

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

In the Midst: Understanding the emergence of address in traditionary acts

by

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A DISSERTATION

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

GRADUATE DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

OCTOBER, 1999

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0-612-49503-5

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Abstract

On one day, ashes are imposed on our foreheads. On another, sombre stories of wandering and temptation are told. On another, palm branches are strewn in the nave. On another the bishop removes his vestments and washes our feet. On another a solitary cross is brought before a silent church. During these ancient traditionary acts of Lent, in the midst of the ancient texts, the gathered community, and this interpreter, something happens. In a peculiar way, we, the gathered people, are spoken to. We find ourselves addressed.

In one way, it is what we set out to do every year. It is tradition. But in another— at least in the Protestant church to which I belong— we set out to hermeneutically destroy what these traditionary acts present. More broadly, schooling in general with deep and unacknowledged roots in this hermeneutic, has in its own context, followed suit.

This paper seeks to push away from this dominant hermeneutic. It seeks to understand the address that is still emerging in the midst of the traditionary acts of Lent. It seeks an understanding of the ways of address for those who yet teach in the hope that something will “speak” to the hearer. And for those who gather round them.

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Chapter 1. Ash Wednesday - genealogy: In the midst of finitude

1. Traditional act

It happens on a Wednesday. We gather in our familiar place. An oaken altar sits at the front. To the left is the pulpit. To the right the lectern. The people are seated in the pews facing the altar. As usual, I am standing behind the altar, robed in a flax alb. A purple stole hangs over my shoulders— embroidered in the stole is a gold shepherd's staff. The same purple appears on the paraments hanging from the altar and pulpit.

It is about to happen. The order of service in the hands of all the people reads, "Those who wish, are invited to come and kneel at the altar rail to receive the imposition of ashes." They come. Rows of them. Doctors, teachers, lawyers, nurses, farmers, seniors, children, men, women. They come. I go to each with a small bowl of ashes. With my thumb I mark them with the ashes, on the forehead of each one, I mark them. At the same time, I say quietly and gently, "Remember that thou art dust; and to dust thou shalt return." My thumb traces with ashes on each forehead the sign of a cross. Finally I kneel as well, and the young acolyte marks my forehead. "Remember that thou art dust; and to dust thou shalt return." All the while the congregation curiously marked with rather imperfect ashen crosses, sings:

Breathe on me Breath of God

Fill me with life anew

That I may love all that you love

And do what you would do (Hatch, 1978).

2. Introduction

Ash Wednesday introduces the season of Lent for Christian communities, and also introduces this understanding of the “emergence of address” in the traditionary acts of Lent. The ashes are one of a series of liturgical acts that will be unfolded in order of appearance in this paper.

The interest I have in these acts in this particular exploration is not in their liturgical history, nor in the way the events take shape in the various Christian communities. The interest I have in these traditionary acts is rather the way in which they seem to be an occasion of address for the people— the way in which they appear to bring a text to “speak” to a people. I am interested in the hermeneutic ways of these traditionary acts.

I am particularly interested in the hermeneutic of these acts as they present a possibility of understanding that is in many ways at odds with what is the still dominant view in educational institutions— church and school. The ways of the traditionary acts push against the wall of the dominant hermeneutic of education.

3. The wall

The wall appears in most of the church’s educational “curriculum.” The objective, for example, is “that the student may be able to describe Paul’s concept of justification.” A certain text is read by the teacher or by the class; its meaning is presented by the teacher. Or, alternately, the children are set to the task of finding the meaning that the teacher or the workbook describes— only so they will learn the meaning more clearly through their own effort. The sense of the curriculum is that there is a plain meaning in the text that is known, presented and recited.

In the Protestant version of the church with which I am most familiar, this wall is most evident in the preparation and delivery of the sermon— the way of exegesis and homiletics. In exegesis— from the Greek, *ex*, out, and *hegeomai*, to lead (O.E.D.)— the

preacher is faced literally with the task of “leading out the meaning.” Once the meaning has been lead out, is known, the preacher’s task is to take the meaning and make it more interesting to the people, in part through the application of rhetorical devices, and in part through application to the life situation of the particular people to whom she speaks— the task of homiletics.

This hermeneutic appears as the dominant hermeneutic in public education as well. The preacher studies the Bible— exegetical commentary in hand— to find out what it “means,” then delivers the meaning to the congregation. The teacher studies *Hamlet* — analytical textbook in hand— to find out what it “means” then delivers the meaning over to the students. The learner’s task is to take note of the meaning of the Bible, the Sacraments, *Hamlet*, World War II, Capitalism and learn it. The congregation “recites” the meaning back to the preacher in the creed. The learner “recites” the meaning back to the teacher in the examination. If exegetics, homiletics, and recitation appear as the dominant hermeneutic for religious education; study, delivery, and recitation appear as a dominant hermeneutic for secular education as well.

Yet something is deeply lacking in the dominant hermeneutic. Briefly put, the dominant hermeneutic does not do justice to the text, the teacher/preacher, or the student.

In one way the dominant hermeneutic does not do justice to the *texts* that are in our midst. The preacher is up against a Bible that will not give over a single, discoverable, stable, universal meaning to be delivered— the varieties of interpretations alone attest to that. The teacher is, for instance, up against a *Hamlet*, up against a story of World War II, that will not give just one stable meaning— those ongoing studies continue to attest to that. In another way the dominant model does not do justice to the *preachers and teachers* in our midst. This text of the Good Shepherd leading “through the valley of the shadow of death” must be spoken by me differently, on that week after the death of my father. This text telling of World War II must be spoken differently by the teacher whose relatives were lost in the

Holocaust. In still another way, the dominant hermeneutic does not do justice *to the congregation gathered, to the students in the desks*. In the midst of their lives, in the midst of their success and failure and despair and hope, these texts need to be told differently, must be re-cited by these particular students also differently.

The question of this paper pushes away from the taken-for-granted answer that has been passed forward in the dominant hermeneutic of analyzing texts, explaining texts, and passing on the stable meaning to the congregation, to the gathering of students.

4. The push

The traditionary acts of Lent present a quite different way— first with text. The most obvious text during the imposition of ashes, is the one repeated for each one at the imposition of the ashes, “Remember that thou art dust; and to dust thou shalt return.” It is lifted from the Hebrew Bible. The text is part of the story of creation taking place in the Garden of Eden. The woman is tricked by the serpent into thinking that eating from the forbidden “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” will make them like God. She talks to the man, and they both eat from the forbidden tree. The text comes after their being “found out” and tells of God’s curse on the man for his part in the rebellion.

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; *you are dust, and to dust you shall return* (Genesis 3:19).

The words tell of a curse: of sin and sweat and death.

Yet at the same time, the reference to the dust, recalls not only the dust of death, it also recalls the dust of creation.

Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:4-8).

The Biblical text relates the story of creation in which the Lord God stoops to the earth, and takes the *adam-ah* (Hebrew, earth) and breathing wind into the dust, creates *adam* (Hebrew,

human); takes the humus and breathing spirit into the humus, creates human. One of the Psalmists takes up the dust of the creation of humankind as bearing also the ongoing possibility of the renewal of humanity, and of the humus itself.

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground (Psalm 104:29-30).

The breath/Spirit of God that brought life to the dust, may also again bring life to those who are dismayed. The hymn behind the imposition of ashes, specifically raises this sense of the dust:

Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew. . .

The ashes also are imposed in the shape of a cross, bringing into play on Ash Wednesday the cross of Jesus, and the text of the New Testament. The cross shape is a reminder of another day in the gathering, the day of baptism in which it is water that is traced on the forehead with these words:

You are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and marked with the cross of Christ forever (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, 1978, p. 124).

The “text” this Ash Wednesday appears as a number of interrelated texts. Texts of the dust and ashes of sorrow and fallenness. Texts also of the dust and breath and hope of creation. Texts of the cross of Jesus and the baptismal blessing. They are texts that are at once of sorrow and hope. Rather than interpreting *a* text, on Ash Wednesday *many* inter-related texts, are brought into the midst of the people and the pastor. The text is not explained among them. It is presented. Done. Enacted. In the midst of us all.

Doctors, teachers, lawyers, nurses, farmers, seniors, children, men, women.

The texts presented will be taken up differently by the people gathered in the midst. One is there that is going through the days of divorce. He will “hear” the text in one way. One is there that is holding a granddaughter in her arms. She will take up the text in

another. One is there who just learned of the result of her biopsy. She will take it up in yet another way.

The preacher in the midst of this collection of text, in the midst of this collection of people, is in a mess. He is tempted (in Lent) to make things simpler. To tell the people exactly what text applies to this Ash Wednesday. To tell the people exactly what that particular text means— for all people and for all times. He is tempted in part because he has been trained for many years in exegesis and homiletics. But the traditionary act calls for him to mark the cross on all who will come forward, with the words given, in the midst of the inter-related texts that touch on those words and on those ashes.

The traditionary acts push against the wall. In Lent in particular, the traditionary acts: the ashes, the readings, the procession with palms, the footwashing, the stripping of the altar, the veneration of the cross; push against the preacher's training in exegesis/homiletics. These acts are done in the midst of the people, they are done in an odd way in the midst of text, and they are done in the midst also of the interpreter himself. And the acts are profound in a way not easily described.

Before proceeding— if not to explain— at least to “lay out” an understanding of the traditionary acts, it is first necessary to deal with a place to stand. It is necessary on the one hand, to deal with the wall, to set this urge to close, to explain, to settle once and for all “in its place.” At the same time, it is necessary to stake out a “place” in the world for this particular interpreter's work, in the midst of hermeneutics.

5. A genealogy of interpreters

a. Introduction

When Adam was a hundred and thirty years old he fathered a son, in his likeness, after his image, and he called him Seth. Adam lived for eight hundred years after the birth of Seth and he fathered sons and daughters. In all, Adam lived for nine

hundred and thirty years; then he died. When Seth was a hundred and five years old, he fathered Enosh. After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived for eight hundred and seven years, and he fathered sons and daughters. In all Seth lived for nine hundred and twelve years; then he died. When Enosh was ninety years old he fathered Kenan. After the birth of Kenan. . . (Genesis 5:3-9)

Most of the accounts of the generation of hermeneutics sound somewhat like a genealogy but contain also a distinct shift. The accounts of the parentage of hermeneutics usually begin with Origen of Alexandria, and follow a line of the interpreters to some present day hermeneutics. Typically it is a sort of evolutionary process that is presented, with one generation advancing further than the one before it, toward fulfillment in the present day. Dilthey (1976), for one, presents the “development of hermeneutics” as a series of steps forward from classical and Christian antiquity through the Renaissance to his own hermeneutics. A portrayal of “steps” has a sense of progressive development that seems to easily forget how hidden that progression may be in the midst of history, or even that in the writing, the supposed end point will become the middle of a later generation’s account.

A lineage of hermeneutics is here presented as a genealogy. A genealogy of hermeneutics, of course, would also present a present way of interpretation developing from the past. It is ending up somewhere. A genealogy would be no more certain or factual in its rendering of the past than a modern progress story. A genealogy would also choose who is significant, partly by what seems to survive. It would also write *out* of the story, some of the “other sons and daughters.” A genealogy also allows for a certain selection of significant ancestors by the genealogist: mother’s side, father’s side, etc.. Yet on the other hand, the genealogist is “stuck” with dealing with given relatives.

But a genealogy, unlike the factual account, at least *knows* that it is choosing one line and excluding another. A genealogy *knows* that the significance of certain patriarchs has a

way of changing over time, or even a way of being forgotten. A genealogy knows itself to be an incomplete account. The next child will change it. A genealogy knows itself to be in the midst of the living and the dead. A genealogy knows it has ashes on its forehead.

Like the ashes, a genealogy is both sombre and hopeful. On the one hand the genealogy remembers the hard words of the fathers, and seeks release from that fallenness. On the other, in the genealogy there may well be a renewing word on the lips of an old ancestor that one may claim. There may well be distant kin whose sense of interpretation also adds a refreshing, renewing voice to the clamor of interpreters.

What follows is a genealogy of the interpreters, of *hermeneus*.

b. Anonymous oral interpreters (From “of old”)

This particular genealogy begins with those whose names are not knowable. The oldest *hermeneus* are buried deep in the un-known past, as *adam* in *adamah*. They are the elders who told of ancient lore to the young. The singers who wove the stories in the midst of the people. This particular genealogy begins also with those whose time is not knowable. The story-tellers spoke their stories into the air for a time and for a place, though to us the time is unknown and the place is unknown.

But if the patriarchs and matriarchs of oral story are not name-able, or date-able, they can still be heard in the children who continue to rely on oral stories. One of these “children,” appeared in 1993 on Peter Gzowski’s CBC radio show *Morningside*. Chief Jake Thomas, chief of the Kayuga nation in Eastern Canada had recited the Iroquois Great Law on the Six Nations Reserve. The oral speech, the recitation, lasted nine days.

The interview — interestingly “on air” — flowed around the recitation of the Great Law.

Gzowski: Is the Great Law written down anywhere?

Thomas: No, you don't write anything down. You don't write down your traditions— because once you write it down it's structured one way now— and that is the way people know it. If you have people that are knowledgeable, it can be put a different way. Because if you write it down, you can never change it. It is always just one way. But if you have knowledgeable people in oral tradition, everybody confirms what they say. They might all say it a little different. But it doesn't mean that this guy knows any better. It just means that the other is a better speaker. He can put things in better ways what he means or what it means. This is why you can have a Great Law, and some ways that you can brighten a people (Thomas, 1993).

The oral story-teller speaks of the dangers in written text. "You don't write down your traditions." Oral story turned into text, is "structured one way now." If a story in memory can be told differently at each telling, if the word that the young do not understand can be changed in the telling, a story in text is stuck. Once the oral traditions are written down, "you can never change it."

The oral tradition needed to be capable of being told in more than one way. The children would need to tell the tradition so that it mattered to them, so that it met their world, so that it was *their* tradition. Yet it was not to be changed to the point that the ancient tradition was not being carried forward. The tradition, said Chief Thomas, needed to be told, even if took nine days. It was a way to "brighten a people."

Writers about oral story tellers— from outside the children of oral tellers of story— make similar observations. Ong (1981) writes about the movement of oral tradition in the singing of traditional tales.

The singer is not conveying "information" in our ordinary sense of a "pipeline transfer" of data from singer to listener. Basically the singer is remembering in a curiously public way— remembering not a memorized text, for there is no such thing— nor any verbatim succession of words, but the themes and formulae that he

has heard other singers sing. He remembers these always differently, as rhapsodized or stitched together in his own way on this particular occasion for this particular audience. . . . The song is the interaction between him, his audience, and his memories of songs sung (p. 17-18).

Again this is not to say that the songs, the oral stories are in such a state of flux as to be unrecognizable from one generation to the next. The singers and tale tellers do not compose original works of imagination.

Thought in oral cultures develops, but it develops with glacial slowness, for individuals cannot move far from the tradition in which oral culture stores its knowledge without losing both the auditors and themselves (p. 20).

The oral story tellers in many ways are strange and remote sounding against the dominant hermeneutic. That the presence of the “oral text” in the midst of the people changes the “oral text” presents a problem for those who would say what a text “means” once and for all. The oral story teller appears as a “strange bird” in the educational institutions of exegesis, presentation, and repetition.

The sermon — from the Latin *sermonis* — speech (O.E.D.), seems to hold a hope of such speaking the words of text in the midst of a people. But, at least in its current place in the dominant hermeneutic, the sermon as “explanation” presents little hope.

Yet a sort of recovery of the oral habit of speaking differently for the sake of the children, yet speaking old words that are passed on from the “old” seems to also be renewed in recent hermeneutic work in education.

Hermeneutics is this standing between, at the boundary between the old and the new, the young and the old, *puer* and *senex*. When we tell tales, these tales must not be simply repeated identically. These tales must be *re-membered* by children, this one and this (Jardine, 1992, p. 121).

In the context of one who stands in the midst of a people in a flax alb, speaking words, yet bound to old texts, the hermeneutic ways of the oral story tellers will be called forth during the unfolding of the events of the Lenten observances.

c . Philo, Origen, Augustine, Gregory the Great (Antiquity)

The early centuries of the Christian era are a more familiar place to begin a lineage of hermeneutics. It is, in any case, a time when actual names can be given to the “fathers.”

In Alexandria, the collection of the Greek classics presented a hermeneutic crisis. How could the difficult Greek texts be reconciled with the meaningful religious texts already established in Alexandria? And vice versa, how could the difficult religious texts be reconciled with the meaningful Greek works now erupting in Alexandria?

