

CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter/Communiqué

de la société théologique canadienne

Spring/Fall 2002 Vol. 21/2 Vol. 22/1 ISSN 0826-9599

Editor's Note

For some years now I have been editor of this newsletter and this past year for the first time the circumstances of life intruded in such a way as to result in my failure to produce the scheduled issues. 2002 has come and nearly gone and there has been no trace of the normal two issues of this newsletter. I will not rehearse here any list of excuses for this disappointing outcome but only say that with the publication of this 'double issue' I hope that my shortfall will be a small blip on the landscape of the history of this small journal. Time is not the only ingredient needed to get this publication out. Focused attention and some current vision for content are also important. This conjunction of resources eluded me at the times they were most needed.

I don't know whether it is a good sign or not, but I have heard no rumblings from the membership about the absence of this publication in 2002. Let me assume that this is a consequence of a generous and forgiving spirit and not that you hadn't noticed it was missing. I might say here that submissions for membership news are minimal. May I suggest that news for inclusion in the newsletter be submitted by email. That will facilitate the process for most of you.

At the beginning of last April I was offered the opportunity to co-ordinate a national visual arts competition. The benefactor provided funding for this event including substantial prize money for the three winners. The competition was open to all visual artists in Canada and was on the theme A New Heaven and A New Earth. The past several months have been given to organizational detail aimed at making this event a good success. Thirty finalists were chosen from nearly 350 artists who entered from coast to coast. After a show at a downtown gallery in Toronto in November the work of the 30 finalists will be at Regent College Vancouver from January 15 to February 8, 2003. In another venue I offered some reflections on the theme of the competition which I reproduce here.

My involvement in coordinating a National Art Competition has led me to do some thinking about the theme - A New Heaven and A New Earth. A good deal of recent work in theology has given attention to the topic of eschatology, that look toward the culmination of history, the end of things, or perhaps better a new beginning. Talk of endings is in the air.

Living our lives as we do in the midst of a world of uncertainty, we scan the horizon for a beacon of hope. Kant the influential 18th century philosopher suggested that humanity seeks answers to three great questions, what can I know? what ought I to do? and what can I hope for? It is this inclination to look ahead, to secure ourselves in the hope for something yet to come that captures my interest. Why is it we are so keen to discover what the "end" will be like, why are endings so important to us. Our passion for endings may lead us to look to the back of a novel because we can't wait, or not to tell a friend the conclusion of the film lest we spoil the story or as is common today, to engage in speculation about how the world will end. It seems characteristic of humanity to be directed toward the future. This is far too big a topic to tackle in so short a space, but I can at least suggest a few threads that I trust will be of interest.

The end of a narrative can serve to organize the story. It enables us to make sense of the bits and pieces of the story and allows us to see how the parts fit together within the whole. In this view ending brings closure. But endings may also serve to leave things open. Specifically I have in mind the biblical 'ending' of a new heaven and a new earth. This promised end engages God the creator of all things and humanity in all of its potential for new possibilities. And so what we are given here is not simply closure but an openness

that will bring to birth a new enriched reality of a heaven and earth changed and transformed. Entertaining this idea is often difficult when we face some of the dark realities of our social and personal worlds. It is here that imagination is called into play.

The vision of a new heaven and a new earth is subversive. It subverts the social consensus, the propaganda of "the empire", the claims that the world as we experience it is all there is, and the contention that hope rests in human resourcefulness. To grasp a vision of this hopefulness of what is to come requires the imagination. It is through imagination that we are lifted out of current circumstances to get a glimpse of a larger horizon. This glimpse can then be brought back into the present both to assist us with putting the often stark and difficult realities of the present into perspective and in empowering us to move toward changing those present realities. And so there is both an imagining of the future and a re-imagining of the present. Contrary to what many have suggested looking to a new heaven and a new earth does not lead us to ignore the present as if it doesn't matter, but rather it calls us to engage in transforming the present in a way consistent with promised future.

Given the idea of a hopeful future that engages the play of imagination, it seems fitting that we involve artists to help us to open our understanding of that future. Here faith and art have common cause in letting the imagination take us beyond the present to see something we have not seen before.

A promised end is a captivating idea, especially if the promise is reliable and the end has appeal. What strikes me is that the Christian tradition directs us to a promised end. We may of course declare or speculate about that end and what it means. That the promise is there offers a resource for hope in a world where hope is often in short supply.

I trust you will find the various pieces of this special issue of the newsletter of interest. Stewart Gillan's short piece offers some reflections generated out of an exchange at the meeting for the Society of Christian Ethics held in Vancouver early this year. How we (and particularly political leaders) think about justice is a matter of ongoing concern. God's action in the world continues to get a good deal of attention. It seems it is at the nub of current debates about the relationship between science and religion though its import goes far beyond that discussion. The article included in this issue was first on the Meta list (a science and religion group) and is used here with permission of the author. Chaos or complexity theory has opened the way for fresh perspectives on the matter of divine action in the world. It goes to the heart of traditional science and its need for predictability. Its benefits for theological understanding are still under discussion. The article below affirms its value for theology. A number of books have been noted with brief comments on each volume which I hope you will find informative. A few items of special interest from periodicals are noted as well including the two issues of the Toronto Journal of Theology that have been published to honour the retirement of important figures in the Toronto and Canadian theological landscape, David Demson (Emmanuel College - TST) and Iain Nicol. (Knox College - TST)

The last page of the newsletter is a form inviting you to submit information for the next issue. You may wish not to use the form but simply send along the information which would be fine. Please feel free to also include any information about upcoming events that will be of interest to our membership.

The next Congress will take place May 29-31, 2003 at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Visit our new CTS website
<http://www.ccsr.ca/cts/>

John Franklin,
133 Southvale Dr. Toronto,
ON M4G 1G6
franklin@ultratech.net

Rev Dr Stewart Gillan

Executive Director, Church's Council on Theological Education

Justice that is Only Justice?

America and the Society of Christian Ethics

'Any justice which is only justice soon degenerates into something that is less than justice. It must be saved by something that is more than justice.'

Reinhold Niebuhr, New York, 1932

This article is a brief attempt to understand a particular instance of laughter and forgetting at this year's Annual Meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics, held in Vancouver on 11-13 January 2002. At issue, or so I thought, was the need to distinguish among competing approaches to justice in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, and critically to assess the influence of our respective identities, locations, biases and interests in addressing the question. In this I was mistaken; in the event it was the stuff of stand-up comedy.

The laughter was occasioned by a question I asked during the Saturday evening plenary session, focused on 'September 11, 2001: Terrorism and its Aftermath.' My question, not unrelated to the observation that all four of the session's panelists were from and of the United States of America, had to do with the ways in which Americo-centrism, particularly in the form of patriotism, may be said to affect our practice of Christian ethics. I wanted to test, among other things, my suspicion that a form of self-censorship was being exercised in our discourse together concerning September 11th. I wondered why, for example, George W. Bush's ambiguous use of the word 'justice' in his historic address to the joint session of Congress on 20 September had not received more critical attention. Early in his address, to great applause, President Bush had stated:

Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our

grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies

to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

I wondered how many kinds of justice were on offer in this statement. On the one hand, 'bring our enemies to justice' seemed to imply due process and the criminal code; on the other, 'bring justice to our enemies' seemed to portend a more retaliatory, retributive approach - one that, by January 2002, we had seen falling from the sky in Afghanistan. What concerned me most was that it seemed not to matter which justice it was - either way, 'justice' would be done. What, beyond the rhetorical flourish of a memorable chiasmus, was 'justice' by the end of this sentence?

