acts 20:4). More uncircumcised, pork-eating believers in Jerusalem!¹⁹ This time we do not know what happened, whether the Judean Christians accepted the monetary relief for their poverty, or whether James celebrated communion with Trophimus. Acts is distressingly vague.

Still, we may conclude that Paul's implementation style included Niebuhrian influence, a precedent surely for the eighty-two GLBT Lutheran pastors who presented themselves, their names, their bodies, and their calls from God to the Churchwide Assembly 2007 in Chicago.

[Recommended reading: *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), edited by David Balch. At this point in ELCA history, Balch recommends especially the articles by David Fredrickson and Nancy Duff.]

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Notes:

1. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Homosexualitatis problema* [Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, October 1, 1986], English translation in Jeffrey S. Siker, *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 39-47. Here I depend on Stephen V. Sprinkle, "Queer Fear: Ministry Made Strange by Fear of the Sexual Other," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* (journal article forthcoming, May, 2008).
2. For the text see Jeannine Gramick and Robert Nugent, eds., *Voices of Hope: A Collection of Positive Catholic Writings on Gay and Lesbian Issues* (New York: Center for Homophobia Education, 2005) 229-33. See also Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Considerations Regarding Proposals to give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons" (June 3, 2003 [Vatican codice 7494-0]).
3. The document is available on the ELCA website.
4. See http://www.lcna.org/lcna_news/2007-08-07a.shtm, in the column "Churchwide Assembly 2007," under the heading "Eighty-two GLBT Lutheran ministers introduce themselves to the ELCA (Goodsoil press release, August 7, 2007)"; click on "devotional booklet," which is entitled "A Place within My Walls."
5. See http://www.lcna.org/lcna_news/2007-08-07a.shtm: under the same heading, "Churchwide Assembly 2007," and check the Goodsoil press release of August 11, 2007.
6. Edward Le Roy Long, Jr., *A Survey of Christian Ethics* (New York: Oxford University, 1967). The article I am writing is not an attempt at constructive ethics, or I would need to revise and update Long, adding names of feminist, liberation, queer, and third world, postcolonial ethicists. Decades later, however, Long's categories are clarifying, and I employ them below.
7. Larry D. Shinn, *Two Sacred Worlds: Experience and Structure in the World's Religions* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977).
8. David Rhoads, "6. Crossing Boundaries: Purity and Defilement," pp. 140-75 in *Reading Mark: Engaging the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004); citations below are from 153, 157-60, 163-64. Now revised and republished in *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008, 2nd ed.) 145-79.
9. Rhoads, *Reading Mark* 159.
10. Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Influence of Symbols upon Social Change: A Place on Which to Stand," *Worship* 44 (1970) 457-

(Continued on page 12)

DO YOU SHARE THIS VISION?

The Lutheran Network for Inclusive Vision is a public list of members in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who envision this church as fully welcoming to all who are baptized into the body of Christ, including its gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) members. They hold up the biblical vision of the community of God's people, united not by their traits and merits, but by God's grace in Christ. They hope to lift the hearts and minds of the people of the ELCA to this vision by focusing on the biblical faith and the Lutheran Confessions through their journal, *The Network Letter*, through publications for congregations, and through regional conferences.

The Network Members

Network members, about 1,300 of them, are members of the ELCA, lay persons, seminarians, diaconal ministers, deaconesses, associates in ministry, professors, bishops, pastors—fathers, mothers, spouses, siblings. The names of Network members are listed on a public roster, which is shared with ELCA officials and can be found on its website, *inclusivenet.com*.

The Network Message

We who are on the Network list publicly challenge the ELCA:

- to promote an environment open to honest and faithful discussion as we seek the Spirit's guidance concerning issues around sexuality;
- to provide the same pastoral care for GLBT people as it claims to provide for all its other members;
- to affirm committed and faithful same-sex relationships with appropriate liturgies;
- to change the current guidelines for candidates for ministry, in "Vision and Expectations" and "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline," which discriminate against gay and lesbian clergy, associates in ministry, and seminarians;
- to seek justice for victims of sexual orientation discrimination within the church and to support those who provide care for them and advocate on their behalf.

If You Share This Vision

1. We ask for your contributions.
2. We encourage you to be an advocate in your congregation for the full inclusion of GLBT persons in the church.
3. We encourage you to seek your congregation's nomination to become a member of your synod assembly, in order to support resolutions for full acceptance of GLBT persons in our church.

Join Us!

You can become a member of The Network by sending your name, address, and ELCA Synod with an annual contribution of \$25 for an individual, \$35 for a household, or \$10 for a student (checks payable to The Network), to:

Ingrid Christiansen, Treasurer
The Network
4145 N. Greenview Ave.
Chicago IL 60613-1924

You will receive *The Network Letter* three times a year. You can join The Network online at *inclusivenet.com* (click on "Join").

74, now in his *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (SJLA 23; Leiden: Brill, 1978) 129-46, which I quote below.

11. Rhoads, *Reading Mark* 164.
12. Smith, *Map is Not Territory*, 145.
13. Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005, translation from the German of 2003) 80. For better exegesis and a different conclusion with respect to 1 Cor 7.21, see S. Scott Bartchy, "Slavery (New Testament)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 (1992) 65-73 and Bartchy, "Philemon, Epistle to," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5 (1992) 305-10.
14. Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 130-34, calls this verse the key to Romans; note his further comments on pp. 46, 139-40, 632, 742, 841, 905.
15. Year A of the lectionary regularly pairs Romans and Matthew as epistle and gospel, a dilemma for preachers!
16. Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 86.
17. Jacob Neusner, *Invitation to the Talmud: a Teaching Book* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
18. According to my teacher, Nils Dahl, "Paul's Letter to the Galatians: Epistolary Genre, Content, and Structure," 117-42, esp. 134-39 and 141 in *The Galatians Debate*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), at 4.12 Paul shifts for the first

time in the epistle to the imperative mood, which supports his appeals to the Galatians not to subject themselves to Judean law.

19. Acts 16.1-5 is not historical, when reporting that Paul circumcised Timothy. Contrast Paul himself in Gal 5.1-12.

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