What arises in Alexandria, first in the work of Philo (c. 20 BC-AD 50) and later in the work of Origen (A.D. 185-254) is the introduction of the far reaching use of allegory. Philo allegorizes the Hebrew Torah; Origen allegorizes the Christian Bible. Dilthey in his account of hermeneutics, argues that allegorical interpretation is employed, to “eliminate the conflict between religious texts and an enlightened world view”— a skill which Dilthey labels “pernicious” (1976, p. 177). For Dilthey, allegory avoids hearing what the text has to say by covering it with an allegorical meaning. Dilthey’s reading of Philo and Origen is hardly generous. While allegorical reading may appear to be a resort to a sort of hermeneutic ear-plugging, allegory may also be seen as recognition of depth brought by another reading. Philo and Origen are kin to those who would allow the interpretation of the text to be a not-simple matter, and will be called forward later in this work.

St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) in *De Doctrina Christiana*, On Christian Doctrine (1997), presents another of the earliest known works of hermeneutic method. His work is divided into two parts:

There are two things on which all interpretation of Scripture depends: the mode of ascertaining the proper meaning, and the mode of making known the meaning when it is ascertained. We shall treat first of the mode of ascertaining, next of the mode of making known the meaning (I:1).

The work seeks to first ascertain the “proper meaning” through the application of various rules, then to ascertain, “the mode of making known” the meaning. The “wall” is beginning already to appear. Augustine appears as kin to the dominant hermeneutic: exegesis/homiletics, know the meaning/deliver it. Augustine, however, also has left other writing— notably the *Confessions*— quite unlike *On Christian Doctrine*.

Overlooked in accounts of hermeneutics is Gregory the Great, (540-604) the last pope before the Middle ages. Gregory did not write about interpretation, but his sense of interpretation is evident in the writings. The context of Gregory’s writings is most significant for hermeneutics. The writings are his oral addresses in the monastic *collatio*, the daily conference in which the abbot preached and the monks were able to ask questions from their reading. It is in the context of the presence of the congregation, Gregory says, that the understanding of the text happens also for the speaker:

I know that very often I understand many things in the sacred writings when I am with my brethren, which, when alone, I could not understand. . . . Hence God grants that understanding increases and pride decreases, while I learn, on your behalf, that which I teach you. For, really, very often I hear what I am saying for the first time, just as you do (*Homilies in Ezekiel*, II:ii, cited in Dudden, 1967).

In contrast to Augustine’s two step process, Gregory says that the text is finally only understood in the midst of the “brethren.” This is not simply a homiletical issue of shaping the material to the audience. Gregory says that as the speaker stands in the midst of the people, *the text itself* moves to where the people are. The texts resemble the wheels in the vision of Ezekiel:

When those went these went, and when those stood these stood, and when those were lifted up from the earth the wheels were also lifted up together and followed them: for the spirit of life was in the wheels (Ezek 1:21): just so with *lectio divina*; it corresponds with the state of the student; it goes, stands, is lifted up with him, like the wheels, according as he is striving after the active life, after stability and constancy of spirit, or after the flights of contemplation (*Homilies in Ezechiel*, II.ii, cited in Dudden, 1967).

The text moves to speak to the people gathered, to speak to their longings for activity, for stability, for constancy, or for the “flights of contemplation.” The interpreter’s task in the midst of the “brethren” is to follow the movement of the text, to follow it as one follows a “river” (*Commentary on Job*, 1997, Prol: 2).

Gregory’s sense of interpretation, of the moving word that is only understood in the midst of the people, and the interpretive task of “following” that word, will again be called forward in the understanding of traditionary acts.

d. The Scholars (The Middle Ages)

Curiously, the Middle Ages are passed over by nearly all the accounts of the “development” of hermeneutics. Yet the many generations from Augustine to Luther still set to the work of interpreting text, notably of the Scripture.

The emergence of the *gloss* in the middle ages is a significant generation of Biblical interpretation. In the gloss, the actual manuscripts of Scripture are covered with anonymous interlinear and marginal interpretations. The anonymous notes are traceable to the word of the Church Fathers on the text, though the text itself does not acknowledge them. The annotated text is called the “*glosa*” gloss, literally, “tongue.” In an apparent kinship with the oral story tellers, the old texts are brought back to “voice.” The old traditions are again brought into the new generation through the interlinear and marginal “voice.” But the

voices around and within the text, are also *written* notes. In effect, the written “tongue” makes the text even more written than before, even more distant from the living voice.

The work of the Scholars turned later to inserting questions into the text, the *quaestio*. The *quaestio* inserted in the text, later began to appear as separate systematic collections of questions and answers. The certainty of the answers of scholasticism reaches its pinnacle in the *Summa* (1997) of Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274). Thomas’ approach to interpretation of text is methodical and definite. Each part of the *Summa* begins with a Question being put; followed by one or more “Objections,” sometimes on both sides of the argument; followed by the “I answer” of Aquinas; followed by “Replies” to each of the Objections. The methodical movement brings with it a distinct sense of closure. A question is put forward, objections are raised, the “truth is presented,” objections are explained.

Aquinas and the scholars appear as the dogmatists. They appear as something else than the “wall” of the dominant hermeneutic. Aquinas and the scholars appear as the voice of the certainty of authority, not of the certainty that is arrived at by methodical exegesis. They appear not as the “wall” of this work, but as another wall — the wall against which the reformers pushed.

e. Luther and Flacius (The Reformation)

The accounts of hermeneutics always include, indeed often begin with the Protestant Reformers. By the time of the closing of the Middle Ages, both classical and Biblical texts are absorbed in the dogmatic tradition of the Church. The reformation, spear-headed by Martin Luther (1483-1546) will seek to un-cover the meaning of the texts, to extricate it from Church control. *Sola scriptura*, Word alone, is the watchword of the Reformation. The Word needs no authoritative interpreters to oversee it. *Sui ipsius interpret*. Scripture interprets itself.

But in order for Scripture to stand by itself, without the authoritative church tradition guiding interpretation, a way of interpretation will need to be forged. Interpreters will be called on to reveal an “original” meaning, before the clutter of church tradition. Interpreters will be called on to hold to the *sensus literalis*, to the univocal plain meaning. The Scriptures will need to be as unquestionable as the decrees of the Roman church.

The reformers, having wrestled the authority to interpret the text from the Church authorities, had in one way “freed” the text to “speak” new to this people in this time (reminiscent of the oral story tellers). But in another way, having wrestled the text free, the reformers were left with a hermeneutic problem. Who is to say what it means? Is there a way to still hear something certain?

Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575) took on the task in the *Clavis scripturae sacrae*. Flacius offers a *clavis*, a *key* to decipher obscure passages of Scripture. Flacius sets out to prove the possibility of the valid interpretation of the Bible through a series of grammatical rules for interpretation— very similar to those of Augustine.

Sola scriptura, quickly became *sola scriptura*-and-also-the-proper-hermeneutic-method. The method appears initially as a sense of purifying the text of its traditional “baggage”— the interlinear and marginal clutter— that the word could be heard *plainly*. The reformers also moved to silence allegorical senses, as well as Gregory’s sense of the text speaking “differently” among the people. The reformers needed the text to say one thing, one certain stable thing, in order for *sola scriptura* to stand against the Catholic interpretation by authority.

The Protestant reformers in a program of purifying the text from tradition, appear as the chief builders of the wall against which this paper pushes. And oddly, they appear then, as kin of the dominant hermeneutic operative in *public* schooling.

f. Dannhauer, (Descartes), Chladenius (The Enlightenment)

Dannhauer (1603-1666) wrote *The Idea of the Good Interpreter* in 1630 projecting a *universal hermeneutica generalis*. Dannhauer was searching for a new scientific methodology freed from scholasticism. He proposed that there is only one universal hermeneutics, though its objects are of several kinds: law, medicine, theology (cited in Grondin, 1994, p. 48).

For Dannhauer statements are always the utterance of an intended meaning. The task of the *Good interpreter* was to retrace the intention of the author who wrote the utterance, without concern for whether the intended meaning is actually true. Prior to determining truth we need a hermeneutics whose task is to establish “hermeneutic truth”—that is to clarify what an author wanted to say (cited in Grondin, 1994, p.49). Dannhauer produced hermeneutical rules for interpretation based on logic. Dannhauer sets out to secure knowledge, to secure a certain validity in text, the secure sense of hermeneutic truth, that is, the intention of the author.

If the Reformers sought to get above the cloud of traditional dust that surrounded the text, in the Enlightenment the interpreters went still further. Now the interpreters sat high above the text gazing back at what the original author meant, at the “hermeneutic truth.” In the originality of the author’s intent the text would speak a clear plain word.

Dannhauer’s attempt to produce a *hermeneutica generalis* is born in 1630. Rene Descartes (1596-1650) wrote his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (1961) around 1628 (though the work was not published in his lifetime).

Rule 1: The purpose of our studies should be the direction of the mind toward the production of firm and true judgments concerning all things. . . (p. 3).

Rule 2: We should be concerned only with those objects regarding which our minds seem capable of obtaining certain and indubitable knowledge (p. 5).

Rule 3: Concerning the subjects proposed for investigation, we should seek to determine not what others have thought, nor what we ourselves conjecture, but what we can clearly and evidently intuit, or deduce with certainty; for in no other way can knowledge be obtained (p. 8).

Rule 4: Method is necessary in discovering the truths of nature (p. 12).

Though Descartes does not exactly belong in the genealogy of the interpreters, the philosophy of Descartes will so profoundly effect generations of interpreters— that he at least must be named in their midst.

Johann Martin Chladenius (1710-1759) wrote the *“Introduction to the correct interpretation of reasonable speeches and writing”* in 1742. The title tells that Chladenius was not solely interested in Scripture interpretation, but in “reasonable speeches and writing.” Chladenius opened up a new area of hermeneutics beyond Dannhauer’s logical rules. Chladenius explains that knowledge is produced in two ways. The first is the increase of knowledge through discoveries. The second is through the study of “useful or lovely things that others before us have thought of,” and the interpretation of those things (cited in Grondin, 1994, p. 50). Rules about the first form of knowledge are rules that teach us how to think correctly— a “theory of reason.” The second area, also has rules for interpreting correctly, a general theory of interpretation. Chladenius emphasizes a theory of “viewpoint.”

The circumstances of our mind, body, and whole person that make or cause us to imagine something in this way rather than that, are what we call viewpoint (cited in Grondin, 1994, p. 55).

Viewpoint, for Chladenius, is simply a hurdle that teaching needs to overcome. Chladenius’ work is a “pedagogical” hermeneutics. The teacher provides background knowledge to the student until the author’s thoughts are understood correctly.

Interpretation is nothing but adducing the concepts necessary to the complete understanding of a passage (cited in Grondin 1994, p 54).

Complete understanding of a passage is attainable, if the method is carried out. The method involves a number of moves. First, with Flacius, the interpreter must distance himself from the community, the tradition. Second, with Descartes, the interpreter must purify himself of "viewpoint," the interpreter must distance himself from himself, his own sense of the world. Finally, with Descartes, Dannhauer, and Chladenius the interpreter, isolated from his community and himself, must distance himself from the text, must take a place high above the text to peer back in order to see its original event or the original "intent" of the author.

The wall is now in place. The hermeneutic dominating educational institutions, church and school has appeared. It appears as a Protestant-Cartesian hermeneutic still enclosing the interpretation of text in church and school.

g. Schleiermacher, Dilthey (Nineteenth Century)

Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and his romanticist hermeneutics appears as a dynamic shift away from the hermeneutics of the Enlightenment. Schleiermacher's sense of *understanding* appears as a break with the unproblematical, rational access to text and world that Enlightenment hermeneutics presupposed. Schleiermacher would call hermeneutics much more cautiously, "the art of avoiding misunderstanding" (cited in Gadamer, 1989, p. 185).

Schleiermacher follows Kant's definition of the aesthetic, "as properly only the momentaneous act of the subject" (cited in Gadamer, 1989, p. 187). The task of hermeneutics is then to recreate the expression of the subject whether the expression is an act of speech or text. Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, then, is the act of reconstruction. The reconstruction happens in two areas, the grammatical and the psychological. Both are

involved broadly in understanding, both are involved with Schleiermacher's "hermeneutic circle" — the interplay of whole and part.

In grammatical interpretation the single word belongs in the total context of one sentence, the single text belongs in the total context of a writer's work, and the writer's work in the whole of literature. Full understanding of the part only takes place with a full exploration of the whole. Full understanding of the whole only takes place with full exploration of the part.

Psychological understanding involves an exploration of the total world of the author out of which the expression/text/work erupts. The task of the psychological is to reconstruct the author's mind, in order to understand the author's expression. Again the author's parts, his particular works are only understandable with a full exploration of the author's mind. The mind of the author is only understood with a full exploration of the author's parts, his individual works.

For Schleiermacher, the task of understanding may allow the interpreter to be aware of influences in the author's life of which the author may not be aware. As a result, the interpreter may be in a better position to understand a work than the author.

The task is to understand the discourse just as well and even better than its creator. Since we have no unmediated knowledge of that which is within him, we must first seek to become conscious of much which he could have remained unconscious of (*The Hermeneutics: Outline of the 1819 Lectures*, 1978, p. 152).

Schleiermacher, like the enlightenment interpreters, still sits above the text gazing behind it to know, not simply the author's intent, but to commune with the author's soul. Having gained a certain understanding from a distance, the interpreter then may be caught up in original event of the text. Yet this romanticist sense of unmediated meaning through a sort of identification with a past time and place is far removed from the Enlightenment's knowing certainly what a text once meant. Unlike complete explanation, for Schleiermacher,

understanding is never “finished.” “Understanding” text in Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics regains a sense of ongoing-ness previously taken for granted by Philo, Origen, and Gregory. It also gains, albeit in the midst of the romantic leap, a sense of address, of being deeply “spoken to.” A related sort of address appears to emerge in the midst of the traditionary acts.

Dilthey (1833-1911) takes up Schleiermacher’s romantic hermeneutics and expands it into an historical method. Dilthey inquires into a “solid foundation” for the human sciences. Unlike Schleiermacher, Dilthey does not take communion with the author as the goal of interpretation. Rather, understanding meant comprehending what the author has expressed in his cultural achievement, be it text, dance, work of art, etc.

Understanding only becomes interpretation which achieves validity when confronted with linguistic records (1976, p. 184).

Dilthey made use of the hermeneutic circle with reference to the study of these texts. By studying increasingly larger historical units a fuller understanding would be produced. History, like grammar, is known through the part and the whole.

Life and history have a meaning just like the letters of a word (cited in Gadamer, 1989, p. 231).

While Dilthey is concerned to develop a “historical sense” in order to provide objectivity to human sciences, still the hermeneutic circle ensures that this understanding is never complete.

All understanding always remains relative and can never be completed. *The individual is not definable* (1976, p. 183).

Dilthey like Schleiermacher, continues to perch above the text of history, to gaze back in order not to rationally explain, but in order to gain a better understanding. Unlike the Enlightenment hermeneutic, Dilthey’s hermeneutic insists on a methodical hermeneutic

circle, insists on the difficult and unending process of understanding for the human sciences, over against the methodical explanation of the enlightenment.

Too briefly, it might be said that Dilthey's work depends on the relativizing of the absolute knowledge claimed by natural science and the enlightenment. But while rejecting the closure that the application of the methodology of natural science was bringing to the human sciences, Dilthey is still seeking to build for hermeneutics a "solid foundation," that is, to build a Cartesian foundation. The end result was a sea of relativity in which nothing seemed knowable. Another, truly post-Cartesian turn would need to be taken.

h. Heidegger (1889-1976)

A radical, (and at times, barely understandable) shift takes place in Martin Heidegger's "ontological turn." If until Schleiermacher hermeneutics was only about rules for interpretation, (as Dilthey had said), hermeneutics (including that of Schleiermacher and Dilthey) until Heidegger, was always about a *method* of interpretation. In Heidegger (1962) hermeneutics turns from being a method of understanding the meaning of the way things are, (an epistemology of ontology), to an ontology that is a hermeneutic.

The phenomenology of Being (*Dasein*) is a hermeneutic in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting (p. 62). Heidegger's hermeneutic begins with the phenomenology of *Dasein*. *Dasein* for Heidegger is by definition undefinable in the usual sense of definition.

We cannot define *Dasein*'s essence by citing a "what" of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter. . . and because its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its Being to be, and has it as its own, we have chosen to designate this entity as "*Dasein*," a term which is purely an expression of Being (p. 32-33).