The panelist who chose to field my question was of the opinion that I was reading too much into the speech. 'I know the speech well,' he stated, 'and I don't think President Bush thought that much about it.' Cue the laughter. I tried, not quite believing what I was hearing, to put the question a second time, citing a morning session on restorative justice and urging that there was much at stake in distinguishing what President Bush meant when he used the word 'justice.' Again, I was reading things into the speech that weren't there. President Bush just hadn't thought that much about it. (Nor had his speechwriters, presumably.) More laughter. I suggested that it was a matter of hermeneutics, and that was where we left it. It was indeed laughable.

By this time many of the Canadian members of the Society had left the session. It was not until the following morning, talking informally with friends and colleagues, that I learned how strongly they were repulsed by the Americo-centrism, and how early in the session many of them had left. 'Last night,' said one, 'this was the Society of American Ethics.'

To suggest, however, that there were no moments of critical self-transcendence, or something approaching it, would be misleading. The most useful of these came with a question from the floor addressed to Richard Miller concerning the (in)advisability of the U.S. military reprisals. Miller, in his earlier remarks, had stated his opposition to 'fighting terrorism by imitating it.' Yet, he had left the door open for the question by suggesting that a case might be made for the justification of reprisals on the basis of their (supposed) pre-emptive quality. Reprisals are not justified by looking back, he said, but by looking forward - seeking to be preventative. Miller was careful, nonetheless, to note that the U.S. reprisals were being carried out not against the perpetrators of September 11th but against their supporters. His interlocutor from the floor questioned the wisdom of the reprisals, suspecting that, whatever else they do, reprisals contribute to cycles of revenge. How do we know, he asked, that the reprisals will deter our enemies? They will have their own interpretations of our actions, he said, and may be expected to use these in their efforts to broaden their support base. There was general agreement that this was a distinct possibility, but that is as far as it went on the night.

The session came back to me a month later as I read the opening paragraphs of Benjamin Barber's new, post-September 11 introduction to Jihad vs. McWorld. Early in the 2001 Introduction, entitled 'Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy,' Barber argues that the 'clash between Jihad and McWorld' is immediately relevant for understanding why a contemporary response to terror 'cannot be exclusively military or tactical, but rather must entail a commitment to democracy and justice even when they are in tension with the commitment to cultural expansionism and global markets.' For the U.S.-led war against terrorism to succeed, he states, it must also be a war for justice - 'and not just in the sense in which President George W. Bush used the term in his address to Congress.' With this he had my full attention. Barber sees Bush as having chosen to deploy the 'rhetoric of retributive justice' in response to the terrorist attacks, and quotes the 'whether we bring our enemies to justice . or bring justice to our enemies' chiasmus in support of his argument. Though willing to risk a term like 'war for justice' - conceptually and programmatically problematic - Barber argues forcefully for a justice that is more than retributive:

The language of justice was surely the appropriate context for the American response, but it will remain appropriate only if the compass of its meaning is extended from retributive to distributive.

Barber argues that government, whatever its limitations, has a crucial role to play in the establishment of such justice. It must concern itself not only with matters of regulation and protection but also with questions of opportunity and distribution. It must not only wage a war against terrorism but must also engage itself in 'the construction of a fair and equitable international order that offers every person and every group equal access and equal opportunity.' Without the latter, the former will not succeed. 'Put simply,' says Barber, 'the struggle against Jihad [by which he means religious and tribal fundamentalisms] can succeed only if it is also a struggle on behalf of genuine transnational public goods against the private interests manifest in McWorld.' The war between Jihad and McWorld cannot be won, says Barber: 'Only a struggle of democracy against not solely Jihad but also against McWorld can achieve a just victory for the planet.'

Whatever we may think of Barber's argument, he is at least not laughing at the question of justice in Bush's address to Congress.

Call for Papers

Seminar on Violence and Religion

*Canadian Society for the Study of Religion
Canadian Society of Biblical Studies
Canadian Theological Society*

The steering committee of the Seminar on Violence and Religion solicits proposals for the upcoming Seminar on Violence and Religion (2003-2005).

The first stage of the Seminar will be held at a combined meeting (CSSR, CSBS, CTS) during the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities at Dalhousie University (May 28 - 31, 2003).

All proposals in the area of the intersection between violence and religion are welcome. Preference will be given to papers in the following areas:

- i) Origin, definition, and character of violence from the perspective of Religious Studies
- ii) The history of the justification and/or use of violence, especially in a Canadian context
- iii) Studies of religious texts and their use in the construction of particular positions

Proposals of approximately 250 words should be submitted before December 31, 2002 to one of the committee members.

Dr. Hans Boersma (hansb@twu.ca <mailto:hansb@twu.ca>)
Dr. Aaron Hughes (hughesa@ucalgary.ca <mailto:hughesa@ucalgary.ca>)
Dr. Bill Morrow (morroww@post.queensu.ca <mailto:morroww@post.queensu.ca>)

God's Action in a World of Chaos

Ilia Delio, O.S.F., Associate Professor, Department of Ecclesiastical History at the Washington Theological Union and Director of Franciscan Studies

Email: <delio@wtu.edu <mailto:delio@wtu.edu>

Introduction

Scientists tell us today that one of the most astounding features of physical, biological and chemical systems is that they are open to change. Whereas in the Newtonian world physical reality was assumed to follow rigid causal pathways, today physical reality is seen to be open and "flexible" with the capacity not only to sustain change but, moreover, to sustain novelty and spontaneity with an openness to future possibilities. The science of chaos and complexity indicates to us that non-linear dynamical systems are characterized by spontaneous, emergent changes that give rise to new order within systems.

The notion of spontaneity and new patterns of order in chaotic systems impels us to explore, from a Christian perspective, the way God acts in the world. Here I would like to raise several questions:

- 1) what does it mean to say "God acts?"
- 2) what is the nature of God who "acts?"
- 3) why does God "act?"

While these are broad questions they indicate the approach I am taking here, and that is strictly a theological one. I could take a more integrative, dialogical approach with contemporary science (and if I had more than an hour, I would do so); however, what I feel is lacking today is a theologically coherent understanding of divine action. By "theological coherence" (and here I am referring to Christian doctrine) I mean an understanding of divine action that accounts for the work of the Trinity in creation, the centrality of the Incarnation, and an eschatological future that somehow relates to Christ. In other words, the Trinity is not some divine multiple conundrum, the Incarnation is not an intrusion into an otherwise evolutionary universe, and eschatology is not theological jargon about the future. Any worthwhile Christian doctrine of divine action must hold together Trinity, Incarnation, and eschatology, since these are not three separate events but the single mystery of God's revelation in Christ. So you might find what I am saying here a bit "thick" at times but it is an attempt to provide a theological understanding of divine action in view of the new science (such as chaos and complexity) and not merely as a compatible explanation for what science otherwise tells us.