Dasein appears not as an object that may be defined from the outside. Nor is Dasein simply Being, an object that is contemplated. Dasein appears as that entity for whom Being itself is an issue. Dasein seeks to understand itself in Being.

In the midst of Dasein, understanding and interpretation take a peculiar place. Understanding for Heidegger cannot be a method of standing away from something in order to know it. Nor is interpretation that which one undertakes to begin to either explain, or understand something. Before something encounters us, before interpretation is an issue, understanding is already in place, it is there be-fore. What Heidegger calls the “fore-structure of understanding” means that before interpretation begins we already understand something.

When something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation (p. 191).

In one sense understanding is a sort of being at home with something. As a simple instance, Dasein has been around a hammer so understands a hammer “as” heavy, “as” equipment with which to “hammer.” The fore-structure, fore-conception, fore-sight of understanding precedes the encounter with the hammer, with the text, with the person.

When entities within-the-world are discovered along with the Being of Dasein— that is, when they have come to be understood— we say they have meaning. . .

(p. 192).

Understanding has already happened because understanding is part of ontology, part of being in a world. And interpretation is nothing else than “the development of the understanding.”

In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former; nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about

what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding (p. 188-189).

Understanding then appears as a circle. Fore-understanding meets entities within the world, understanding is “laid out” again in interpretation, and a new fore-understanding forms itself. It is not a methodological circle however; it is an ontological one. The circle describes what already is going on.

Not that the circle of understanding is necessarily positive to understanding. Heidegger says that the circle needs to be “come into” in the right way. Understanding is not always genuine.

We genuinely take hold of the possibility [of knowing] only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies, and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the *things themselves* (emphasis added, p. 195).

One of the not-genuine ways of coming in to the circle is to fall into the trap of the “leveling” of the interpretive “as” in the assertion. The example of a hammer is lifted up as a simple case. “The hammer is heavy,” is an assertion that is made in an everyday situation. The assertion in the situation means that hammer is taken *as* something, it is taken “as” heavy for the particular task before the wielder of the hammer. Though the assertion in everydayness drops the “as” of interpretation, it knows the “as” belongs there. If the hammer becomes no longer equipment but “object” then the assertion comes to mean that the hammer object has the property of heaviness. The “as-structure” of interpretation has been flattened. Then, it happens that we “just stare at it” as this thing of heaviness, rather than interpreting the entity in the midst of our wielding it, in the midst of the world, “as”

equipment for hammering. The hammer slips outside the circle of understanding, reifies, and becomes merely heavy.

The “as-structure” of understanding is particularly pointed in the context of this work in Heidegger’s unfolding of tradition.

Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial ‘sources’ from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and make us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand (p. 43).

What is at some point genuinely understood, becomes “merely” self-evident. Heavy. What at one point was a vibrant word, becomes merely “dogma” merely “true” merely something which we simply “stare” at. Something that desperately needs loosening, even destruction. Heidegger’s kinship to Luther is evident. The text must be freed from its enclosure in the fallenness, the deadness of tradition.

But for Heidegger, there is no sense of an *arrival* in the movement of understanding. There is no place to stop and say, “This is what it means free of its deadened tradition.” In a fascinating inclusion, Heidegger quotes a fable about “Care” crossing a river, taking some clay and shaping it. Jupiter arrives and Care asks Jupiter to give it spirit. Jupiter does so. Jupiter and Care then dispute over whose name the creature should carry. Earth rises up and makes her claim, as it was her clay. Finally, Saturn is called in to arbitrate:

Since you Jupiter have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you Earth, have give its body, you shall receive its body. But since ‘Care’ first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is

now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called '*homo*,' for it is made out of *humus* (earth) (p. 242).

"Temporality" says Heidegger, may be said as the "meaning of the Being of Dasein" (p. 38). Understanding and interpretation never "arrive." They are constantly being formed of clay and returning to clay only to be formed again.

Since Heidegger, Caputo (1987) says, hermeneutics is about, "the fix we are in, what in a more innocent day we might have called the 'human condition'" (p. 6). Or might have been presented as ashes on our forehead.

The fix of hermeneutics, since Heidegger, is that we are already in the midst of the things which we are interpreting. The fix is that what we say this day has been said differently before. The fix we are in is that the pronouncement of this day will be said differently in another day. The fix is that the new exciting issuance of interpretation also will have a way of hardening and deadening, and in a sense becoming something else.

Heidegger's ontological approach brings with it the sense of understanding as that which is already going on, and interpretation as the re-forming of understanding when the disruptions brought by events loosen the tradition. Yet Heidegger's destruction of hardened tradition appears as still a move of the Reformation, though assuredly not of the Enlightenment. For Heidegger there is no getting up out of the mess of being in order to see the pure meaning of the text. No simple "teaching" our way into the clear as Chladenius or— much earlier— Augustine had said. There is no ridding ourselves of prejudice as in Descartes. There is no "solid foundation" to either build (as Descartes) or rebuild (as Dilthey). There is only ontology. There is only being *in the midst* of the text and the people and the interpreters and coming to understand differently. A move vaguely reminiscent of Gregory, and of Chief Jake Thomas, and of the feel of ashes on my forehead.

i. Gadamer (born 1900)

Hans-Georg Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, also owns up to the “fix we are in” — finitude, or historicity. Gadamer’s hermeneutic may begin to be told with reference to his use of Hegel’s story of the girl and the basket of fruit. Gadamer recalls that Hegel reflects on the state of classical works as “beautiful fruits torn from a tree”:

A friendly fate presents them to us as a girl might offer those fruits. We have not the real life of their being— the tree that bore them, the earth and elements, the climate that constituted their substance, the seasonal changes that governed their growth. Nor does fate give us, with those works of art, their world, the spring and summer of the moral life in which they bloomed and ripened but only the veiled memory of this reality (cited in Gadamer, 1989, p. 167).

The “beautiful fruits” the classical works are only available to us “torn” from a tree. The tree is not available. Nor is the climate in which they bloomed. Nor is the soil in which they grew. There is no possibility of rising up above the text to gaze at its the original shape, to explain its original intent, or to recover the inspiration of its author. The “tree” is not available. Attempts to unearth the tree would simply bring a restatement of a dead text. Part of owning up to the “fix” of finitude, of historicity is to own up to the inaccessibility of the context and mind and soul of the author of a work, to the finitude of the world of the work. The other part of owning up to the “fix” of finitude is to own up to our own finitude, our own situatedness in our place in history. We have no other place to see the work than from this place. There is no “high ground” from which the work can be seen as a clear object. There is no place to see the world but from the midst of it.

As well as the torn fruits, there is the other side of the story, the girl with the basket of fruit. Again Gadamer recounts Hegel’s description of the meaning of the girl presenting the plucked fruit:

But just as the girl who presents the plucked fruit is more than Nature that presented it in the first place with all its conditions and elements— trees, air, light, and so on— insofar as she combines all these in a higher way in the light of self-consciousness in her eyes and in her gesture, so also the spirit of destiny which gives us these works of art is greater than the ethical life and reality of a particular people, for it is the interiorizing recollection (*Er-innerung*) of the still externalized spirit manifest in them” (cited in Gadamer, 1989, p. 168).

Hegel, says Gadamer, states a “definite truth,” that is, that “the essential nature of the historical spirit consists not in the restoration of the past but in thoughtful mediation with contemporary life” (p. 168). The “girl with the basket” is what presents itself to us, live and breathing. To interpret what presents itself, for Gadamer, is not to get *behind* the presented to some original tree, to some original meaning or event, but to stand *in front of it*.

In front of the text, fruit from an ancient unrecoverable tree or not, we are aware that we already know something about the text. The starting point for interpretation is what is already known in the interpreter, namely what Gadamer calls, “prejudice.” Prejudice for Gadamer comes from the German legal terminology, in which a “prejudice” is a provisional legal judgment before the final verdict is reached (p. 270). Moreso, prejudice for Gadamer comes from Heidegger’s sense of finitude, from being caught in the “fix” of humanity.

In fact, history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. . . . That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being (p. 276).

Prejudice in this sense is a positive place to start. Starting with prejudice, fore-projection, fore-meaning means that the interpreter starts by owning up to being human. To being in

the midst of history, even a particular history. Because of this situatedness, when an interpreter encounters a text, the interpreter projects a meaning to the text.

The prejudices, situatedness, finitude of the interpreter— note well— are not owned up to in order to be overcome by an act of ruling them out, like Descartes. Gadamer's is not a method of "leaving behind" one's situatedness, one's fore-projections, one's prejudices, a sort of purification of the interpreter in order to bring a certainty to the interpretation. Rather, in front of the text the interpreter with her prejudices puts to risk the prejudices that she had previously held in an encounter with the text. Interpretation, as in Heidegger, is the ongoing "working out" of the fore-projection, and revising of the fore-projection, until a sense of understanding is worked out. Objectivity in Gadamer, is the willingness to let go of a fore-projection before the text.

Openness to the other, then, is recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me even though no one forces me to do so (p. 361).

In front of the text, the interpreter must know, understanding is also never complete, it is never a closed book, rather it is an ongoing opening and closing.

But the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process. Not only are fresh sources of error constantly excluded, so that all kinds of things are filtered out that obscure the true meaning; but new sources of understanding are continually emerging that reveal unsuspected elements of meaning (p. 298).

Yet also in front of the text, understanding does not descend into a sea of relativity, in which nothing is knowable. If the certainty of method in the Protestant-Cartesian hermeneutic is rejected in Gadamer, so is the situation of knowing nothing because nothing is knowable *certainly*.

What man needs is not just the persistent posing of ultimate questions, but the sense of what is feasible, what is possible, what is correct, here and now (p. xxxviii).

Gadamer, in what appears to be a departure from Heidegger, recovers a sense of “tact.” “Tact” is about a “special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which knowledge from general principles does not suffice” (p. 16). Tact is the learning that one has from experience, from being at home with something. Tact is the sense of know-how that a shepherd knows from herding sheep. It is the sense of tactful know-how that a teacher has from being around *Hamlet*, and around children, the sense of tactful know-how that a preacher has from being around the Bible, and being around a congregation. In front of the text, tact is knowing something, and also knowing tactfully that one only knows so much.

The truly experienced person is one who has taken this to heart, who knows that he is master neither of time nor the future (p. 357).

Ashes again appear on the forehead. Tact also is part of owning up to finitude.

Tact is and must be about “application.” Gadamer calls for the recovery of the connection between interpretation and application. He calls for re-connecting hermeneutics to the “forgotten history of hermeneutics,” namely the theological and legal hermeneutics.

A law does not exist in order to be understood historically, but to be concretized in its legal validity by being interpreted. Similarly, the gospel does not exist in order to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in such a way that it exercises its saving effect. . . . Understanding here is always application (p. 309).

Application recovers, among other things, the gathering of people. The text in application is not used to find a final “meaning.” Interpretation re-united with application means that the text, the law, the Gospel is to be interpreted for something, for this class, for this case, for this congregation. Not remote in an “ivory tower” but Gregory-like, in the midst of a people.

Finally, for Gadamer, in front of the text, the medium of hermeneutic experience is language. In front of the text one may seek conversants, others who have tactfully been at

home with this text. One may seek conversants also among those whose view of the text is as a stranger, yet whose conversation may be all the more interesting. Understanding indeed is the achievement of conversation.

But Gadamer adds, one does not “set out” to start a conversation. Conversations are also “the fix” we are in. When we set out to converse, we find we are already in the midst of conversation. Before churches and public schools set out to converse, already Descartes and Luther were in on the conversation, in fact, they already appear to dominate the conversation. Understanding has the crucial task of taking up conversations already going on, including those of which we were quite unaware.

Understanding is the continuation of a dialogue that precedes us and has always already begun (p. 116).

6. Understanding address in the midst of finitude

It usually happens this way. The preacher stands before the mess of finitude: *the text*, its web of harmonic and dissonant texts, its web of harmonic and dissonant interpretations; *the people*, their web of harmonic and dissonant interpretations; *himself*, his web of harmonic and dissonant fore-projections about the text and the people; and the preacher makes a deft move. He takes as it were, a position above the text. From this position, he clears the text of the mess. He strips off old interpretations, silences the multiple voices of allegory, in order to hear the text alone. It is a Protestant move, this dis-covery of the plain sense of the Word, free of its boundness to Catholic tradition, free indeed of its familial genealogy. The preacher probably knows this parentage with its watchwords *sola scriptura*, word alone. But the preacher before the mess of finitude makes one more move, though he may not know from whom he learned it.

The preacher, already above the text clear of its familial connections, now slips on a labcoat. Now the preacher *peers* behind the text. The preacher is now concerned about what

the original author of the text meant in his own historical place, the stable “hermeneutic truth.” The preacher is now concerned about what actual events lay behind the text, what exactly happened at the Red Sea, what did Jesus actually say? The second move falls into the heritage of Rene Descartes.

The preacher in following Descartes, has also gotten clear of something else. The preacher-in-the-labcoat has taken on a posture of objectivity. The preacher in objectivity, has cleared the interpretive work of *himself*, of his own experiences, his own doubts, his own beliefs, with respect to the texts, as well as, for that matter, his own experiences with the people.

With the second move the preacher is, or thinks himself, clear of the mess of finitude. Now the singular text means this one singular thing, free of “prejudice” — perhaps also free of faith. Now the singular text means this one singular thing— free of its various receptions by the people— perhaps also free of love. It happens, as we have heard before, broadly in educational institutions.

The preacher studies the Bible— exegetical commentary in hand— to find out what it “means,” then delivers the meaning to the congregation. The teacher studies *Hamlet* — analytical textbook in hand— to find out what it “means” then delivers the meaning over to the students. The learner’s task is to take note of the meaning of the Bible, the Sacraments, *Hamlet*, World War II, Capitalism and learn it. The congregation “recites” the meaning back to the preacher in the creed. The learner “recites” the meaning back to the teacher in the examination.

All that remains is to take the meaning of the text and turn it into something interesting and engaging— the task of homiletics. The task of “motivation.” Maybe tell a good joke. Have a group discussion. Show a film.

This paper argues that the largely unwitting involvement of preachers and teachers in the dominant Protestant-Cartesian hermeneutic is disastrous pedagogy. Lost in this

pedagogy is the mystery of the text. Lost is the personhood of the teacher. Lost is the humanity of the students. Lost is the mysterious address of the text in the midst of them all.

Yet. There is something that is still going on. Something that is not flattened by Luther and Descartes. Something in the interpretation of texts in the midst of the congregation and in the midst of the students. Something that “speaks” to us. Something that emerges unexpectedly. Something that “matters.” Something mysteriously elusive as well. The emergence of address.

In the peculiar context in which I work, donning a flax alb in an odd looking classroom indeed, the commonplace acts of worship continue to gather a people. The gathering is not simply to hear a sermonic message cleverly “set up” by the service. Rather, in the midst somehow of the service, in the midst of the texts, the people and the one in the flax alb, address emerges. During the services of Lent— in which the explaining sermon is either totally absent or at least secondary— this is particularly evident.

It is then these traditionary acts of Lent that this paper will seek to unfold, these acts in the midst of which address appears to emerge. First, I will seek to tell of “what happens” in the midst of the event of the traditionary act. Second, I will seek to pursue conversations already going on in the events— many with conversants introduced in the genealogy. Third, I will try to tell of what I am understanding as address “in the midst” of the traditionary acts and in the light of the conversations. Finally, lest things appear again entirely too settled, a postlude ends each discussion with what would sound musically, like a seventh chord.

7. Postlude

The sign of the ashen cross is one that returns in the life of the people— suddenly.

In 1998, an old friend, a horseshoe partner, frequent visitor to our house, father of five girls whose weddings I had been privileged to perform, passed away suddenly. The

family asked if I might return to the village to take part in the service. An entire town gathered to say good-bye to Cecil. After the service the procession of cars and half-tons made their way out to Round Hill Cemetery. In the flax alb, I led the casket and pall bearers out to the place. A grassy spot with trees surrounding it. The immediate family surrounded the spot. Daughters, sons in law, grandchildren. One of the grandchildren, a 22 year old wheel-chair athlete, wheeled in beside me. The interment followed. At the end, I knelt by the casket and said these words,

We commend to almighty God our brother Cecil, and we commit his body to the ground. . .

I traced on the casket— just above the spray of flowers— a small rather imperfect cross of sand.

earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust (Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, p. 213).

We knew something that day on the grassy spot. One in a flax alb. The people huddled close together. The ashen cross bearing a text, several texts within. Something had spoken.

Chapter 2. Forty Days - the readings: In the midst of story

1. Traditionary act

The Pastor raises her hands inviting the people to stand for the reading of the Holy Gospel. "The Holy Gospel for this First Sunday of Lent is recorded in the fourth chapter of Matthew, beginning at the first verse." The people sing the Verse, "Glory to you, O Lord." She reads:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him (Matthew 4:1-11).

The people sing, "Praise to you O Christ" (Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, p. 86).

2. Introduction

The texts of the readings are from the Christian Bible: the combination of the Old and New Testaments. Usually four texts are read in order: The First Lesson, usually from the Old Testament, The Psalm (which is often sung to a tone), The Second Lesson from a New Testament letter, followed by The Gospel Lesson, a reading from one of the four stories of Jesus.

The readings are assigned in a three year Lectionary. The Matthew 4 reading above is the Gospel Reading for the First Sunday of Lent, *Year A*. The Gospel Reading for the First Sunday of Lent, *Year B* tells of the same event, the event of the temptation of Jesus from the Gospel according to Mark. The entire reading appears below:

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him (Mark 1:12-13).

The readings in Matthew and Mark are markedly different. Matthew tells of three specific temptations; in Mark no incidents are described. Matthew tells of the devil leaving Jesus at the end; Mark tells of no such leaving— the devil is still prowling. Mark's wild beasts do not appear in Matthew. In Matthew Jesus fasts forty days, then is tempted by the devil; in Mark, the forty days themselves are the time of temptation by Satan. Yet the accounts tell of the same event. In both accounts the event is placed just after Jesus' baptism by John and just before the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Both speak of a forty day period of "wilderness." We read the one in Year A, the other in the following year, Luke's account, more similar to Matthew's than Mark's, is the reading for Year C.

On the one hand, what these Gospel readings hold in common— Jesus' forty days in the wilderness— sits behind the forty day season of Lent in the Christian liturgical calendar, the solemn season that begins with ashes on the forehead on Wednesday, and continues with the reading of the wilderness temptations on Sunday. The forty day season

also makes connection with the forty years of Israel in the wilderness, as frequently in Lent, First Lesson texts tell of Israel's forty years wandering in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land.

On the other hand, these Gospel readings introduce in their differering accounts of apparently the same event, the way of the readings themselves: story.

3. Story

"Story" does not seem to have particularly "telling" roots. Story is plainly a short form of "history," from the Greek *historia* (O.E.D.). Yet story is quite different from history. History appears as a serious, grounded discipline. Story appears rather more broadly than "historiography" but with much less credibility.

At its commonest, a story is what we tell each other in the every-day. A spouse returns from a trip, and "tells" about what happened while she was away— sometimes complete with a set of snapshots. In the telling the other may "get in" on the trip. The spouse who stayed at home, may also tell his own story of what happened at home while the other was away. Through the stories the teller and the listener seek somehow to be "brought together" through the shared stories.

The common utility of story, however, does not furnish story with much regard. "Telling stories" is synonymous in our culture with "telling lies." We see no proof that the traveler is telling the truth about her trip. The traveler is of course telling the story from her "perspective." The traveler is intimate with her story, "in" it. The traveler "in" the story may be highlighting certain parts of the trip at the expense of others, not telling certain parts accurately, not telling certain parts at all. The story-teller is intimate with the story, therefore, her story cannot be trusted.

Stories in a quite unique way, collide with the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic. The story-teller is not removed "high above" the story, but is in the midst of the story herself.

She tells the story in the first person. She tells of what she sees, what she knows, what she has come to believe, and not to believe. And, we, the Protestant Cartesians that we are, *know*, in the midst of hearing her story, that she could be wrong. We could be led astray. Certainty, truth in stories cannot be guaranteed.

In the context of the traditionary acts of Lent, in the context of the readings, it is a story however that keeps on appearing. More to the point, it is a number of versions of a story that appears. And it is when the story does appear that the people say together, "Praise to you, O Christ." In the reading of the storied text, the people understand that address emerges.

Conversants about story who may be brought into the conversation are available in a number of places. A largely anonymous group is discernible among the ancients, among those *who speak in stories*. A contemporary group is also appearing— those *who speak to recover anew a sense of story*. But we begin with those between; we begin with the wall, the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic, those who *speak to end all stories*.

4. Conversants: Speaking to end all stories

An incident in a classroom in Eastern Zambia presents a way of the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic with story. The teacher, Priestly (1983) relates a certain story:

Like all hyenas this one was greedy but it had some reason to be because it had not eaten for several days. It ambled along the bush path desperate for food. The track divided. Which way should it go? The hyena hesitated. Then it lifted its head and sniffed to the right. Distant smells of food made its nostrils tingle. It began to move forward, then hesitated. Turning, it raised its head and sniffed the air again, this time to the left. There was food in that direction, too. What should the hyena do? It paused, turned right, hesitated and turned left, then right again. . . . It could not

decide, until finally it tried to go in both directions at once, split itself in two and died (p. 378).

The hyena story, from the Nyanja people, was discussed in the classroom. It is the discussion of the story in the midst of the unique gathering of students that fascinated Priestly. He was teaching at the Malcolm Moffat Teacher Training College at Serenje in the central province of Zambia. The school was made up of two main groups. One group of students was from the Copperbelt; they were “Westernized,” wearing European suits, carrying briefcases. A second group of students was from the bush; they arrived in tribal dress, carrying no briefcases. The two groups talked about whether the story was “true.” For the Copperbelt students, it was plainly “tribal nonsense.” But the bush students said it was “of course true.”

At this the joy of the *homo Copperbeltus* was complete. Tears ran down their cheeks as they saw the increasing discomfort of their fellows who continued to say only, “It is true, it is true.” How was it true? Did they believe it actually happened once upon a time? The question was received with bewilderment. Such a thought had not even occurred to them (p. 378).

The hyena story to the Westernized, is a typical “cock and bull” story. The story cannot be true. Hyena’s do not split in two in indecision. It is simply an “old wives’ tale” An old tradition. The voice of the Protestants peeling off the old tradition is audible.

For the bush student the questions of the Westernized do not “occur” to them. The story is “of course true.” It was passed on to them by the elders. And the story could still be told and gather the people. It spoke something to those who had ever stood at the crossroads of one decision or another. Yet, what exactly it meant, was not a question they appeared to have asked either.

In the classroom, Priestly now observes a second movement. One of the bush students, frustrated, blurted out this assertion, "It is true. Greed kills" (p. 390). Priestly observes that something happened to the story of the hyena at the moment of the assertion.

A story that had conveyed its truth indirectly to countless generations had to be translated into the direct propositional language of a new, scientifically based culture. The hyena might continue to exist for a little while but his status was severely diminished. From being a conveyor of moral truth he would become at best a piece of harmless entertainment. . . . "Greed kills" was the essential message, its articulation regarded as the high point of moral cognitive development (p. 381).

Greed kills. In propositional language, the story now can be said to mean one thing. Greed kills. Now it will mean one thing for any people, for any place, for any time. In fact, the one propositional truth separated from the mess of story can simply be passed on as a stable object. Behind the story of the handling of the hyena a familiar hermeneutic chants:

Rule 1: The purpose of our studies should be the direction of the mind toward the production of firm and true judgments concerning all things. . . (p. 3).

Rule 2: We should be concerned only with those objects regarding which our minds seem capable of obtaining certain and indubitable knowledge (p. 5).

(Descartes, 1961)

For the Cartesian, the production of a propositional meaning of the story appears as the only way to rescue something of the story for the Cartesian world. In the proposition the story now at least possesses a "firm-ness." The offensive magic of a hyena that splits in two becomes mere window dressing for the meaning. In the proposition the story now possesses a "certain" and "indubitable" "meaning" extricated from the story. Greed kills. Justification by grace through faith. Survival of the fittest. Columbus discovered America in 1492. The propositional meaning can be passed on, object-like to students. It can be passed on among a mixed classroom in Zambia. In classrooms in North America. In

church buildings. The preacher/teacher determines the meaning of the story, delivers it to the students, and the students can recite back the stable, indubitable meaning. The Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic is served well by the propositional statement extricated from story.

Yet stories are also handled differently by the bush students for whom this Protestant Cartesian way is not even a wall to push against— by those who “speak in story.”

5. Conversants: Speaking in story

a. Introduction

The basic appearance of the readings of the Christian Bible as a whole is story, and the appearance of most of the parts is story. In a large scope the Christian Bible is laid out as one story beginning with creation in Genesis and concluding in the vision of the new creation, the world to come in Revelation. The five core books of the Hebrew Bible, the Torah, are most obviously a collection of stories that tell a story. Genesis is made entirely of stories, including among others: the Creation stories, Adam and Eve in the Garden, Cain and Abel, Noah and the ark, the Tower of Babel, the journey of Abraham and Sarah and Hagar, the marriage of Isaac and Rebekkah, the struggles of Jacob and Esau, Jacob’s ladder, the selling of Joseph by his brothers, the movement of the Israelite tribe to Egypt. Exodus stories the slavery of Israel in Egypt, deliverance under the leadership of Moses, the ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the stories of the wilderness wanderings. Even the most basic legal material, the ten commandments, is caught up in the midst of the Exodus wilderness stories. Sanders (1972) concludes in his study on Torah: “The basic structure of the Pentateuch is not that of law code but rather that of narrative” (p. 4).

The New Testament takes up story with similar enthusiasm. The most obvious presence of story, the four Gospels, each tells a story of Jesus from Christmas stories of early beginnings to stories of his death on a cross and rising on Sunday. It is these stories

for which the people stand, each Sunday. No less than the Torah, the stories form the centre of the New Testament and the centre of the Lenten readings.

b. Speaking in fictional stories

Some of the Scriptural conversants in story spoke in stories that they *knew* were fictional. They were fictional, *fictio*, fashioned, in our usual sense of the word, “made up.” They were tales, parables.

The prophet Nathan tells a story for King David, for the King, in his capacity as judge, to adjudicate.

There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him (2 Samuel 12: 1-5).

On hearing the story, the King is furious and calls for the execution of the rich man. Nathan, who unbeknownst to the King, is aware that the King has had an affair with his neighbour's wife, said to David:

“You are the man!”

Nathan knows he is “telling a story.” And he knows also that the story is “made up”—there was no such case in the kingdom. He also knows that the “made up” story may well bring the King to know the truth about himself.

Such obvious “fictions” are actually quite rare in the Hebrew Bible. They do appear more often in the Gospels as the stories told by Jesus, the parables: the Prodigal

Son, the Good Samaritan, the Rich man and Lazarus, etc.. These parables make no claim to have factually happened. Their claim rather is that they happen. Their claim is that they happen in the fairy tale's sense of happening: "Once upon a time," that is, they happen upon that time, and that one, and this one. Adventuresome "Jack" and the beanstalk happens "upon a time." Prodigal Sons happen "upon a time." Like Nathan's story to David, the claim of the parable is not to tell what happened, but to tell what things might mean.

The Lenten wilderness stories however, are not known by their speakers or writers as "fiction" in our sense of "made up." The stories of Lent are not portrayed in Scripture as "parables" or "fables." They are told in the manner of history. Jesus was baptized by John. He went out into the wilderness for forty days. He was tempted. The people were in Egypt. They went out into the wilderness for forty years. They were heading for the Promised Land. Yet the stories *sound* in other ways like parables. They are clearly not simply intended as "history" in the sense of giving information; they show little interest either in recording accurate dates, or in giving physical descriptions of people or places. The stories appear rather to be interested in the activity or the in-activity of God in the stories, of the presence of meaning in the midst of history, the same interest as the fictional parables. They appear indeed as stories in the sense of story's presentation of meaning, while they appear as historic in their presentation of themselves as the events of history. They appear as what one might call, "historic stories."

c. Speaking in historic stories

Those who speak in historic stories make two moves with story that appear on the face of it to be opposed to each other. Bruns (1992) presents these two ways of story, as a hermeneutic of canon, and a hermeneutic of actualization.

The hermeneutic of canon is visible in a story from 1 Kings. It is about the finding of a lost book of “Torah.” In the account, the priest finds a “book of the Torah” in the temple during a renovation project. The priest takes the found book to the King’s secretary, the scribe Shaphan, who reads it. The scribe evidently approves the text and reads it to the King. The King tears his clothes in response. The King sends the book with members of his court to consult with the an outsider to his court, the prophetess Hulda. After the approving report from the prophetess, the king gathers the people.

The king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people stood to the covenant (1 Kings 24:1 -3).

The hermeneutic of canon appears at the end of the text. When the text speaks, and the community, the priest, prophet, king and people hear an address, the people “stood to” the covenant. The people “obey.” Obey— from the Latin *obedio*, *ob-*, against and *audio*, to hear— is to hear against (in the same way *ob-ject* is to throw against) (O.E.D.). Obedience is about listening to that which confronts, to that which stands. Those who speak in historic stories, know something of what it is to hear a story, know something about being confronted by something that calls from the midst of a story.

Interestingly, the texts that are “canon” for Judaism are called “torah”— which has been translated to Greek as *nomos*, law. The Gospel stories of Jesus hold a similar “canonical” strength for Christians. Torah. Law. Canon. Those who speak in stories know

that when canonical stories speak, they call for obedience. They call for the people to “stand.”

The obedience to the canonical text is set however, beside a second move with text. “Actualization” is visible again inside the Bible, in the handling of the prophecy of Jeremiah. This text is again about the presentation of a scroll for the consideration of the King and people. Jeremiah the prophet (about 600 B.C.) submits his prophecy, his preaching on the Word of the Lord for the nation to the king.

Now the king was sitting in the winter-house in the ninth month and the brazier was burning before him. And it came to pass, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that he cut it with a penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. Yet, they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king nor any of his servants that heard these words (Jeremiah 36:22-24).

The prophecy of Jeremiah as Bruns notes, is read very like the old found text was read to King Josiah. But this time the scribe reads and slashes and burns the text, and the king and the others in the court concur.

The scroll, the prophecy of Jeremiah, is a voice of protest. Jeremiah protested against the current written Torah, the established canonized text.

How do you say: “We are wise, And the Law [Torah] is with us?”

Lo, certainly in vain hath wrought the vain pen of the scribes.

The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken.

Lo, they have rejected the Word of the Lord. . . (Jeremiah 8:8-9).

The prophecy of Jeremiah pits the “Word of the Lord” *against* the Torah— specifically against the words of the Torah’s book of Deuteronomy. Jeremiah speaks on behalf of the spoken prophetic word and opposes the priest’s claim that Torah was their special domain. For Jeremiah the true Torah is not made by some “vain pen,” but it is the “word of the

Lord” given through the spoken word of the prophets. A sort of collision appears here between the priests, scribes, court prophets and kings— the keepers of the written Torah— and the prophets of the countryside. There is for those who speak in stories, an uncomfortable relationship between text and voice, between the authoritative passed down texts interpreted by the interpreters, and the spoken voices of those who speak the Word for the day, a radical word. The lineage of oral story-tellers comes to mind:

You don’t write down your traditions— because once you write it down it’s structured one way now— and that is the way people know it. If you have people that are knowledgeable, it can be put a different way. Because if you write it down, you can never change it. It is always just one way (Thomas, 1993).

But the text of those who spoke in stories, did not manage to stay “just one way.” When Jeremiah’s prophecy of doom, did indeed come about, the prophecy of Jeremiah made its way into canonical text, beside Deuteronomy which it had opposed. But the text of Jeremiah made its way significantly altered. One passage is jarring. In Jeremiah 11:1-5 the central motif of the Deuteronomic covenant— which Jeremiah had opposed with the prophetic voice— is expressed as the “word of the Lord” coming to Jeremiah. Jeremiah’s answer is an improbable: “Amen, O Lord” (Jeremiah 11). Jeremiah scholar Philip Hyatt (1942) notes that it is widely accepted that this passage is not the work or word of Jeremiah (p. 158). It is the work of a later hand; the Jeremiah scroll has received an addition from the “Deuteronomic” editors, whose purpose in part was to claim for Deuteronomy the sanction of the now-great prophet Jeremiah.

The canonical text of Jeremiah comes already “doctored” to put it one way. To put it another way, from a hermeneutical standpoint it is an attempt of the Deuteronomists to make sense of Jeremiah’s message and the text of Deuteronomy in the light of the destruction of Jerusalem (prophesied by Jeremiah).

The text of Jeremiah has been appropriated to the present situation. The text is even doctored to make it fit the present situation. The way of those who speak in stories is a way which includes what Childs (1979) calls "actualization."