To undertake my lofty goal, I am reaching back into the Christian tradition, to theologians of the patristic and medieval periods such as Saint Bonaventure, simply because the richness of their teachings still provides a wealth of insight for us today. I am aware, however, that this approach could lead me to affirm a platonic universe with an ontological ground to reality. While I am taking a metaphysical approach to understand divine action, what I will propose here is not a metaphysics of being but a metaphysics of love which is a theological metaphysics based on the mystery of God revealed in Christ. My thesis is simply that the whole process of creation is integrally related to the mystery of Christ so that the question of divine action centers on the Incarnation. In order to explore this thesis I will examine the following points. First, I will show that chaos is changing our understanding of God as creator, from one who intervenes to produce an effect to one who allows creation to unfold freely and independently. Second, I will argue that the ability of complex systems at the edge of chaos to self-organize discloses the humility of God as self-communicative love which gives rise to creativity and freedom of creation. Third, I will examine the role of God as Creator one of attractive love. Finally, I will argue that the centrality of the Incarnation is the basis of direction in the evolutionary world. Creation is attraction toward the fullness of love as the universe unfolds in the mystery of Christ.

Aspects of Chaos Theory

Chaos is a word that the average person hardly associates with order and, yet, the science of chaos is primarily concerned with order. One of the major discoveries of post-Newtonian science is that most systems, whether physical, chemical or biological, are open systems. Rather than being closed to any outside influences, systems are now seen not only to be open to outside influences but moreover to exhibit novelty and spontaneous change within the system. Chaos theory is the study of "dynamical systems" in which complex and random behaviour arises spontaneously out of simple and ordered physical processes (Haught 1994, 2). It is a branch of science that studies non-linear behaviour in complex, dynamical systems, that is, systems composed of interacting units and subsystems of units. The non-linearity of the system means that interaction of units have consequences that are not simply additive in nature (Jones and Culliney 1998, 396). Rather, spontaneous, evolutionary, "emergent" changes appear in complex systems in a way that cannot be ascribed to any one part.

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of chaotic systems is their sensitive dependency on initial conditions, a sensitivity that is characteristic of open systems. "Many natural processes start out with a simple kind of orderliness, move through an incalculable phase of turbulence, but then end up manifesting surprisingly rich forms of unpredictable order in the midst of chaos" (Haught 1995, 143). The idea that a change in initial conditions can give rise to new patterns of order characterizes the science of chaos. Using computer simulations of weather forecasting, Edward Lorenz showed that small imbalances or disturbances in weather factors have massive effects, indicating that the smallest changes in open systems can result in transformation of the system. The term "butterfly effect" was coined to describe the extreme sensitivity of initial conditions and the effects of slight changes on interconnected systems; a butterfly flapping its wings in Burma may set off a hurricane in Florida (Gleick 1987, 11-31). The extreme sensitivity of initial conditions on which complex systems are based underscores the fact that

random, spontaneous changes can emerge in systems under the guise of "disorder"; thus, the name "chaos." However, such a term, according to its scientific meaning, is a misnomer since chaos is really order masquerading as randomness in systems. The source of this randomness is a kind of spontaneous evolution that seems to characterize complex systems.

The term "chaos," however, includes not simply disorder or randomness but the often incalculable (unpredictable) complex patterns that arise out of turbulence. As the system moves toward the "edge of chaos" the capacity for creativity increases as an emergent engine or organizing principle becomes apparent. Order, therefore, seems to emerge "spontaneously" at states far from thermodynamic equilibrium.

The term "strange attractor" describes the shape of chaos or spontaneous movements of a system that deviate from the normal pattern of order. The use of computer imagery has helped to detect spontaneous non-linear deviations in systems that signify new patterns of order. A strange attractor is a basin of attraction that pulls the system into a visible shape. It is, in some way, the spontaneous non-linear variation in a system that ultimately causes a new pattern of order to emerge. Some scientists have claimed that the appearance of the "strange attractor" means that order is inherent in chaos since the "attractor" itself is a novel pattern of order that arises spontaneously within a system. When systems are dislodged from a stable state, there is first a period of oscillation prior to a state of full chaos or a period of total unpredictability; it is during this time that the strange attractor seems to "spontaneously" appear. Very slight variations, so small as to be indiscernible, can amplify into unpredictable results when they are fed back on themselves (Wheatley 1994, 105).

What chaos theory indicates is that in a dynamic, changing system, the slightest variation can have explosive results. Because the chaos or disequilibrium of a system never exceeds the bounds of its strange attractor, it is difficult to say that true chaos exists. Rather, every chaotic system has within it an inherent pattern of order and novelty of order can emerge spontaneously at critical points of transformation within the system. The "surprise" of chaotic systems, therefore, is that fluctuations, randomness and unpredictability at the local level, in the presence of guiding or self-referential principles, cohere over time into definite and predictable forms. Beyond the edge of chaos, however, much of the structure, sustainability, orderly flow of information and creativity of systems are lost or frozen into complete stability. "[T]he edge of chaos is a metaphorical cliff" (Jones & Culliney 1998, 398).

What Does It Mean to Say "God Acts?"

The question of divine action in a world of chaos, where complex interactions play a significant role in self-organizing systems, is a challenging one. In an insightful essay, Robert Russell raised the question, "Does the God who acts really act?" (Russell 1997) We might add to this question, is it reasonable to even talk about God's "action?" The question is an important one because there is a tendency to forge God into a human projection - a clockmaker, architect, or paternal figure. The language of the Bible has imparted to us the image of a powerful creator God who "acts" to produce change.

The potter with large strong hands shaping and moulding creation like clay has been our somewhat comfortable image of God as creator. Traditionally we have maintained that God creates "out of nothing" (ex nihilo) by divine power. The doctrine of creatio ex nihilo underscores the idea that God creates a world truly distinct from Godself. While the notion of distinction between God and world was meant to underscore a transcendent God who is independent of the world, common belief distilled God and universe into two separate realities more or less over against each other, with God reaching into the world to act at particular moments. This common way of imaging the God-world relationship resulted in an interventionist view of divine action with God intervening to create and to move creation in the right direction at certain times (Edwards 1999, 30).

While I do not dispute the fact that God creates-even in a self-organizing universe-I think our language and imagery of God as creator needs revisiting in light of the new science. First, the language of God as creator pre-empts our Christian understanding of God as Trinity. Portraying God (the Father) as a singular agent (creator) seems to suggest that there is no role in creation for the Word and the Spirit (Edwards, 78). Second, the ability of chaotic systems to self-organize changes our understanding of a God who creates "out of nothing." Creation is not an ongoing process of divine intervention but has within it "mechanisms"

of novelty and change, that is, the capacity to self-organize. Third, the prevalence of order amidst randomness or disorder means that whatever we say about God as creator we are speaking of a God who is comfortable with disorder while allowing new patterns of order to emerge. As Sir John Polkinghorne states, "God doesn't mind the sloppiness" (Polkinghorne 2001, 23). God does not create order out of chaos, therefore, but precisely in and through chaos.

There is every reason to suspect that language about God is causing division today among scholars, especially with regard to divine action. Some describe God as absolute mystery while others describe God as a mastermind. Some say God acts by persuasion, others say that God designs and connects the parts. These two ways of thinking underlie the two major schools of thought today with regard to divine action: intelligent design theory and kenotic (evolutionary) theology. While I will argue in favour of the latter, I would like to highlight some of the problems with the former. Intelligent design theory points to the intricate order of the world as "proof" that the theory of evolution cannot account for the complex order of physical entities/systems in nature. Michael Behe's example of the living cell as a sign of "irreducible complexity" provides an a posteriori argument for design from nature. Since the components of a cell cannot function independently outside the cell and thus cannot be accounted for by evolution itself, there must be an ultimate designer.