It is constitutive of the canon to seek to transmit the tradition in such a way as to prevent its being moored in the past. Actualization derives from a hermeneutical concern which was present during different stages of the book's canonization. It is built into the structure of the text itself (p. 79).

The hermeneutic of actualization evident in the Scriptures themselves, brings with it a movement away from a sense of the original spoken message toward the various possibilities of understanding for this day in this place. Bruns (1992) writes:

What we have in the Book of Jeremiah as a canonical text is not what Jeremiah said in his own historical moment but the way his words were received and understood by those who heard them in circumstances radically different from those in which Jeremiah originally spoke (p. 76).

While Jeremiah's prophecy survives, it survives in text. And while it survives in text, it does not survive as is, it survives altered, doctored, or more positively, "actualized." And yet the words do survive. The protest against the "vain pen" is still readable in the canonical text of Jeremiah.

Those who speak in stories are free with them. They will "doctor" "actualize" "re-tell" the stories in ways that make the written text audible to a new time and place. They will re-tell them when the events that transpire require them to be told differently. The movement of text and stories with them is evident within Scriptures in many forms. Kugel (1986) lists the wide expanse of intra-biblical interpretive work.

Among the many forms that this intrabiblical interpretation can take are: the interpretation of earlier historical texts in later retellings (Chronicles); the interpretation of legal material through reordering, rewording, expansion, and

harmonization, as well as allusions to laws and their application found outside legal corpora proper (as in prophetic oracles); prophetic reuse or reinterpretation of earlier prophetic sayings, as well as those anonymous expansions to prophetic collections, many of which build new material around a saying or theme of the original prophet; reinterpretation by reuse of a linguistic formulae, liturgical motifs, proverbs and sayings and so on; and. . . the whole area of ‘editorial interpretation’ — that is, the interpretive act embodied in the ordering of earlier material, arrangement and splicing of fragments, as well as actual excisions, headings, chronological notes, glosses of rare or technical terms, and so forth (pp. 73-74).

Outside the Biblical texts those who speak in stories show even more clearly the willingness to actualize. The non-canonical book of *Jubilees* (from about the second century B.C.) presents an interpretation of the most clearly narrative portion of the first two books of the Torah (Genesis 1 through Exodus 14). In *Jubilees*, the Genesis story of Abraham’s call by God, and Abraham’s subsequent departure from his homeland (Genesis 12) is taken up. In the canonical text of Genesis, no reason is given for the choice of Abraham by God, no reason is given for Abraham’s need to leave his homeland of Ur. In *Jubilees*, the singling out of Abraham and his departure is explained. In *Jubilees*’ retelling, Abraham reproaches his father Terah for believing in idols. Terah replies: “Keep silent, my son, lest they slay thee.” Abraham however gets up in the dead of night, and burns the “house of idols.” He and his father then leave their homeland, apparently for their own safety because of Abraham’s radical act. The re-telling is a significant reworking of the history, explaining why God chose Abraham, and at the same time directing the later people of Abraham to reject idols as their fore-father had done before them.

This way of those who speak in story is evident in large strokes in the Hebrew Scripture and in the Christian Bible. At least three differing versions of the ten commandments exist in Scripture. At least two stories of creation. The four Gospels

“story” the life of Jesus presenting events of his life ordered differently and told differently, as we have seen. This is most keenly seen in that there is nearly universal agreement that two of the Gospel writers wrote with the Gospel of Mark complete in hand— and then knowingly and intentionally made significant changes to the story, apparently “actualizing” it for their own community.

The stories are re-told. And the re-telling is obviously not simply repeating. The stories are re-told; they are interpreted *in* the retelling of the story, not in words said *about* the story. The retelling adds features into the story. While the re-telling stays anchored to the text, the way of canon, it also floats away from whatever exactly happened in order to connect the story to the world of the re-telling. The stories address issues of current concern, which are not concerns of the original story. Concerns of the “original” story are muted when they do not apparently address the current place of reading. In the “actualizing” the stories become exceedingly meaningful, as interpreted into their place of current reading. It also becomes exceedingly difficult to know “what actually happened” to Abraham.

Actualizing, “doctoring” as we might put it is constantly going on in the re-telling of the Biblical stories. And the “doctors” seem quite aware that it is happening. And make no effort to disguise it. It is, apparently, a legitimate practice for those who speak in stories.

The two moves with story happen together: canon and actualization. Brueggemann’s (1991) *Interpretation and Obedience* brings the two moves together. For biblical faith, Brueggemann says, canon is “absolute and non-negotiable” while at the same time biblical faith practices an amazing “interpretive openness.” Canon, takes the *story* with “abiding seriousness” preventing a sort of indifference that would trivialize a text. Actualization takes the changing situation of the gathered *people* with such seriousness that stories are re-told differently for the sake of the people, preventing a sort of legal coldness that, “imagines all the questions are settled” (p. 152). Seen together, interpretation and obedience, actualization

and canonization are two parts that belong together, keeping a sort of balance for those who speak in stories.

Up against the ways of those who speak in story, the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic looks very odd. The proposal to find the kernel in the midst of the story, then discard the story is a world apart from the re-tellings of actualization. The proposal to find a “hermeneutic truth,” the original intention of the author is a world apart from finding an address in the text for this day. The proposal to find what “actually happened” in the story is a world apart from re-telling what happened then into what may be a living concern in the present day.

There are those however, who are now speaking to re-cover the meaningful sense of story, from the grip of the dominant hermeneutic.

6. Conversants: Speaking to recover story

a. Introduction

The art of story-telling, says Walter Benjamin (1955), “is coming to an end” (p. 83). Story-telling is being replaced, says Benjamin, by “information,” by a flood of plausible sounding reports of events shot through with the explanations of the events (p. 89). Benjamin adds in an almost hopeful tone, that the dominance of information has so completely removed narrative from living speech, that it “is making it possible to see a new beauty in what is vanishing” (p. 87).

Martin Buber similarly speaks of the curious state of story in world literature, especially viewed against the use of story in Scripture.

It [Scripture] uses the methods of story-telling to a degree however, that world literature has not yet learned to use. . . . Hence, it remains for us latecomers to point out the significance of what has been hitherto overlooked, neglected, insufficiently valued” (cited in McConnell, 1986, p. 14).

We are stuck as “latecomers” to story. As those for whom story has lost its inherent significance. As those for whom information reigns. We are stuck in the lineage of several generations of those for whom stories at worst, are worthless tales, and at best, are simply the containers holding some “propositional” thing. “The fix” we are in, does not allow us to tactfully simply speak in stories. We know that “actualizing” offends our sense of genuineness, even if somehow the ancient tree was not troubled by those sorts of “fruit.” Descartes, Luther *et al* cannot be ignored from the lineage. Before speaking in “stories” it is tactfully needful to first speak “about stories” in order to re-cover a place for stories among the latecomers.

b. Conversant: Crites

As we have seen, one of the Cartesian moves to close stories is to assign them a propositional “meaning.” Stephen Crites argues against the “abstraction” of stories.

Crites presents a sort of architecture of story. He explicitly begins with the sense of memory from Augustine’s (1960) *Confessions*.

Therefore, I will pass also beyond the power of my nature, and ascending by steps to him who made me, I come into the fields and spacious palaces of my memory, where are treasures of countless images and things of every manner, brought there from objects perceived by sense. Hidden away in that place is also whatever we think about, whether by increasing or by lessening or somehow altering the things that sense attains to (X:8:12).

Augustine speaks of the realm of memory as a treasurehouse, from which one may ask for things to be drawn out. Some of the things come forth easily. Some offer themselves unbidden. Some come forth “in mobs.” Some hide themselves. The treasurehouse is added to by experiences of the senses, and by learning from other sources.

From that same abundant stock, also, I combine one and another of the likenesses of things, whether things actually known by experience or those believed in from those I have experienced, with things past, and from them I meditate upon future actions, events, and hopes, and all these again as though they were actually present (X:8:14).

Though Crites does not mention it, it is a most appropriate place to start. Augustine's sense of memory emerges in the retrospective book ten of *Confessions* which significantly follows the nine books in which Augustine tells the story of his spiritual journey from infant to converted Christian. It is a telling location, and is a stone's throw from saying that one's story is the meaningful arranging of the things known and things experienced that are stored in the memory. Augustine does not take the throw. Crites does.

Crites (1971) names Augustine's treasurehouse, the "chronicle" of memory (p. 299). Out of this chronicle a person re-collects and re-imagines the pieces into stories. These pieces can be "dismantled and reassembled or recombined in original ways" (p. 299). As an example, Crites attempts to recount an incident in his childhood, trying he says, to be "as faithful as possible to the *memory* itself."

I measure out "a long time" and recall an episode from my childhood. . . . In an impetuous fit of bravado I threw a rock through a garage window. I recall the exact spot on the ground from which I picked up the rock, I recall the wind-up, the pitch, the rock in mid-air, the explosive sound of the impact, the shining spray of glass, the tinkling hail of shards falling on the cement below, the rough stony texture of the cement. I recall also my inner glee at that moment, and my triumph when a playmate, uncertain at first how to react, looked to me for his cue and then broke into a grin. . . . Then I recall that moment in the evening when I heard my father's returning footsteps on the porch and my guilty terror reached a visceral maximum the very memory of which wrenches a fat adult belly— for remembering is not simply a process in the head (p. 301).

The details of this event, he realizes, have been a part of many stories that he has told of his own life. The details are re-collected with other pieces in the chronicle of memory to form stories. And the story of the event changes as other events are added to the chronicle of memory and added to the story. As a result the story of the rock-throwing changes in the re-collecting after other events occur. The story would change after the author's reading of Freud's work on the relationship of sons and fathers. It would change after the birth and childhood of his own children. The story would change after the death of his own father (p. 301). Crites observes that even in his attempt to simply recount the chronicle of memory in the paper, a story begins to form, "recollection" intervenes, a re-ordering of the events happens by itself.

Crites opens a sense of what happens in stories, far removed from the sense of a container in which meaning, kernel-like is carried. Stories have something to do with what one remembers, with events. But rather than simple chronicles on events, stories also have to do with the meaningful arrangement of the events. They also have to do with the meaningful *re-arranging* of the events: the fathers "returning steps" are charged with different meaning after the father's death, the "rock through the window" is charged with a different sense after the birth of that grown child's own son. The stories are ever-changing because they are in the midst of the world. They are meaning-ful as they are told and re-told by people to "articulate and clarify their sense of the world" (p. 302).

Crites' move is arguably a Cartesian one. Story is broken into its parts and explained, though explained differently. Taking up the language of the Cartesian world, Crites recovers a story, however, that is something else than a mere vehicle for an abstract meaning.

c. Conversant: Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur's recovery of story surely is the broadest move to recover the importance of story. Ricoeur's (1983) major work, *Time and Narrative* provides the starting point for a brief exploration of Ricoeur's recovery of story.

Ricoeur bases a sense of *narrative* in a reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Emplotment, *muthos*, says Ricoeur, signifies both fable (story that knows it is "made up") and plot (in the broader sense of story). Emplotment is a "synthesis of heterogeneous elements" (p. 65). The plot gathers a wide array of diffuse elements into a single story. Emplotment gathers more than a single basic line of plot. It gathers a totality which can be said to be at once "concordant and discordant." The narrative says more than can be summarized by a single propositional meaning.

Ricoeur (1991) adds that for Aristotle plot is not a "static structure," a thing, but an action, "an integrating process" (p. 21). Emplotment is not simply about "writing" a text; emplotment is ongoing configuration.

Emplotment is the common work of the text and the reader (p. 27).

The "actualizing" visible within the biblical texts, is part of the ongoing emplotment of the narrative. Emplotment is the "integrating process" that is constantly going on in the work of the text and reader. This common work appears as a sort of "following."

It is the act of reading which completes the work, transforming it (the narrative) into a guide for reading, with its zones of indeterminacy, its latent wealth of interpretation, its power of being reinterpreted in new ways in new historical contexts (p. 27).

Emplotment is the ongoing action of clasping together performed by both the text and the reader. As "clasping together," emplotment is the stabilizing force in narrative. But, the destabilizing force in narrative, is time.

Ricoeur bases a sense of *time* in a reading of Augustine's (1960) *Confessions*. Augustine considers that time is an enigma. In the memory are images that stand for things that are past but *still* do exist now in the present. This is an enigma. Images about the future are not really present, yet they do "*exist already*" in the present image. This is also an enigma. Neither the past nor the future are really present, yet in memory and in expectation, they are present. We know they are present because presently we know of the past and future. Augustine then presents a sense of time as three aspects of the present: expectation— the present of the future; memory— the present of the past, and attention— the present of the present (II:20.26).

What is known is the constant awareness of time "passing." Rather than human beings passing through time, time *passes* human beings. The future is constantly moving toward us to the present and away from us into the past. As in Heidegger's *Dasein*, Augustine opens a sense that it is the soul that experiences the three-fold present flowing past that gives a sense of time. Yet the soul only sees what it sees— it is temporal. Unlike God, the soul is constantly perceiving the instability of time.

For Ricoeur, Augustine's relation of time and the "soul" is related to Heidegger's sense of finitude. One presupposition "commands all others," says Ricoeur (1983), that is, "the temporal character of human experience" (p. 3).

Emplotment, then is not an unfortunate concordant-discordant, sedimenting-innovating, riddle. It is the fit companion to the temporal character of human experience. Ricoeur (1980) would make the claim even more strongly.

I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent (p. 169).

The structure of existence, says Ricoeur is temporality. Narrative is the language structure that ultimately fits temporality, is suited to temporality.

Ricoeur's part in the conversation brings a recovery of story that begins to make readable in the twentieth century, the way of those who spoke in stories of old. From a reading of Aristotle and Augustine, and in the light of hermeneutics post-Heidegger, Ricoeur brings a possible recovery of story that can at least begin to overcome the destruction brought by Luther, Descartes and kin.

If temporality can be taken as the way of human beings, then these same human beings might do well to speak to one another, both after they return from the trip, and in the pursuit of "serious disciplines" in the humble story.

d. Conversants: Other

A surprising conversant is found in the realm of history itself. Hayden White (1991) tells of the abandonment of story by various "fields of study" including history itself.

It could be argued with some pertinence that the transformation of a field of study into a genuine science has always been attended by an abandonment of anything like an interest in inventing a story to tell about its object of study in favour of the task of discovering the laws that governed its structures and function. . . . Getting the 'story' out of 'history' was therefore a first step in the transformation of historical studies into a science (p.140).

White (1980) also argues, however, that historians are nearly always telling stories, but in odd ways. Much historical discourse, he says, narrativizes, "feigns to make *the world speak itself*, and speak itself as a story" (p. 7). These narrativizing stories are always framed in the third person. The third person historical story is told as if the events themselves were doing the narrating, rather than the historical story-teller. "Narrativizing" discourse is a refusal of being in the midst of the world, a refusal of temporality, a refusal of the ashes on the forehead. White urges the engagement in historical discourse that "narrates," that "openly

adopts a perspective, that looks out on the world and reports it." Such a discourse openly admits a narrator, with perspective, who is making "sense" out of the events of history.

Ironically, in White, a historian is making an effort to get the story back "in" to history. To have history cease pretending to have the events tell themselves in some third person objectivity. Rather, the hi-story may be told, must be told from within the world, as a human "I" telling a story and knowing she is telling a story.

A similar call is being heard in education. Harold Rosen's (1986) article on the "Importance of Story" proposes narrativity as curriculum. Education, he says, needs narrativity, for three reasons. Because "we can detect calcified, inert, authoritative discourse dominating learning." Because "in the making of narrative we can most easily elude the magisterial, and engage in the play of boundaries." Because "when we are striving to retell, this is no simple act of reproduction but rather a further creative development of another's discourse in a new context and under new conditions" (p. 235). The article pushes against the dominant voice of "authoritative discourse" and calls for the "making of narrative" the telling of story, to elude the "calcified, inerrant" and "magisterial."

In the church, "Authoritative discourse" has long been the dominant background of theology. Harold Weinrich (1973) begins a journal article with a re-told story of Jesus. He interrupts himself with a telling burst:

What have I just been doing. . . . I have told a story in an academic journal (p. 47).
Most theological writing is argument, explanation, authoritative discourse. Weinrich observes what is all too self-evident to conversants in theology.

Theology today is dominated by the unanimous and almost unquestioned view that the biblical stories, if they must be mentioned at all, should be allowed to stand as stories at the most when they can be proved by the recognized scientific methods of history to be true stories (p. 53).

Oddly, in a field in which the canonical texts are storied, theology has sought to get the story out of the Bible. To pretend that the events tell themselves.

And yet, the traditionary act of the reading and responding to the old stories, remains among us.

7. Understanding address in the midst of story

Stories are an offence to the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic. First person stories sound home-spun and dubious. The appearance of “I” sounds like the writer has not brought enough professional distance to the study. The dominant hermeneutic would prefer that the interpreter perch high above the text, and “let the facts speak for themselves.”

Stories are an offence also to the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic because they are intimately bound to the people to whom they speak. The story is actualized, “doctored” for the sake of the people. The story is told by the story-teller to the people, for the sake of the people.

Stories are an offence also because they are not certainly true. Stories indeed, may be told horribly. A teacher in northern Alberta may tell his students that the Holocaust was a hoax. The dominant hermeneutic would like to rule out such falsehood by methodically eliminating story-telling by telling “just the facts.” Yet it is the teacher’s professionally trained pretense of telling the “magisterial” facts which is where the falsehood becomes monstrous. When the account is told as fact, there can be no argument. Only hearing and repeating. If the “I” returned in the telling of history, in the telling of Biblical theology, then the understanding of the story would be taken up by the student as human words, would not simply run the risk of being absorbed as certain fact or infallible doctrine.

I speak here on behalf of the telling and re-telling of the traditionary stories. I speak to say that that these old texts speak, not through finding a lost original, not through determining an historical event, not even through finding what it is that these stories

“mean” to say. The stories appear as the ways that human beings speak of their experience to one another. The stories appear as a making sense of the world, and as a re-making sense of the world as the future flies past us to become the past. The stories speak most profoundly when we let the stories be stories, rather than convert them to authoritative history or infallible doctrine.

The story it seems requires the tellers of the story, and the hearers of the story to take their place in front of the text.

In front of the text, I read stories. I read them not to primarily understand some past time, but to understand this time. I read them not to hear about some past word of God, but to hear some present address.

In front of the text I also tell stories. As the public reader and teller of stories among this people, I do handle them. I highlight certain parts. I mute others. I twist certain parts into something they were not before. (Indeed, the Christian practise of reading the wilderness wanderings of Israel in the context of the *Christian* Lenten season is one of those given twists.) I tell the stories that the people who hear them will hear a reading not of a past time, a past word of God, but that they may hear a reading of this time, that they may hear some present address.

8. Postlude

A story I have told in front of the text based on Luke 15:11-32, and in front of a people:

There was once a home. In the home lived a father with his two sons. The younger son said to his father, “I am sick of this place. I am sick to death of you. Give me my inheritance now, so I can leave.” So the father did. He gave his son the share of the home property that would— at his own death— be his. The young man sold the land. He bought a cherry red Corvette, packed into the car three things: his

saxophone, his Television, and his stereo system— and at the last minute, he slipped a picture of the farm into his now bulging wallet— and drove away from home. The young man drove into the city. There he rented a penthouse. There he threw parties every weekend. There he met many people that he would call, “good friends.” There he would spend money on himself and on his good friends. There he would find work playing music for local night clubs and bars. But there, it began also, to unravel. The economy failed. There was no more work in the bars. His money disappeared. His good friends disappeared. He had to give up his penthouse. He found himself on the street, sleeping on a park bench at night, asking passers-by for a few dollars during the day. Then one day he opened his thin wallet and found all that was left in it: the old picture of the farm home. He said to himself, “Back home even the hired hands have a bunkhouse; they eat a good meal each day. What if I go back to the old man and tell him: ‘I’m real sorry’; tell him, ‘I’ve been a bad sinner’; tell him, ‘I’m not good enough to be called your son’; tell him, ‘I’ll be your hired hand if you’ll let me.’ Then at least I won’t be so cold, so hungry.” So the son found a local clergyman and told him a story of how his father was dying and how he needed to get home and how he didn’t have any money because you see, he had cancer and the drugs were expensive, and his wife was sick, too, and his baby boy needed food. The pastor took him to the Greyhound bus station and paid his fare. On the bus the young man practiced his lines. “Father, I have been wrong. Father I have sinned against you— no, I’ll say, against *God* and you (Dad always was into that religious bunk)— Father I have sinned against God and against you and am no longer worthy to be called your son. But let me come back as a hired hand.” All the way home he practiced. All night the bus travelled. In the early morning the bus stopped at the side of the highway, and let off a ragged looking young man. He walked the mile of gravel road toward the farmhouse, practicing, practicing. “Father

I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Let me be your hired man. Father I have sinned against heaven and against you. Let me be your hired man.” Over and over. Then the young man looked up. An old man was running toward him. He wore a house coat and slippers. Half his face was shaven the other was covered in shaving cream. He was crying. The young man began, “Father, I have si. . . ” — but he made it no further. Strong arms embraced him. A familiar hand patted his back, stroked his hair. “Oh, my son. My son, my son, my son. You are home.”

Chapter 3. Palm Sunday - profundity: In the midst of allegory

1. Traditional act

All glory, laud and honor to you redeemer King,

To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

Palm Sunday arrives. We process into the sanctuary— two hundred of us. The children lead the way strewing the green palms fronds on the red carpet.

The company of angels are praising you on high;

Creation and all mortals in chorus make reply.

Behind them are the people. Two side-by-side bear lit candles to be placed in receptacles at the front. Behind them are those bearing the red paraments, decorations for the altar and pulpit. Following them, an elderly woman is carrying a large red banner, "Celebrate" it reads. Behind her a young man is carrying the large missal, the altar hymn book. Another bears the processional Bible. Still others bear the altar candles. Many carry flowers and greenery to set about the chancel. On the way to the front the pastor sets his red stole over his shoulders. All the while the people sing, and the trumpet blazes from the balcony:

The multitude of pilgrims with palms before you went

Our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present (Theodolph of Orleans, 1978, p. 108).

The processional reaches the front. Paraments are tacked and Velcroed into place. Candles are placed and lit. The pastor takes his place as the presider just as the last of the procession reaches the front— a little girl bearing a single white candle. The Christ candle.

2. Introduction

The procession of Palm Sunday puts into play strangely-named objects and features of the worship space which are usually merely present. The three-part structure of the space itself is set in motion by the actions of parade. The parade begins with the people lining up in the entry, in the *narthex*— anciently, a place of preparation at the back of the church (O.E.D). It begins with preparation in the place of preparation. The procession moves into the main seating area, the nave— from the Latin *navis*, a ship. The ship is the vessel for those in the midst of a journey (it also has connections to Noah's ark, a ship of rescue). The procession makes its way to the front of the church, the chancel— from the Latin *cancelli*, a lattice-work railing. It is a place set aside as the place in which God is present in the word, and the bread and wine. The procession moves from a place of preparation through the people's "ship," toward the place of God's presence, from narthex, through nave, to chancel.

The processional also puts into play the unique and strangely named furniture of the place of worship. The processional moves past the baptismal font which stands at the entry to the nave. The font— from Latin *fundo*, to pour out— is the place of beginning, the way *in* to the ship. The procession makes its way to the centre of the chancel where stands the altar— derived from the Latin *altus*, high. The altar is the place where prayers are offered by the pastor, and where the bread and wine are prepared for communion. To the left and right of the altar are the pulpit— from the Latin *pulpitum*, a scaffold or stage; and lectern— from the Latin *lego*, to read. The pulpit is normally the place from which the sermon— from the Latin *sermonis*, speech— is delivered.

Those in the procession place on the odd sounding furniture the vestments— from the Latin, *vestio*, to clothe. Paraments— from the Latin *parare*, to adorn or equip— of rich fabric are hung on the pulpit, altar and lectern. During the days of Lent, the colors of the vestments are a deep solemn purple. During festivals— Christmas, Epiphany, Easter— a

festive white would appear. During the time of hope and expectation, Advent, a royal blue would appear. During ordinary days— about half the year— vestments are the green of growth. The vestments that those in procession place on the furnishings on Palm Sunday are red, and remain red until Thursday night of Holy Week. The red of fire, and of blood, and of passion.

Once in place, the red paraments are unfurled on the furniture. The paraments bear a collection of symbols and lettering in gold thread. The white Christmas and Epiphany paraments are often marked with images of candles, cradles, mangers, shells, stars, shepherd staffs. The green paraments for the non-festival year are often marked with sheaves or heads of wheat— one Regina church also displays a grain elevator on a green parament. The purple Lent paraments are often marked with various symbolic crosses. The white Easter paraments are often emblazoned with lettering of various languages: *הללוהו* — Hebrew, *Hallelu*, praise, *yah*, an abbreviation of the four-consonant *יהוה* the unspeakable holy name of God. The Latin phrase *sanctus sanctus sanctus* (holy holy holy) often appears on the altar parament. Lettering may also include strange looking abbreviations in various languages: *IHS* — the first three Greek letters in the name Jesus; *XP* — the chi rho, first two letters in the Greek name Christ; *AΩ*, the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, symbolic of the infinite one. Curiously abbreviations rarely appear in English. “AZ” does not translate the *AΩ*. “Jes” does not replace the *IHS*. The strangeness of the ancient language is often retained.

The colorful and embroidered vestments also are placed on the pastor in this parade. The pastor is first “covered” by one of a number of robes— my own is the alb, a long ancient looking flax robe bound with a rope at the waist. The symbol of the pastoral office is the stole— from Greek *stol-e*, garment. It is the stole that bears, like the furniture, the colors of the day, matching the seasonal colors of the paraments, and like the paraments, bears also ornate symbols and lettering in various languages.

The visual procession is surrounded in sound. “All Glory Laud and Honor” is sung by the people in procession, by the congregation seated in the nave, and led by the choir, trumpets, and organ significantly above us in the choir *loft*— from the Anglo Saxon *lyft*, air or sky. The music like the paraments has a certain color. During Christmas, carols are sung. During the season of preparation, Advent, carols are not to be sung. During Easter, celebrative music is sung. During the Lenten wilderness we must hear dark music. Except on this special day of Palm Sunday, the sound of the trumpet blazes above us, the bright music of the parade surrounds us.

The astonishing profundity of the worship space is brought into play in the procession. Profundity— from Latin *pro*, forward or far, and *fundus*, bottom— speaks of “having great depth”; of “descending far below the surface”; of “depth” of meaning. The profundity of the worship space is literally brought forward in the procession, the traditionary act of Palm Sunday. Profundity and depth, are caught up in ancient conversations about allegory.

3. Allegory

Allegory has roots in the Greek *allos*— something different, and *agorein*— to say (O.E.D.). Allegory is about words or actions that say something else than they appear to merely say. The narthex is not simply an entry. The nave is not simply a meeting area. The stole not simply a scarf. The Palm Sunday text is not merely an historical event.

Allegory however, is dispatched by the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic, as we have seen before. Martin Luther (1989) writes:

In the interpretation of Holy Scripture the main task must be to derive from it some sure and plain meaning, especially because there is such a variety of interpreters. . . Almost all of these not only do not concern themselves with the story but bury it and confuse it with their nonsensical allegories (p. 121).

The destruction of tradition in the Protestant's "plain meaning" and later in Descartes' philosophical doubt, sounded the death knell for allegorical interpretation. Allegory in undermining the plain sense, in opening multiple interpretive possibilities, was to be eliminated wherever possible.

Yet again, in the midst of the traditionary acts of Lent, in the procession of Palm Sunday specifically, we surround ourselves in allegory. Generous conversants in allegory, are available in pre-Reformation conversants, and again in the recent work to rehabilitate allegory.

4. Conversants: Philo, Origen, Gregory

Allegory in some of its earliest known forms is found in the Stoics' interpretation of the works of Homer. The Stoics read Homer's tales of the carrying-on of the gods on divine Olympus and found them offensive. The Stoa re-read the meaning of Homer's tales of the gods through a method they would call *hyponoia*— under-meaning. *Hyponoia* often through etymology could un-cover a more moral and useful interpretation. A passage from Cicero includes a speech from the Stoic Balbus in which Balbus argues that the god Saturn meant to lift up the virtue of the aged, for Saturn etymologically, meant, "sated by years" (Grondin, 1994, p. 25). *Hyponoia* allowed for another meaning to be brought from below the surface, an apparently more moral, rational, useful interpretation. Allegory gradually became synonymous with the general term for a sort of apologetic covering of ancient text. Something far more pro-found than "covering-up" is hinted at in *hyponoia* however, and the depths begin to be plumbed by the Alexandrians and by early Christian interpreters.

Philo takes up the Stoics' method of *hyponoia*— under meaning— in his allegorical interpretation of the Torah. Philo, like the Stoa, rules that whenever a text presents an insoluble difficulty, or contains no sense, or a contradiction, or something inadmissible or unworthy of Scripture, an allegorical meaning must be *un-covered*, to cover the literal sense.

Philo would say that the allegorical reading of the difficult passages is not covering them, it is simply reading them more deeply, an excavation of the “deeper” meaning which a difficult text demands. This deeper layer of meaning provides what is misunderstood by moderns as simply a “cover-up” for the difficult. Philo, in fact, would also excavate a deeper allegorical meaning from texts that are *not* in need of apologetic covering. Philo allegorizes the migration of Abraham from Haran to Canaan (*On the Migration of Abraham*), though it was not a difficult or offensive text. The literal text of Scripture is of the travels of a wise man, but the “deeper” allegorical sense is of “a virtue loving soul in its search for the true God.” For Philo indeed, it is not the historicity of the characters in the Bible that is important; the characters “of the Scripture” were written for a deeper purpose:

Now probably there was an actual man called Samuel, but we conceive of the Samuel of the Scripture, not as a living compound of soul and body, but as a mind which rejoices in the service and worship of God and that only. For his name by interpretation means “appointed or ordered to God,” because he thinks that all actions that are based on idle opinions are a grievous disorder (*On Drunkenness*, 144).

Philo brings up from “under” the deeper meaning also of not-difficult texts. Allegory is not primarily about “covering-up” it is about the attempt to “uncover” the deep meaningfulness of the text.

The interpretation is rooted in a certain metaphysical cosmology. Philo says that the words of the text are like shadows cast by the allegorical substance beneath or behind them (*On the Confusion of Tongues*, 190). Allegory in this case is seen as a raising to view what is only seen in “shadow” in the literal sense, what is hiding “beneath” or under the apparent. Allegory is the attempt to unearth what had been buried beneath the words of the literal meaning.

The effect of the unearthing is startling. Philo's allegorical interpretation is one that takes what appears to be simply a text of the past to be, on a deeper level, the text also of the present. In *On the Posterity and Exile of Cain*, Philo reads the Torah such that his present world and present people appear.

When He lead us forth out of Egypt, that is out of our bodily passions, as we journeyed along the track barren of pleasure, we encamped at Marah, a spot having no water fit to drink, but water wholly bitter (Exod. xv. 23) for the delights that come by way of the eyes and ears and that of the appetite and sexual lusts bewitched us with their haunting music, ever ringing in our ears. And whenever we wished wholly to sever ourselves from them, they would pull us, drawing us on and gripping us, and persistently casting their spells over us, so that. . . we planned to retrace our course and return to Egypt, the refuge of a dissolute and licentious life. . . (155-157).

Through allegory the people of Israel's experiences become the experience of a later people. And this happens for Philo not as a covering of the text, but as an un-covering of the deep meaning of the text.

Origen of Alexandria, like the Stoa and Philo, applies allegorical interpretation to a canonical text— the text for Origen being the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament, gradually, coming to be called among Christians at that time, "Old Testament and New Testament." The allegorical method of Origen is similar to that of the Stoa and Philo. Like Philo, Origen's allegory appears at first sight as an apologetic, covering of difficult texts— in both Old and New Testaments. Origen's allegory also seeks out "something else"— other people than the people of "that" ancient time.

Origen (1997a) in his Commentary on Matthew would describe allegorical interpretation indeed as finding "a treasure hidden in a field." The field is the Scriptures, he says, but the treasures hidden in the field are the thoughts concealed and lying under that

which is manifest, “of wisdom hidden in a mystery” (X:5). More specifically in the deep folds of every Scripture Origen would find, “even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden” (X:5). Origen’s allegory involves drawing from the depths of the text a sense of the Christ. Old Testament stories through allegory would say “something else.” For Origen “type” becomes a key to allegorical interpretation. Isaac in being offered as a sacrifice by his father becomes a type of Christ; Joshua, successor of Moses, whose name means “God saves” becomes a type of Christ; Solomon, who receives the Queen of Sheba becomes a type of “church” for the foreigner, every Levitical law has its Christian spiritual interpretation (Crouzel, 1989, p. 71). Put differently, the old text is called on to speak again for this people— for Origen, the Christian people of his own time and place.