It is indeed awesome to observe the wonders of nature and marvel at the fine-tuned complexity of things. But the role of science is precisely that -to strive for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of nature. When the notion of design in nature becomes the basis of theological argument then one has violated the integrity of science as a discipline of inquiry. Intelligent design theorists introduce a theological notion of design in such a way as to place it in competition with scientific explanation. That is, God becomes part of the scientific explanation as a causal link rather than a ground of created order (Haught 2001, 89). For all practical purposes, intelligent design theory thwarts the whole endeavor to come to a new theological understanding of God's action in an evolutionary world because it takes neither God nor evolution seriously. When God is used to fill in the gap of explanation one can be sure that God is nothing more than the first of many causes and this, in short, is really not God as all.

Because intelligent design theory has gained such momentum today with the noted writings of William Dembski, Philip Johnson and Michael Behe, it is necessary to come to a clearer theological basis of divine action. By "theological" I mean that whatever we say of God's "action" it must be consistent with who God is. To deduce God's action based on nature itself, as intelligent design theorists are prone to do, yields nothing more than mere speculation. Not only do we read the book of nature incorrectly due to faulty vision, but the Incarnation as the fullness of God's revelation becomes an appendage rather than central to Christian belief. In light of this idea, I maintain that the only real starting point for divine action is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Revelation: The Basis of God's Action

The question "why does God create?" must begin with the question of Jesus Christ if we understand Christ to be truly God and not otherwise. In the Middle Ages the tendency of theologians was to move from the story of Jesus to the widest possible horizon. They developed a style of reflection that today is commonly called cosmic Christology (Hayes 1996, 6). This does not mean letting go of the story of Jesus. Rather, it means looking out at the entire world as one sees it at a particular time and trying to perceive the possible relations between the story of Jesus and the larger picture of the world. This idea of cosmic Christology was already rooted in New Testament writers such as John and Paul who saw immense significance in the life of Jesus, far more than one human being's life.

"In the beginning was the Word", writes John, and "through him all things came into being, and apart from him nothing came to be" (Jn 1:1-3). Texts such as this one were important to theologians who argued for an intrinsic connection between the mystery of creation and the mystery of incarnation. The life of Jesus provided a divine clue as to the structure and meaning not only of humanity but of the entire universe (Hayes 1996, 7). In his spiritual writings the Franciscan theologian, Bonaventure, emphasized that the life of Jesus Christ is the fullest expression of God among us. In the Incarnation God humbly bends down to embrace us in love. Christ is no mere human, Bonaventure writes. Rather, in his human existence Christ

externalizes the eternal mystery of sonship. The humanity of Christ is not a second word related to an inner [divine] word but is precisely the form the Word of God takes when it is expressed externally.

While Bonaventure viewed the life of Jesus Christ as a manifestation of the humility of God's love, he saw the culmination of this life in the cross where the manifestation of God's love, he claimed, is fully expressed. According to Bonaventure, the mystery of the cross is the mystery of poverty because here God is not possessing but fully communicating the mystery of love in his radical openness to and acceptance of humanity. The poverty of the cross is one with and identical to the mystery of divine love, it is an overflowing of love. If God's love is fully expressed in the cross, however, it is love manifested in and through suffering and death. The cross signifies the inscrutable mystery of God's action, for the failure of the cross is the beginning of new life. We might say that the cross is God's entrance into chaos. In and through the disorder of the cross, God draws out a new order of life. The cross, therefore, is the most fundamental sign of God's power shown in the powerless of suffering and death. As we move from the cross to the resurrection of Jesus, we see that God's power is veiled in mystery. There are no witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. However, as Saint Paul writes, "If Christ is not raised from the dead, then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless" (1 Cor 15:14). We believe, however, that the crucified Christ is raised to new and eternal life to reconcile creation to God and to lead it towards completion in God. What happens in Jesus, therefore, provides a clue as to how God acts in the cosmos. God acts in a mystical way in and through suffering and death to bring about new life. The best we can say in light of the cross is that God acts through the power of love.

The Trinity and Creation

The question, "how does God act in a world of chaos" finds its starting point in the Trinity of perfect, self-communicative love. The Trinity is marked by the order of love which is dynamic and inexhaustible. Love within the Trinity is always going out to an other for the sake of the other. If we ask the question, "why does God create," we would have to say that God creates because God is relational. As scientists tell us today, relationality is the hallmark of the universe in which we live. According to Bonaventure, the relationship between the Father and Son is the basis of all other relationships. The Father, the fountain fullness of love, is always moving towards the Son in the sharing of love and the Son, in turn, is always loving the Father in the Spirit. Creation is caught up in the mystery of the generation of the Word from the Father and is generated out of the fecundity of God's love. Creation's fecundity, therefore, is a limited expression of the infinite and dynamic love between the Father and Son united in the Spirit. In this respect, creation is not a mere external act of God, an object on the fringe of divine power; rather, it is rooted in the self-diffusive goodness of God's inner life and emerges out of the innermost depths of trinitarian life. Since creation emanates out of and is a limited expression of divine goodness, we may think of creation as unfolding "within" the trinitarian relations of divine love (Edwards, 30) rather than being radically separate from God. To say that the universe shares in the mystery of the Trinity means that the universe is caught up in the dynamic process of self-transcendence and self-communication of inter-penetrating relationships and creative love.

The Incarnation expresses the excess love and mercy of God. This doctrine known as the primacy of Christ means that Christ is the first in God's intention to create. Duns Scotus states that the primary purpose of the Incarnation finds its expression in the divine will as it is moved by love for the highest good. God's primary purpose for becoming human is not predicated on our need for salvation, but on the divine desire to love, to be our beginning and our end, to be "God with us" in order that we might dwell in the presence of the Divine (Ingham 1999, 196). In this way Christ is not an intrusion into an otherwise evolutionary universe; rather, the whole process of evolution points to Christ. As Margaret Pirkl states, "If the universe is an external embodiment of the inner Word of God, there is something incarnational throughout the whole creation" (Pirkl 1999, 262). In the Incarnation itself there is a perfect fit between Christ and creation because everything has been made to resemble Christ (Short 1999, 264).

In light of the mystery of God as love and the primacy of Christ, we see not only the integral relationship between creation and Christ but we see the meaning of creation in view of Christ. According to Bonaventure, the deepest truth about the created world is that it has within itself the potential to become, through God's grace, something of what it has already come to be in the mystery of Christ. That is, what has happened between God and the world in Christ points to the future of the cosmos. It is a future

that involves the radical transformation of created reality through the unitive power of God's love (Hayes, 314).

The Humility of God in a World of Chaos

If creation ultimately arises out of the eternal fecundity of the Trinity and is an overflow of that fecundity, it is possible to speak of a divine kenosis whereby God communicates his love to creation. The idea of a divine kenosis in creation is consistent with the idea of God who is self-communicative love. A God who is self-giving by nature is a God who is turned toward the other in the communication of love. John Haught argues for a metaphysics of humility as the basis of divine action in an evolutionary world. A theology of divine humility, according to Haught, makes room for true novelty to spring spontaneously into being--a feature logically suppressed by deterministic materialist interpretations (Haught 1995, 54). The image of divine humility has been resisted theologically up until now because it implies that God has too little power or perhaps no power at all to act in nature (Haught 2000, 47-56). Such a vulnerable and defenseless God, Haught indicates, does not seem capable of provoking an adequate foundation for our hope in redemption, resurrection and new creation. Yet, it is precisely a God who is kenotic, self-giving love who can impart freedom to creation and guide it towards its purpose.