Often Origen’s allegory is seen as a way of simply covering the Old Testament in the interests of the dominance of the New Testament. But Origen also allegorizes the New Testament. For Origen, interpreting the New Testament is guided by 1 Corinthians 13:12.

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Origen calls the New Testament the “temporal gospel,” an image of reality not the reality itself— which will only be seen later, face-to-face. Interpretation of the New Testament is still a seeking of the deeply hidden meaning, as in interpreting the Old. Both are allegorized as seeking the One to come. So for Origen the Bible, text, New or Old Testaments, is only known allegorically, in plumbing the depths, in exploring the depths of the old texts. In finding beneath appearance, the hidden reality.

Origen also begins to see several layers in the depths of meaning: body, soul and spirit. The first level, the body, is the interpretation of the “common and historical sense”. The second, the soul, is deeper, the moral interpretation. The third, the spirit, is deeper still,

the mystical sense. His three layers carry a sense of multiple layers, of deep texture in the canonical texts, which allegorical interpretation recognizes.

Gregory the Great, just before the Middle Ages, lays out a way of allegorical interpretation related to that of Origen. But Gregory significantly adds to the conversation. Gregory's massive *Commentary on Job* (1997) became one of the most loved commentaries in the Middle Ages— with reason. In the preface he describes to his readers his way of handling the layers of Scripture:

First we lay the foundations of historical fact; then we lift up the mind to the citadel of faith through allegory; finally through the exposition of the moral sense we dress the edifice in its colored raiment. . . . Sometimes we neglect to expound the overt historical sense lest we be retarded getting to deeper matters. Sometimes passages cannot be expounded literally because when they are taken in that superficial way they offer no instruction to the reader but only generate error (Prol:3).

Gregory describes three-levels of interpretation: a literal level, which sometimes “offers no instruction”; an allegorical level which is deeper; and a moral level. Gregory would draw from the depths of the text several layers, sometimes covering one in the “exposition,” sometimes another. Fascinatingly, Gregory would also describe the moral as vestment:

We dress the edifice in its colored raiment.

The deeper senses are uncovered, drawn forth naked as it were, and then “dressed” “vested” in “colored raiment.” Connections with the Palm Sunday processional are tantalizing.

Gregory's *Commentary on Job* centers on the tale of the “godly” person— Job— who nonetheless encounters a series of devastating personal tragedies, and on Job's angry questions to God about the reason for his ill fate. The text is well suited to Gregory's own time and place, with the fall of Rome imminent. Job, for Gregory, is allegorically, the believers in the midst of their own inexplicable suffering.

So every saint, when left unassailed, seems worthless and meek, but when the flail of persecution strikes him, right away you sense the true flavor of the man. Whatever had seemed weak and worthless before is transformed into a fervent zeal for virtue. The things he had gladly concealed in time of tranquillity he is forced to reveal under pressure of tribulation. So the prophet well said, "By day the Lord commanded his mercy, and at night he declared it" (Pref:III:6).

If in the daytime, mercy was commanded by God, in the night, in their own night, the "mercy of God" was declared to the people. In the Job commentary Gregory makes use of allegory to unearth his own people, from the text, and from their own despair.

It is rather odd looking exegesis. When Job speaks of his "head," Gregory sees that Job refers to Christ (the head of the church). When Job speaks of his "body," Gregory sees the church the "body" of Christ. And yet the image is somehow powerful. The suffering head of the church is the crucified one, suffering as his people suffer. And the body, the suffering community of Gregory's world, the "good" but still agonizing Job, is suffering like the Head, yet for a mysterious unknowable purpose. Job endures. Job provides Gregory's people words of hope. For Gregory, the Biblical figures, Job among them, show (allegorically) a way of bearing misfortune.

They let us walk along the pathways of our night sure of foot. . . (Pref:VI:13).
Deep in the abyss, the people are offered a meaning Gregory excavates from the profound words of the Job text.

5. Conversants: Clifford, Gadamer

Allegory, as we have seen, has been driven from the house of the interpreter. With tradition, it has been peeled away by the Protestant Cartesian. And yet it arises it seems, unbidden, in the human world, when people seek to understand a text or a world.

James Clifford's (1986) fascinating article in anthropology notes the presence of allegory in anthropological studies. Clifford refers to Marjorie Shorstak's book, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*:

I lay there and felt the pains as they came, over and over again. Then I felt something wet, the beginning of the childbirth. I thought, "Eh hey, maybe it is the child." I got up, took a blanket and covered Tashay with it; he was still sleeping. Then I took another blanket and my smaller duiker skin covering and I left. Was I not the only one? The only other woman was Tashay's grandmother; and she was asleep in her hut. So, just as I was, I left. I walked a short distance from the village and lay down beside a tree. . . . After she was born, I sat there; I didn't know what to do. I had no sense. She lay there, moving her arms about, trying to suck her fingers. She started to cry. I just sat there, looking at her. I thought, "Is this my child. Who gave birth to this child?" Then I thought, "A big thing like that. How could it possibly have come out of my genitals?" I sat there and looked and looked and looked (Shorstak, cited in Clifford, p. 98-99).

Clifford notes that the ethnography is an account of a woman bearing a child alone in the Kalahari desert. But it does not remain a simple account. A reader finds himself imagining a different cultural norm. A reader finds himself recognizing a common human experience, "the quiet heroism of childbirth." The account, first an account of an unfamiliar culture, becomes at the same time, an account of his own culture. The ethnography inevitably becomes, "an allegory of (female) humanity" (p. 99).

Clifford would say that even the prominent scientific studies of Margaret Mead demonstrate allegory more than science.

Mead's 'experiment' in controlled cultural variation now looks less like science than allegory— a too sharply focused story of Samoa suggesting a possible America (p. 102).

But the allegory in the work, Clifford says, is not the work's weakness, it is its strength.

These kinds of transcendent meanings are not abstractions or interpretations "added" to the original "simple" account. Rather, they are the conditions of its meaningfulness (p. 99).

Unless the study of Samoa matters in some way, unless it means something, for somewhere else, to someone else, the study itself is *meaningless*. Clifford rules out any sense of "non-allegoric" description, the claim of the "positivist" and of "empirical science," as oddly, a romanticist "search for unmediated meaning in the event" (p. 100). Like Schleiermacher, the non-allegoric positivist wants to get above the text or the story, and see the event in its totality, in order to know the person, in order to commune with the author's soul.

Gadamer (1989) takes up the conversation for the "rehabilitation" of allegory. *Rehabilitation* takes up the sense that allegory is that with which we live, as Clifford had noted. It also takes up the sense of *re*-habilitation, that allegory, post-reformation, post-enlightenment is to be lived with differently—rehabilitated.

Allegory is given a "home" in Gadamer's unfolding of language. For Gadamer as we have heard, "language is the record of finitude." Language is constantly being formed and developed, added to, as it goes on expressing its experience of the world (p. 457). Gadamer notes that on the one hand, as Plato had recognized, "the word of language is both one and many." On one hand, we speak but "one" word to each other, and the unity of the word "unfolds step by step" in discourse. Gadamer however, raises the other side of the conversation on word:

But there is another dialectic of the word, which accords to every word of language an inner dimension of multiplication: every word breaks forth as if from a center and is related to a whole, through which alone it is a word. Every word causes the whole of language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole worldview that underlies it to appear (p. 458).

Beside the unfolding of one “word,” “step by step,” there is also this explosion of meaning from each word. Because the shepherd’s staff on my stole has been around the world of Jesus, the use of that “word” brings with it a sense of that place and time. It brings with it the world of sheep-herding in Palestine at the time of Jesus. It brings with it the Christmas story with shepherd’s on a hill “keeping watch over their flocks by night.” It brings with it also the world of North American shepherding with dogs and ATV’s. It brings with it also the sense of shepherds as pastors. It brings with it also the bishop’s heavy and impressive looking staff— the crozier. It brings with it the infinitely complex experiences of the people gathered in the worship space, with sheep and shepherd’s staffs and pastors and bishops and more. The word brings the possibility of any part of the “whole worldview” that underlies it to appear. Such a “word” embodies what Gadamer calls the “living virtuality” of speech.

All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is laid up within it an infinity of meaning to be explicated and laid out (p. 458).

But allegory is also found *re-habilitated* in Gadamer. Gadamer, does not seek to re-establish the Alexandrian allegorical method of metaphysically unearthing deep meanings from mere appearances. This he would regard as a sort of unearthing of the lost dead tree. It is indeed, this ancient and dead metaphysics that Gadamer says underlies the modern sense of symbol.

The symbol is the co-incidence of the sensible and the non-sensible; allegory, the meaningful relation of the sensible to the non-sensible (p. 74).

Allegory rather is *re-habilitated* in the context of language. Allegory recognizes a sense of depth and meaningfulness not through Alexandrian metaphysics. Allegory, as we live with it, as it makes its habitat with us, can be lived with without resorting to metaphysical symbolism. Allegory, says Gadamer, is rather “a coordination created by convention and

dogmatic agreement” (p. 74), through the depth— not of metaphysics— but through the depth of language itself.

Nisa’s story of childbirth in the Kalahari resonates with allegorical meaning; Mead’s study of Samoa resonates with allegorical meaning; Philo’s Samuel resonates with allegorical meaning; the worship space “nave” resonates with allegorical meaning; through the depths of language itself.

6. Understanding address in the midst of allegory

The usual method of understanding the address in the worship space is Cartesian. We perch high over the symbols, the images, the texts, and look back at the event that brought them, or what “original” meaning was intended. Then the symbols are explained to the people. While such explanations may be instructive, they neither explain nor bear the sense of address that is in the midst of the Palm Sunday processional, and in the year-round profundity of the worship space.

In front of (rather than above) the profound “mess” of the worship space a different sort of address may emerge.

For a moment I will refer to the aural space, to the processional hymn, All Glory Laud and Honor, a ninth century lyric, a seventeenth century tune sung on this particular Palm Sunday in Regina, Saskatchewan, 1998. The same hymn however, later that year in the same community, was requested by a parishioner for the funeral service of his wife, Marie. The community gathered and sang the hymn at a service that celebrated her life, a service that lifted up a profound sense of hope in the midst of grief. The hymn “fit” that particular day. Since that day of its meaningful appearance at Marie’s funeral, All Glory Laud and Honor— in the way of language— has gathered into itself another sense for this community. It now bears, for myself, and for this community, not simply the delight of the Palm Sunday parade, but also the memory of Marie, her unexpected death, and the service in

celebration of her life. The hymn, having taken a meaningful part in the funeral, took on allegorical depth. It became *meaning-ful*. It had *been* somewhere else; it came to mean “something else” than a Palm Sunday hymn. It gained an allegorical address.

Words bear within themselves something of where they have been. That particular hymn had doubtless, “been places,” had been at many other places, since the ninth century. The wide collection of places and times where that hymn had been, and the events that it subsequently would bear, gives it potentially an infinite depth of meaning. It is a commonplace in the church, for certain hymns that have “been to” funerals, or to weddings, to bear with them a word, an address that Gadamer would describe, as the peculiar ability of language.

Returning to the visual space, the ancient “equipment” of worship: the paraments, the lettering, the font, the altar, the nave, the narthex; like the music, all bear within them an infinite number of appearances in the life of the people who gather around them. These visual “words” have been many places. They bear within them the places they have been, the events in which they participated. They become *meaning-ful*. The meaningfulness of the font for instance, is not explained — high above it — by what it meant originally (though this understanding may also be important). In front of the font, rather, we speak allegorically, of the *meaningful-ness* of the font. Of that day when our child was baptized. Of that day Cecil was baptized.

The oddity of the allegorical address of these visual or aural “words” is that at any moment one of these “words” may suddenly open and bring to the people or to a person another place, another time, in which a certain meaningfulness emerges.

Finally, in the midst of the allegorical depth something else may be understood. We layer furniture; we layer the one in the flax alb. While the layering is meaningful, and each piece may be explainable by the people, the layering as a totality seems to *mean to say* that what it is saying is not sayable. What is going on in the layering is not plain, and *it means*

to be not plain. The Alexandrians relied on a cosmology of appearance and depth. Gadamer relies on the depth of language itself. But it is the depth that is the most interesting.

If we could have said it plainly, simply, flatly, we would have. Instead we decorate, vest, enact, sing, represent, process, in a profound effort to say something that we mean to say is quite un-sayable. The un-speakable '777' is not un-speakable because it is forbidden, but because it is not actually speakable. In speaking of '777' in speaking of the divine, the procession of the paraments, the deep layering of the furniture, the music, appear as, what Buber might have called "a legitimate stammering" (quoted in McConnell, 1986, p. 17).

7. Postlude

Robert Coles (1989) tells the tale of a conversation with a friend. The man is very ill— Coles did not know how ill.

He called me shortly before he died to tell me he'd not be keeping our next "appointment." He had kept using that word, in spite of my efforts to rid both of us of it. I hastened to offer an alternate date. "No need for that," he told me. Stupidly, fearfully unaware (not only patients "deny"), I pressed the matter, so that he had to end it, finally, by saying a firm good-bye: "I hope I'll see you anon." That last word succeeded— by its slight awkwardness, its antiquity, its rendering of the present and the future, its capacity to break through conventional, temporal statements— in conveying what he had long known better than I: that death had no intention of waiting very long for him. That word, "anon" was the next to last one I heard from Ed. I promised, too wordily, an imminent visit, and he said, "Good-bye," and meant it. Not long afterward I was sitting in a church, listening to his friends sing of him, and sitting in a class, talking with future doctors about the singing he did during his stay on earth (p. 96).

Anon. The Oxford English Dictionary simply defines anon as coming from the Anglo Saxon, “on one,” that is, without break, at another time. But anon has also a sort of strangeness, an “awkward-ness” that came in part from its age.

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and *anon* with joy, receiveth it (*King James Bible*, 1961, Matthew 13: 20).

The single ancient word *anon* bore in itself the possibility of bringing forward an alternate world, transforming the conversation from one of schedules and appointments into one of the profound world of life and death.

Every word causes the whole of language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole world view that underlies it to appear.

Chapter 4. The Days Between - invitation: In the midst of myth

1. Traditional acts

Holy Monday: We gather again. The palm branches are still strewn on the red carpet. The red paraments still decorate the altar and pulpit. Candles flicker on the altar. The service begins with the invitation:

Yesterday we entered with Jesus, waving Palm branches. The whole world was on our side. We knew the Kingdom of God had come among us. At day's end, Jesus looked around the temple, and left abruptly. We returned with him to Bethany, a little village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Come with me, come with me to Jerusalem. Where we follow Jesus.

We speak a Psalm together, say a prayer, and hear Monday's story from the Gospel according to Mark: the disturbing story of Jesus rushing into the temple and violently clearing the outer court of the money-changers. All day long he stood in the middle of the court blazing, and no one, not the Roman soldiers, not the religious establishment, dared say a word. We close the evening with corporate confession of our sin, and with a song by Carey Landry (1980):

Lead us on, O Lord, Lead us on.

Lead us where we dare not go

Lead us on O Lord, Lead us on.

Be with us as we face new days (p. 66).

The service ends with the announcement of the itinerary.

Tonight we return to Bethany. Tomorrow we rise again to follow Jesus.

Holy Tuesday: The service— still in a palm strewn sanctuary— begins again with the invitation.

Sunday we followed Jesus into Jerusalem, waving our palm branches. The whole world was on our side. . . . Yesterday we returned to Jerusalem. We watched wide-eyed as Jesus confronted the ways of the world— our ways. Come with me now to Jerusalem, where we rise again to follow Jesus.

The service presents Tuesday's story, the confrontations between Jesus and the religious establishment recorded in the Gospel according to Mark. The prayers and hymns reflect the sense of conflict in the world. The itinerary concludes the service:

Tonight we return to Bethany. Tomorrow we rise again to follow Jesus.

Holy Wednesday: The service begins with the invitation .

Come with me to Jerusalem. Where Sunday we followed Jesus into Jerusalem, waving our palm branches. . . . Where Monday we watched wide-eyed as Jesus confronted the ways of the world— our ways. Where yesterday all hell broke loose. Everyone who was anyone opposed Jesus. Where last night we slept little. Come with me to Jerusalem.