The German theologian Jurgen Moltmann states that the logic of creation is the logic of love. Creation is not a demonstration of God's boundless power, it is the communication of God's love which knows neither premises nor preconditions. God's almighty power is demonstrated only inasmuch as all the operations of that power are determined by his eternal nature itself (Moltmann 1985, 75-6). Similarly, Walter Kasper writes that divine omnipotence is really the divine capacity for love beyond all human comprehension. He writes: "It requires omnipotence to be able to surrender oneself and give oneself away; and it requires omnipotence to be able to take oneself back in the giving and to preserve the independence and freedom of the recipient. Only an almighty love can give itself wholly to the other and be a helpless love" (Kasper, 194-95).

For Bonaventure, the humility of God's love in creation is related to the fact that God is an infinite source of love. God is eternally fecund and self-communicative. As a coincidence of opposites, God's transcendent fecundity is God's immanence as self-giving love. This means that God can fully communicate love to creation (even if we describe this as self-emptying or kenotic love) without risk or vulnerability because God is an infinite mystery of love. As Bonaventure states, "creation is no more than a center of point compared to the immensity of God's goodness" (Cousins 1978, 103). The divine fecundity in creation is a limited expression of the infinite mystery of God who is love. As a coincidence of fecundity and kenosis, God can be completely present to creation as humble love without diminishing God's transcendent fecundity or interfering in nature's own ability to self-organize. The communication of God's love to creation is nothing apart from the relationships between the Father, Son/Word and Spirit. It is the Spirit who expresses God's freedom in love, which by the very nature of being free, can never be manipulative or controlling. Moltmann aptly describes the relationship between love and freedom when he writes: "Creation is not a demonstration of his boundless power; it is the communication of his love, which knows neither premises nor preconditions. . . God therefore does what for him is axiomatic-what is divine. In doing this he is entirely free, and in this freedom he is entirely himself" (Moltmann 1985, 75-6)

Thus, it is the nature of God as love to allow the other, creation, to "be itself." In this respect, the intertwining levels of chaos and complexity throughout nature can follow the internal rhythms of chance and law without compromising God as the ground of creation, since all creation is related to God and participates in divine goodness by the very nature of its existence. God's gift of freedom to creation is God's fidelity in love. The triune God commits himself to create simply because the Father, the fountain source of goodness, is by nature turned toward the Son/Word and with the Son loves in the single breath of the Spirit who permeates the universe as freedom in love.

The notion of an infinitely loving and humble God at work in the universe certainly overturns the image of God as a tyrannical force who dictates the events of the universe. Creation is not the amusement of a lonely deity (O'Meara 1997: 97). Rather, God's fidelity in love allows creation to follow its own internal laws and designs. The notion that the humble love of God comprises the inner force of the created universe underscores the notion of a self-organizing universe, one that can entertain chance, randomness, complexity

and chaos, and give rise to beauty and order that can be intelligibly perceived. This divine self-restraining character is fully compatible with God's love which, rather than being rigidly deterministic, is total self-giving in freedom and creativity for the sake of the good which both gives rise to created being and, essentially, is being. Whatever we say about God as Creator, therefore, must correspond to the humility of God and to the nature of God as self-communicative love.

Creation as Attraction

If the humility of divine love is that which under girds a self-organizing universe then our understanding of God as creator must shift from a transcendent God who works by divine intervention to a God whose power is integrally related to the humility of love. The science of chaos and complexity indicates that organisms or systems are not entirely "pre-packaged," indicating that God allows new order and new life to unfold with spontaneity, freedom and creativity. God does not impose order by control but imparts such freedom to creation that, at first glance, it seems as though creation does not need God at all.

The inherent ability of natural systems to spontaneously form new patterns of order means that the future of any system is marked by novelty and surprise, not by programmed blueprints. (Haught, 160-61) At the same time, however, if creation emanates through the Word of God it bears an express relationship to God precisely through the Word. This congruent relationship means that God is manifested in every aspect of creation because everything in creation in some way expresses the Word of God, that is, everything in creation "speaks" of God. In short, there is a genuine integral relationship between God and creation. God's fecundity is expressed in creation and creation, as a limited expression of the infinite good (the Word), participates in God. Creation, therefore, can play with the laws of chance and chaos without violating the integrity of God since God is the loving source of all that exists.

While the freedom in creation to explore possibilities is undergirded by the power of God's kenotic love, such freedom [being created] can never exceed God's love because it is infinite. Love is attractive and God's infinite love is always more than the finite good. Thus, God as love is always seeking to attract creation as the beloved. God does not simply create through love; rather, God's communication of love in creation is God's desire for love. God's desire for that which God creates means that creation cannot be in a state of equilibrium or at rest but rather is dynamically oriented toward God.

I would suggest that the attractive nature of God's love undergirds open-ended systems in nature such as chaotic systems. Chaos in creation reflects a dynamic trend in creation towards new life. While systems dissipate over time, strange attractors lure systems to new patterns of order whereby new more complex forms of life emerge. If God is an infinite mystery of love and at the same present to creation as humble love then creation is always being drawn by God to God. Chaos in creation, therefore, is fitting to a God who is inexhaustible love. God lures creation into new life by way of attraction because God is always the infinite mystery of love that transcends creation. As wholly other to creation, God is, metaphorically speaking, a strange attractor.

The notion of attraction finds a basis in Bonaventure's writings on creation where he states that God works over the course of time so that he might move, delight and persuade (Emery 1983, 195). God has endowed the physical world with an innate tendency toward spirit and creates in such a way that matter may cry out for spiritual perfection. It is in light of the dynamic nature of the material world that Bonaventure describes creation as attraction. He states that all life-forms except the human soul are co-created with matter and have resided in matter since the first act of creation. In this way, the appearance of a new form does not mean the creation of a new essence but the appearance of a new disposition.

Creation does not mean bringing something new into existence "out of nothing," that is, something that did not previously exist; rather, it is the drawing out of that which already potentially exists in matter by way of education. The notion that matter is dynamic and full of potential forms underscores the idea that myriad forms within the created order are possible. Thus, the appearance of new patterns of order within creation is not so much the act of a creator ex nihilo as they are the transformation from potentiality to actualization.

Christ: The "Design" of the Universe

The power of God's love to attract in creation resonates with Whitehead's notion of persuasion, albeit without forging God into the process of creation itself. In Whitehead's view, God allows autonomy in creation because God is alluring and never manipulates creation out of divine control. However, God is also somewhat powerless with regard to creation since the immanence of God is contingent on the process of creation itself. By collapsing the pole of God's immanence in the unfolding of creation, Whitehead inserts an indeterminacy into the future of God that provides little support for the irreversible direction of evolution. Yet, one cannot help notice an inner dynamic at work in the course of evolution. The universe is marked by chaos and complexity but things do not fall apart. Despite the second law of thermodynamics which states that entropy is increasing in the universe, chaotic systems do not break down completely. Rather, they reorganize into more complex patterns by way of the emergent force or strange attractor within the system. In short, if life in the universe is a constant progression towards more complex unions, what guides the universe in its evolutionary progression? Here I believe Teilhard de Chardin had profound insight by naming the inner force of the universe as the Christ Omega. Teilhard's thought resonates with that of Bonaventure since both writers saw the Christ mystery not only as the reason for the universe but as the very expression [form] of the universe itself.

The universe has a future because it has a beginning which, as Bonaventure indicated, is rooted in the Trinity of love. The whole universe is made to resemble Christ because Christ is first in God's intention to love. While the primacy of Christ could lead one to suggest that Christ is God's intelligent design in the universe, one could lapse into a type of pan-Christism unless the primacy of Christ is understood within the Trinitarian relationships.

What I am suggesting here is that the notion of creation as attraction corresponds to the primacy of Christ. To say that God's infinite love lures creation towards new possibilities means that creation is absolutely dependent on God as the source of all that is. God communicates love to creation and maintains creation in being by attracting love so that creation is attraction of the lover for the beloved. God's love at work in creation is the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit that lovingly guides creation towards the maximization of beauty, order and goodness-in short-towards the maximization of love. Since the Spirit is not separate from the expression of love between the divine persons of Father and Son, it is not surprising that the Spirit at work in creation lures creation towards the fullness of love (or wisdom) which is shown in the Incarnate Word. We might say the maximization of love culminates in the person of Jesus Christ who realizes the potential imbedded in nature for union with God by freely accepting the demands of love.

Christ is the truly human one who is fully open to God as love and in whom God's loving plan for creation is revealed, namely, the unity of all things in love. Teilhard's notion that cosmogenesis becomes Christogenesis is compatible, therefore, with the notion of God as divine attractor, since the whole process of creation, emerging out of the Trinity, points to Christ. In this respect we can say that the cosmos is not just a random fact, but that it exists for something. Using the language of Whitehead, the cosmos has a divine aim. This idea placed in the context of Scotistic theology allows us to suggest that in the Incarnation of the Word, the divine aim for creation has been realized. As Zachary Hayes states, "a cosmos without Christ is a cosmos without a head....it simply does not hold together. But with Christ, all the lines of energy are coordinated and unified...all is finally brought to its destiny in God (Hayes 1996, 13).

By making the claim that Christ is the future of the universe, it is necessary to move from the person Jesus of Nazareth to the widest possible understanding of Christ as the incarnate Word of God who dwells at the center of the universe, crucified and glorified. Christ is the direction of the universe but it is the Spirit of love in creation who continues to lure creation towards the maximization of love in relation to Christ. It is on the level of human person that the Spirit's work of love becomes the conscious unfolding of the mystery of Christ. The universe continues in evolution, therefore, with humanity at the tip, as it becomes ever the more Christic. Christ will come to be the fullness of the universe when the greatest diversity in creation will be marked by the unity of love.

Does Chaos Ever End?

If God creates with a view towards Christ, and if creation itself is the work of love, then it is reasonable to see humanity as the spearhead of the whole evolutionary process. As Teilhard de Chardin noted, there is a

personal center in evolution that is revealed in the human person and ultimately in Christ. It is the Spirit sent by Christ that empowers human persons to be co-creators in the evolutionary universe in which love is the driving force towards personalization. This idea underscores the Incarnation as a critical point in the history of the universe. As the truly human one, Christ is the dynamic center in whom human persons, evolution made conscious, are potential centers of loving union. The congruent relationship between Christ and humanity recapitulates the relationship between God and creation, namely, the human person like the cosmos itself is intended for union with God. It is the work of the Spirit who joins us to Christ and, in Christ, draws us into the embrace of God's infinite love.

While the Christic form of the universe is that which influences the direction of the universe, such direction finds its deepest expression in the cruciform character of creation as it moves towards its God-intended fulfillment. As Bonaventure continuously emphasized, the crucified Christ is the hidden center of creation so that the power of God's love to create will always involve suffering and death. Teilhard claimed that the universe is Christ's cosmic body but until the parousia, this body is marked by a decidedly kenotic quality, a cruciform character (Hale 1973, 28). I would say that just as Christ lives in the wounded and glorified flesh of humanity, so too the whole process of creation will always be marked by suffering and death. While the wounds of creation are taken up into the wounds of Christ they are never erased but transformed. Suffering will always be integral to the beauty of Christ.

If suffering and death on the human level in any way reflect chaos on the physical level then we might say that chaos lies at the heart of the journey into God, since this journey is a dynamic and continuous creation. The fourth century writer, Gregory of Nyssa described the journey to God as one of perpetual progress (epektasis). One can never exhaust or arrive at true union with God, he claimed, because God always remains beyond as infinite, incomprehensible mystery. There is an unending self-transcendence of the human person [and creation] whereby one continuously stretches forth into the mystery of God. If Christ is the new creation, then one enters into the mystery of God by continuously being made new in Christ. This means that the Christ mystery, as the form of the universe, is not a static concept but an ever-changing reality. Every stage of development, as an expression of Christ, is an entirely new reality. Such an idea gives hope to an evolutionary world marked by chaos and complexity. It means that the movement towards creation's God-intended fulfillment will always be one of change and new life. Even on the human level, the journey into God is one of new vision of spiritual reality, which is continuously new as one enters more deeply into the mystery of Christ.

The notion of perpetual progress resonates with chaos theory and reminds us that life means change. Wherever there is being there is becoming, a stretching forth into new levels of life, the new creation becoming itself ever new. For creation, grounded in the love of God will always tend toward the fullness of love, as the lover searches for the beloved. God's love is an infinite, fecund, and personal love that can never be exhausted or assuaged. Christ stands as center of this infinite dynamic of love, the one in whom God is revealed and in whom the wounds of creation are transformed into the radiance of God's glory. The little designs of creation such as mousetraps and mitochondria pale in the mirror of the mystery of Christ. It is Christ alone who leads us into the heart of the mystery of God.

Conclusion

I began by asking, "does the God who acts really act?" and proceeded to show that the question of divine action intersects with the Christ mystery. There can be no real understanding of God's action, especially in a world of chaos, apart from Christ. It is for this reason, in my view, that intelligent design theory is theologically inadequate. It is a modern version of the God-of-gaps argument that has no real theological ground.

Having said this, I suggest that chaos theory provides a new window of opportunity to explore God's action in an uncertain and evolutionary world. The Incarnation is the revelation of God as love, and in the chaos of the cross, God acts in the mystery of love to transform the dead and wounded Jesus into the living Christ. While God's kenotic love is revealed in Christ that love traced back into the fecundity of the Godhead distinguishes the divine persons as an eternal communion of love. When we say "God is love" therefore we are speaking of the Trinity of persons who by sharing love disclose God as "other-centered."

It is out of this eternal relationship of love that creation freely emerges as a finite expression of the infinite love of God. Being created through the Word, creation is an external expression of the Word so that all of creation points to Christ. With Christ as head and center of creation, I have suggested that God creates by way of attraction, ultimately attracting life forms towards more complex unions. The potential within creation for spiritual union is fully realized in Christ. The life of Jesus Christ, therefore, marks a critical point in evolution whereby human persons continue the Christ mystery through the union of love. Since this mystery is oriented toward the transcendent infinite God of love, I conclude that chaos will never end, as creation itself will continue to stretch forth into the infinite mystery of God, a stretching forth which will always be a new creation.

REFERENCES

Bonaventure: *The Soul's Journey Into God, The Tree of Life, The Major Life of St. Francis*. Translated by Ewert Cousins. New York: Paulist, 1982.

Bonaventure, "Sermon II on the Nativity of the Lord." In *What Manner of Man? Sermons on Christ by St. Bonaventure*. Translated by Zachary Hayes. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989.

Delio, Ilia. "The Humility of God in a Scientific World." *New Theology Review* 11.3 (1998): 36 - 50.

Edwards, Denis. *The God of Evolution*. New York: Paulist, 1999.

Emery, Kent. "Reading the World Rightly and Squarely: Bonaventure's Doctrine of the Cardinal Virtues." *Traditio* 39 (1983): 183 - 214.

Gleick, James. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. New York: Penguin Books, 1987.

Haight, John F. "Chaos, Complexity and Theology." *Teilhard Studies* 30 (Summer 1994): 1 - 20.

----- . *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation*. New York: Paulist, 1995.

----- . *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.

----- . *Responses to 101 Questions on God and Evolution*. New York: Paulist, 2001.

Hale, Robert. *Christ and the Universe: Teilhard de Chardin and the Cosmos*. Edited by Michael Meilach. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973.

Hayes, Zachary. *Introduction to Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*. Vol. 3. Works of Saint Bonaventure. Edited by George Marcil. New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1979.

----- . "Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity." *Cord* 46.1 (1996): 3-17.

Jones, David and John Culliney. "Confucian Order At the Edge of Chaos: The Science of Complexity and Ancient Wisdom." *Zygon* 33.3 (1998): 395-404.

Jürgen Moltmann. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985.

Kasper, Walter. *The God of Jesus Christ*. Translated by Matthew O'Connell. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

Louth, Andrew. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

O'Meara, Thomas. *Thomas Aquinas Theologian*. Notre Dame: U. Notre Dame, 1997.

Pancheri, Francis Xavier. *The Universal Primacy of Christ*. Translated by Juniper B. Carol. Front Royal, VA: Christendom Publications, 1984.

Polkinghorne, John. "The Universe is a Mystery." *Science and Spirit* (Nov-Dec, 2001): 23.

Resource Manual for the Study of Franciscan Christology. Edited by Christa Marie Thompson and Kathleen Moffatt. Washington, D. C., 1999.

Wheatley, Margaret J. *Leadership and the New Science: learning about organization from an orderly universe*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 1994.

Wright Robert. *Non Zero: The Logic of Human Destiny*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000.

<http://www.ccsr.ca/cts/>

Book Notes:

There are a number of works noted below that we hope will be of interest to readers of the newsletter. The comments are brief and the purpose is to give an eclectic selection of works for general awareness. At the end is a more extended review of one work. This was done for the fall issue of the newsletter. The hope is to have some lengthier reviews in the next newsletter.

Marguerite Abdul-Masih, *Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Frei: A Conversation on Method and Christology*, WLU Press, 2001. The author argues that theological method influenced by theological reasoning - what one believes about revelation, and God's activity shapes our attitude towards experience. This in turn will shape our theology and so there is a spiral movement between theological reflection and theological experience. Conscious that experience is contextual, the book explores the work of its two primary subjects with an eye to casting some light on the complex question of experience's role in determining theological method.

Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, Westminster/John Knox, 2002. An extended and careful consideration of the "gift" of freedom which, the author argues, requires a strong theological or better, divine foundation if it is not to degenerate in to something destructive as it seems to have done in the context of modernity. At a time when issues of freedom and authority are common fare in media and academia alike Bauckham offers an informed biblical and theological account which challenges some of the current consensus on the topic.

Gregory Baum and Harold Wells, editors, *The Reconciliation of the Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*, WCC Publications and Orbis Books, 1997. A collection of essays that offer illustrations of church based efforts at reconciliation in a variety of social and cultural settings. At its heart the book is a clarion call to the church to be more intentional in its engagement in bridging the gap in settings where social, religious, economic, or ethnic diversity has generated rifts among the people.

Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, Cambridge, 2000. This work aims to show how music can enrich and advance theology, extending our wisdom about God and God's ways with the world. Instead of asking what can theology do for music? it asks what can music do for theology? The author explores a number of a wide range of musical phenomena - rhythm, metre, resolution, repetition, improvisation - and

through them opens up some of the central themes of the Christian faith - creation, salvation, eschatology, time and eternity, eucharist, election and ecclesiology.

Joseph A. Bracken, SJ, *The One in the Many: A Contemporary Reconstruction of the God-World Relationship*, Eerdmans, 2001. This well known Catholic scholar draws on his intimate acquaintance with the work of process philosopher A.N. Whitehead to give shape to his theological account of the God-world relationship. Inspired by British theologian Colin Gunton (The One, the Three and the Many) he takes Gunton's three transcendentals, *perichoresis*, substantiality and relationality and explores them in the context of a Whiteheadian metaphysic.

Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens ten Kate, *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology*, Fordham University Press, 2000. This is a rich collection of essays for those who are interested in the influence of continental philosophy on theology. Theological themes are common fare in the much of current philosophical reflection in both the Anglo-American and continental philosophical communities. This work includes essays with such titles as *Crisis in Our Speaking about God: Derrida and Barth's Epistle to the Romans, or Is Adorno's Philosophy a Negative Theology?*

Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*, Blackwell, 2002. Coakley formerly at Oriel College Oxford, and now at Harvard Divinity School is an increasingly influential voice in feminist theology. She notes in the introduction that there is, among neo-orthodox and post-liberal (male) theologians and new valorization of Christic vulnerability, while feminist theology has emerged to make its rightful protest. It is the "tangled questions of power and submission both human and divine" that is the focus of this collection of essays. Her intent is to show that the apparently forced choice between dependent vulnerability and liberative power is a false one.

Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Churches Witness and Natural Theology*, Brazos Press, 2001. These Gifford lectures critically explore the work of Reinhold Niebuhr and William James. The question of natural theology is answered in a way that sets the community of faith as the locus for discerning the life of the divine as it is manifest in the world. This is vintage Hauerwas who in this work rests much of his case on an earlier Gifford lecturer, Karl Barth.

Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and Christian Life: Practical, Prophetic Ecclesiology*, Cambridge, 2000. This book argues that modern ecclesiology exhibits two unfortunate tendencies: it describes the church in ideal terms, rather than directly addressing the problems of its everyday sinful activity; and it undermines the distinctiveness of the church and its way of life. This book analyzes the impact of pluralism and inclusivism upon ecclesiology and draws on a variety of sources to develop a more flexible and concrete ecclesiology.

Mary T. Malone, *Women & Christianity: Vol. II, From 1000 to the Reformation*, Orbis Books, 2002. This is the second volume of a major trilogy that documents the lives and contributions of Christian women from the beginning to the present. An engaging account of the medieval world where as mystics, doctors of the church and creative preservers of spiritual values women made their contribution to church life. That contribution was commonly marginalized by the male dominated community, but works such as this book serve to recover some of the rich legacy of the women of Christianity.

Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God*, Issues of Systematic Theology, Vol. 8, Peter Lang 2001. Theology need not, and in fact should not restrict us to the realm of abstract concepts. Theology at its best should be life changing and this work draws out the implications of Barth's thinking for understanding of human subjectivity. Barth has little patience with a philosophical search for the good, but calls us instead to recognize the good that has been disclosed to us. As the title suggests this is a work about the Christian life and the shape it can take in the light of God's action in Christ.

Tim Perry, *Radical Difference: a Defence of Hendrix Kraemer's Theology of Religions*, WLU Press 2001. This revised PhD thesis harkens back to the work of the 19th century Kraemer to shed some light on the

current debate about religious pluralism and its implications for Christian claims to uniqueness. Gavin D'Costa in his brief forward tells us that Perry ".has written an important and timely book on the subject".

Dale M. Schlitt, *Theology and the Experience of God*, Peter Lang, 2001. This work is an implicit, critical dialogue with Hegel's philosophy of religion and Anglo-American experientialist traditions. The author takes up the theme of the experience of God in a three-fold reflection, including fundamental, practical, and systematic theological reflections. This is a thoughtful work that sets out an apologia for experience as the ground of our theological understanding and does so with a clear commitment to a Trinitarian framework for that understanding.

John Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today*, Oxford, 2002. Here is a work which seeks to take into account the current cultural landscape and offer some guidance for articulating the faith in a postmodern world. It provides an account of various models for the doing of apologetics including the author's own. Other recent works by the same author *Church: An Insider's Look at How We Do It*. Baker Books, and *Evangelical Landscapes: Facing Critical Issues of the Day*, Baker Academic.

Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God Through Music, Art and Rhetoric*, Paulist Press, 2000. Art and more specifically beauty is getting increasing attention among the theologians, and more among Catholics than Protestants. This is a good primer for thinking through some of the main issues in the relationship between theology and aesthetics. The author considers art as a way to God, and as theological text. One chapter is devoted to paradigms in theology and art while the final chapter addresses theology, aesthetics and the art of preaching. Clearly the sacramental context of Catholic theology informs this work, and it offers insights of value in both academic and pastoral theology.

Pamela Dickey Young, *Re-Creating the Church: Communities of Eros*, Trinity International Press, 2000. The mainline churches in Canada are in decline while religious needs and spiritualities are receiving increased attention. This book addresses this twofold reality with a call to the churches to respond to current religious concerns which include matters of justice, wholeness and the bridging of our differences. The author offers a vision for renewing the church and recovering its communal character.

John D. Roth, ed., *Engaging Anabaptism: Conversations with a Radical Tradition*, Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 2001. Pp. 212.

Within a platform of dialogue with other Christian theological traditions, this volume celebrates some of the most important characteristics of Anabaptist theological discourse and community. The diversity of the contributors is a clear indication that the Anabaptist tradition represents a resourceful conversational partner that has much to offer to other theological positions. Thus, in the form of personal anecdotes and careful theological analysis, each author interacts with the Anabaptist position and provides us with a clear sense of some of the lessons we can learn from them.

Pacifism is one of those features for which the Anabaptists are commonly known. The relevance of this position becomes evident and even inspiring when one is confronted with the human cost incurred by war and violence (McClendon Jr.). One needs to keep in mind, that the Anabaptists do not understand their commitment for peace as alien to the mission of the church. Pacifism is an inseparable tenet of the mission of the church. What we encounter in the Anabaptist pacifist position, then, is a sophisticated ecclesiology that emanates from its Christology (Hauerwas).

Another important feature of Anabaptist theology is its strong commitment to the biblical text. Their reading of the Scripture demonstrates a very sophisticated hermeneutics that goes beyond literalist sentiments and hermeneutic methodologies that do not take seriously the biblical narrative. Contrary to most traditions, Anabaptist hermeneutics is a "people of God" enterprise. Simply put, the members of the community are invited to participate in the reading and interpreting of the text. This is an egalitarian reading of the Scriptures that empowers ordinary believers to access God's biblical message. (Cartwright).

Central to the Anabaptist tradition is the person of Jesus Christ. In the process of integrating the Christian faith in all dimensions of life, it is Jesus Christ who is said to prescribe and regulate the church's ethical

behavior. This "ethical christocentrism" (Marshall), depending heavily on the "sermon on the mount," provides us with a deeper understanding of what it means to actively participate in the work of the kingdom of God (Stassen). It is here that Anabaptists part ways with some branches of Protestantism as they emphasize the primacy of praxis over dogma. They affirm that following Christ can only be expressed through concrete service for the poor and disenfranchized. This indicates that for the Anabaptists Christian discipleship is a pattern of Christian life (Rowland). In some sense, with its emphasis on pacifism and community, Anabaptism represents a healthy antidote to dissatisfying Protestant theological stances and an appealing alternative to current modern individualistic approaches (Murphy). This is to say that Anabaptism represents an opposition to the status quo; it is countercultural in nature. It is a radical tradition that seeks to participate in the formation of a new reality, a new polis (Hays).

The ethical understanding of the Anabaptist community makes it a powerful partner in the development of social ethics among Evangelicals. It opens new horizons for understanding Christian life and mission in this world (Escobar). Anabaptist ethical and theological position represents a healthy response to our post-Christendom context. And it provides useful theological material for entering into a true dialogue with emerging theological voices and with the growing Pentecostal movement (Murray). In other words, Anabaptist theological position is not something that can be easily ignored by other traditions. The challenge is to abandon previous attitudes of "Mennophobia" in order to create the groundwork for proper theological dialogue (Mouw). In fact, even the Anabaptist practice of adult baptism provides the occasion for entering a fruitful conversation with other perspectives, which would be impossible otherwise (Clapp). It is only in dialogue among the various branches of Christianity that a true ecumenical attitude can be fostered and developed (Bhaldraithe). These are some of the issues that make the Anabaptist tradition a worthy candidate for true theological dialogue.

Néstor Medina,

Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology

Periodical Notes..

International Journal of Systematic Theology, Vol. 4 No. 2 July 2002

God and Some Recent Public Theologies, Phil Ziegler - Atlantic School of Theology

Literature and Theology: An International Journal of Religion, Theory and Culture

Vol. 16, No. 2 June 2002

This issue is devoted to Canadian Writers and is edited with an introduction by Jamie S. Scott of York University. The articles include;

The Gospel According to Grace: Gnostic Heresy as Narrative Strategy in Margaret Atwood's 'Alias Grace' Ryan Miller, Simon Fraser University

John Terpstra and the Sacramental in Urban Geography, Deborah Bowen, Redeemer University College

Religion and (Mimetic) Violence in Native Canadian Literature, Ken Derry, Centre for Religious Studies, University of Toronto

Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology, Vol. xi Spring 2002, #2

Redemptive Hospitality in Irenaeus: A Model for Ecumenicity in a Violent World. Hans Boersma - Trinity Western University.

Toronto Journal of Theology Volume 17 No. 1 Summer 2001

"to yield some place to the Work of God" Essays in honour of David Demson

This volume edited by Phil Ziegler, includes articles by Emil Fackenheim, Nicholas Healy, George Schnier, Eberhard Jungel, John Webster, Martin Rumscheidt, Harold Wells and Douglas Harink.

Toronto Journal of Theology Volume 18 No. 1 Summer 2002

Nowhere to lay their heads: The Sojourning Character of Christian Doctrine and the Church

Essays in honour of Iain G. Nicol

This volume edited by Allen G. Jorgenson and Pamela McCarroll-Butler includes articles by Eberhard Jungel, Catherine Kelsey, John McIntyre, George M. Newlands, David Demson, James Farris, George Schnier, and Simao Chamango

Membership News and Information Spring/Fall 2002

Information for CTS Newsletter/Bulletin d'Information de la Communiqué SCT

Name/Nom: _____ **e-mail address** _____

Recent Publications/Publications recentes:

Current Research /Papers/Recherches Poursuivies/Communications a des Congress, etc.

New Appointments/Nouvelles Positions:

Completion of Graduate Work/dissertations/Achevement des Etudes Superieures:

In addition to the information above we would be glad to receive news about recent or upcoming conferences and other events, local or international, which would be of interest to our membership. Please feel free to send along any information items which you think would be of interest.

Vous etes cordialement invite a vous exprimer en francais. Les reseignements qui nous sont soumis en francais seront publiees en francais.

Please return this form by March 10, 2003 to:

**Veillez remettre avant 10 mars a: John Franklin
133 Southvale Dr.
Toronto, M4G 1G6**

franklin@ultratech.net