This story of the day however is one in which Jesus tells the followers to abide in Bethany. To rest. To go for a walk. Read a book. And to get ready to go to a party that night at the home of Simon. The story is the happening at the party, the anointing of Jesus' feet by the prostitute Mary Magdalene, the offence taken by the onlookers, and Jesus' reproof of the onlookers: "She is doing a beautiful thing for me. She is preparing me for burial. What she is doing will be remembered." The service continues with the invitation for all those who seek wholeness in spirit or body to receive the anointing with olive oil. As the people kneel, the pastor marks each with the oil. It has been a day of rest and healing at Bethany. The service concludes with the itinerary:

We sleep tonight. Tomorrow we rise again to follow Jesus.

2. Introduction

The days between are the days *between* Palm Sunday and the *Triduum*, the three last days of Lent: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil. The services, simple services about a half hour in length, do not memorialize particularly significant events. Most Protestant congregations indeed, do not meet during these days (though the services are a more common practice among Orthodox Christians). They are for the most part a simple gathering to hear a reading, pray, and sing several hymns. Yet in a quite unique way, the services prepare the people for the events of the *Triduum*.

The readings for the three days between are identical each year. They are the stories of the three days that follow Palm Sunday. The stories come from the Gospel according to Mark because of the four gospel writers, Mark alone recounts events for the three days between “Palm Sunday” and Maundy Thursday. Mark presents the cleansing of the temple as happening on Monday; the disputations on Tuesday; the anointing by Mary in Bethany on Wednesday. For Matthew the cleansing of the temple happens on the same day as the parade with Palms, Monday is a day of teaching and disputations, with the anointing happening on Tuesday ; for Luke the entry and the cleansing of the temple both happen on Sunday, with no days of the week given for other teachings or events (and no anointing at all) before Thursday; for John the cleansing of the temple happens years earlier, while in the last week, after Palm Sunday, Jesus disappears after Sunday until Thursday. Mark’s story alone allows for the daily and eventual unfolding of the week— though we return to John for the main Maundy Thursday text, and for the Good Friday readings.

The services of these three days re-introduce story, but story in a different dimension. Story continues to show itself as human words, with several accounts of events presenting little “historical” interest for those in front of the story. These traditionary acts however introduce a profound sense of story “as invitation.” Story as a “world” in which

to see one's past. Story as a "world" toward which one might direct one's future. "Come with me to Jerusalem."

The invitation to the people is to not simply hear about an old *story*, but, in some fashion, to "dwell" in it. This dimension of story as "dwelling place" reopens an understanding of story already discussed. It opens the sense of story as myth.

3. Myth

Myth— from the Greek, *mythos*— is "purely fictitious narrative." Myth, involves "a supernatural person, action or event" and "embodies some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena." Myth is distinguished from allegory and legend which "imply a nucleus of fact" (O.E.D). Myth, almost before the word is completely pronounced, is flattened by the definition of the dominant hermeneutic.

Myth outside the dictionary, has similarly come to mean something patently false. Newspapers and magazines are filled with articles and advertisements "debunking" various "myths"— often numbered: Myth #1, Myth #2, Myth #3 etc.. Myth has come to mean something once thought to be true but that is not, in fact, true. It has come to mean something that people believe, that should have been discarded long ago. Myth, indeed, is set out as the opposite of fact. Myth is about old antiquated tales. Pre-modern superstition. Un-scientific mysteries. Cock-and-bull stories.

Conversants who set out to silence myth will not be brought forward here. They are abundant. Even the *Oxford English Dictionary* speaks as though the falsity of myth is self-evident. Other understandings of myth, however are appearing who find as Eco (1994) that, "the paramount function of myth" is "to find shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience" (p. 87). A number of conversants will be brought forward who make use of this sense of mythic story as dwelling place in contemporary settings. A number of

conversants will also be brought forward who will argue more directly for the recovering of a place for myth.

4. Appearances of mythic story in contemporary settings

Robert Coles (1989) takes up story, including story in certain novels, in this sense of myth's capacity to provide a "dwelling place." Coles make use of stories in therapy with his patients. In one instance, Coles speaks of the use of various stories by his patient, Phil, a fifteen year old polio patient. He tells of Phil's reading of *Catcher in the Rye*.

He began a lively monologue about that novel, on Holden, on Pencey Prep, on "phonies," on what it means to be honest and decent in a world full of "phoniness." Holden's voice had become Phil's; and uncannily, Holden's dreams of escape, of rescue (to save not only himself but others), became Phil's. The novel had, as he put it, "got" to him: lent itself to his purposes as one who was "flat out"; and as one who was wondering what in life he might "try to catch" (p. 38).

Coles adds: "Holden's voice had become Phil's." Phil had found in the story a sort of place and a kind of language in which to sort out his own life. Story texts appear as a source of ways to speak our own stories. A medical colleague confided to Robert Coles:

We try to say what we're experiencing, and sometimes we can't find the words, and other times we're lucky we run into a poet who gives us the words (p. 100).

The story however, does not impose itself on the patient. Coles would also tell of Phil's quite different response to another story, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

Phil resisted that invitation; the book, brought to him by the friend, remained unread. He had glanced at it, seen its charged symbolism, its mix of hard realism and surrealism. . . . He decided to give me a terse explication, one I would never forget. "I'd like to leave this hospital, and find a friend or two, and a place where we could be happy, but I don't want to leave the whole world I know" (p. 38).

Lord of the Flies had not provided a “place” that Phil decided to enter.

Perhaps more importantly, story as a place to dwell provides more than simply an offer of vocabulary to express our own stories. Phil again, speaks of the novel *Huckleberry Finn*.

I read, and when I was done with the story, I felt different. It's hard to say what I mean. . . . I know that my mind changed after I read *Huckleberry Finn*. I couldn't get my mind off the book. I forgot about myself— no, I didn't actually. I joined up with Huck and Jim; we became a trio. They were very nice to me. I explored the Mississippi with them on the boats and on the land. I had some good talks with them. I dreamed about them. I'd wake up, and I'd know I'd just been out west, on the Mississippi. I talked with those guys and they straightened me out (p. 35)!

This text for Phil did not simply provide words to use to tell his own story. In *Huckleberry Finn* a sort of invitation came to Phil, to join, to come along, to be somewhere, to see something. It was an invitation which both drew Phil in and which brought a change in his way of thinking about life.

In psychotherapy, James Hillman (1983) in his tellingly titled *Healing Fiction* also presents story in the sense of myth as an integral part of psychotherapy. Freud could hear the words of the patient and place them into a single plot, the plot named after Oedipus (p. 11).

Every Freudian narrative comes out the same way and can be taken apart to show one answer to the question *why*. The mystery is repression (in one of many varieties), followed by passions, crimes, miseries (symptom formation), the involvement of the author (transference of the repressed), lifting of the repression through prolonged recognitions (psychotherapy), and the denouement of ending therapy (p. 10).

While Hillman is critical of Freud's "shaping of all shoes on one last," (p. 10) he argues, indeed, that the nature of psychotherapy is a working in story.

Ever since [Freud] we are all, in this field of psychoanalysis, not medical empiricists, but workers in story (p. 9).

Freud, is a writer of "pure fiction." The pschotherapist is involved in writing therapeutic fictions. Both in a sense, "write" their patients into a "healing fiction." Diagnostic stories like the Oedipus myth offer one vocabulary for "recognizing oneself" and allow a patient to "recapitulate one's life into the shape of the story" (p. 15). The "healing fiction" is up against the sustaining fiction in which the patient had previously been living. Psychotherapy becomes a sort of "battle of stories." Hillman speaks of one patient who told the story of her life as that of a victim. It was a "story" not a patient that needed to be "doctored," that "needed reimagining" (p. 17).

So I put her years of wastage into another fiction. . . . Hospital had been her finishing school. . . (p. 17).

In an ancient, and odd way, pschotherapy becomes "a contest between singers" (p. 17).

The psychotherapist, says Hillman, is a worker in stories, one who invites people to "recognize" themselves in (mythic) story. In fact, one who does battle with these fictions.

5. Recovering a place for myth

Northrop Frye (1982) takes up the place of myth. Myth, says Frye has two aspects. The first is that of story as it is recreated in literature. This sort of primary mythical material includes the folk tales, stories that may be told repeatedly in a culture purely for entertainment purposes. Secondary myth, says Frye, has a further connection.

Certain stories seem to have a peculiar significance: they are the stories that tell a society what is important for it to know, whether about the gods, its history, its laws,

or its class structure. These stories may be called myth in a secondary sense, a sense that distinguishes them from folktales (p. 33).

The secondary myth, these important stories of the gods, history, class structure are the stories that have come to be called myth in the sense of that which is proverbially false. Ironically, they were preserved for the opposite reason.

Mythical in this secondary sense, therefore means the opposite of “not really true: it means being charged with a special seriousness and importance (p. 33).

Mythical stories, sacred stories, were regarded as the stories that were not proverbially false, but were revered as stories that were proverbially true. These stories not only told a community who it was, it also provided a potential “program of action” (p. 49).

The stories of the Bible, he continues, have served as this secondary “myth,” have served as that which is “charged with a special seriousness.” The exodus of Israel from Egypt, for instance, makes an appearance as a myth in the civil rights movement in the United States in the last century. One of the spirituals sung within the civil rights movement is directly mythical.

Go down Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell old Pharaoh
Let my people go.

The spiritual laid claim to the story of the Exodus, laid claim to it as a “myth.” The myth provided a world to which the American blacks, and to which their leaders were invited. A myth invited a certain people to an understanding of who they are— slaves in “Egypt.” A myth provided also a certain people with an understanding of who they might become— free people. A myth provided a leader with an understanding of who he might be— bold Moses who had “been to the mountain.” A myth provided first a “dwelling place.” And second, the myth provided a program of action.

Frye notes that it is obviously the *myth* that is received by the American blacks, not the actual history. Whatever happened in Egypt in the time of Moses, it is the myth that is held dear, and with eerie similarity, re-lived.

The Israelites were not black, and nineteenth century-American blacks had no quarrel with ancient Egypt. The point is that when any group of people feels as strongly about anything as slaves feel about slavery, history as such is dust and ashes; only myth, with its suggestion of an action that can contain the destinies of those who are contemplating it, can provide any hope or support at all (p. 50).

What is claimed by the "American blacks" is not the historical event, but the myth.

Indeed, the great myths of deliverance, like the people of Israel being freed from slavery in Egypt, Frye adds, "speak of something that history gives us little encouragement to believe in" (p. 49). Only with great difficulty is the actual historical happening believable. But myth says Frye, and says the old spiritual, is not about the actual, "but about the possible" (p. 49).

Richard Kearney (1991) in a call for a "critical hermeneutics of myth," argues that myth is closely bound up with tradition as a recollection and reinterpretation of the past (p. 64). But myth, unlike tradition, also presents a "utopian" sense of the future.

Without the backward look of myth, a culture is deprived of its memory. Without the forward look, it is deprived of its dreams (p. 64).

Myth however also brings danger. Myth may distort a culture's view of its past, ideologically pining after a "golden age" or zealously racing to a "messianic" future such that it is blinded to the realities of the present. It is this agency of distortion that gives myth its proverbial sense of falsity. Kearney calls for a "critical hermeneutics" to constructively hold together tradition and myth, a society's sense of memory and its dreams of utopia.

Kearney, with Ricoeur, notes that "demythologization" which has destroyed the

self-evident truth of myth, does not destroy the purpose of myth. In fact, the ruins of myth may be more fertile than its lost fortress.

It [modernity] means that we are no longer subject to the ideological illusion that myth explains reality. We are far less likely now to commit the error of believing that myth provides a true scientific account of history. Indeed it is arguable that it is the very demythologization of myth's ideological function which permits us to rediscover its genuine utopian function. Or, to put it another way: having eliminated the ideological abuse of myth as a false explanation of how things are, we are now free to appreciate the properly symbolic role of myth as an explanation of how things might be (p. 69).

"Come with me to Jerusalem."

6. Understanding address in the midst of myth

A Franciscan retreat centre near Regina has a painting of the Last Supper across one wall of the cafeteria. The mural portrays Jesus and the disciples at table. Jesus is at the centre of the table in first century garments. Around him are twelve disciples also in first century garb, but one notices that they, oddly, have a variety of symbolic crosses pinned to their cloaks. Children are, oddly, playing marbles to one side of the mural. Cats and dogs play at the other side. At the front of the table is a woman holding a basket of fruit. But beside the table is an older man in Franciscan garb *wearing black rimmed glasses*, clasping a leather bound Bible.

"Come with me to Jerusalem." The mural depicts what the invitation that begins Holy Week is about. The invitation is not simply to hear an historical event. It is not even to simply hear an historical story. The invitation is to enter into what Frye calls "secondary myth," to enter more deeply into the community of faith. To hear the stories of the week and then to find oneself "in the picture." To find in the myth, both a past and a future.

The myth, the “picture” invites the people into a memory, a *past*. It invites the people to see themselves as “Christian,” as those who are among the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. The myth, the picture invites the people also to a *future*. It invites the people to see themselves as following Jesus of Nazareth to somewhere. In the context of the traditionary act, it invites the people to see themselves following even “to where we dare not go.” It invites the people in this week, to see themselves as those following Jesus to a cross. It invites the people indeed, in this week to take up their own “cross” in loving acts of service.

It is the same way in the *Haggadah of the Passover* (1987). The parent is instructed to teach the children not about the Exodus, the deliverance from Egypt, as an event that happened to ancestors of a certain time, but rather in this way:

In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had come out of Egypt.

It is the same sort of story that was heard in the old spiritual, “Go down, Moses.” It is in a certain sense, the way of myth.

As with story more generally, to sit high above a mythic story, as the Protestant Cartesian would instruct, in order to look behind the text, is to not understand the myth at all. Whether Jesus actually rode into Jerusalem on a donkey or not, is not the issue of mythic story. Whether Jesus actually cleared the temple on Sunday or on Monday or several years before is not the issue for the people gathered before the text. What exactly Mark means to say when he originally wrote down the event is also not the issue of myth.

In one way, it is important to the people that *something* happened in the first century in Palestine. But what happened behind the text, is much less important than what happens *in front of it*. When we are invited to “Come with me to Jerusalem.”

What is the issue is whether in front of the myth a possible world opens, into which we can enter. A world which grants us a memory, but which more importantly, perhaps, gives us hope.

7. Postlude

It happened suddenly enough. It was a phonecall in the middle of the night. My father had a heart attack. Hospitalization. The family was called in. He did not know me. His eyes had a vacant look.

During the last week, when little was left of his memory of the world, he said these words out of his wilderness.

Guide me ever, great Redeemer,
 Pilgrim through this barren land.
 I am weak, but you are mighty;
 Hold me with your pow'r-ful hand.
 Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
 Feed me now and evermore,
 Feed me now and evermore....

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
 Bid my anxious fears subside;
 Death of death and hell's destruction,
 Land me safe on Canaan's side.
 Songs and praises, songs and praises,
 I will raise forevermore,
 I will raise forevermore
 (Williams, 1978, p 343).

I played this Lenten hymn on trumpet at his funeral a few days later. The gathering sang it with me. The moment had amazing power. The wilderness of days. The real sense of the unknown in the midst of these days. The journey of my father. The pictures of the home-stead in northern Saskatchewan. His illness. Our own journey from that place, into a

time of grief. And in the midst of this a hope spoken for this people in the midst of the journey, a crossing of the Jordan to come.

And of course my father had lived not one day of his life in Israel. Neither had I. Neither had the people who gathered to mourn him. Yet we were there together in the midst of the wilderness just the same. Looking toward to the Jordan. A word had spoken.

Chapter 5. Maundy Thursday - divestment: In the midst of ambiguity

1. Traditional act

Four empty chairs sit in the chancel, facing the front of the church. A tall man stands at the front facing the congregation. He is robed in a full length white alb, a blazing red chasuble is worn cloak-like over the shoulders, a large silver cross on a heavy silver chain hangs from his neck. He is Bishop J. Robert Jacobson.

Four of us make our way to the empty chairs. A teen-age boy, a child, an elderly woman, and myself. We sit down and take off our shoes, then stuff our socks into them. We wait barefoot. From the lectern a voice is reading John 13:1-4, the story of the footwashing. The bishop removes his cross from around his neck. He removes the chasuble and lays it over the communion rail. Then he removes his white robe. Finally the white collar of the clerical shirt is removed, followed by the shirt itself. In a worn, short-sleeved T-shirt, Bob stoops to pick up a towel, and an old chipped white water basin. He comes to us and kneels down. The footwashing is about to begin.

2. Introduction

The *Triduum*— three days— begins with the dramatic act of the footwashing on Thursday. The event above, unfolds my first experience of the act as a parish pastor with the visiting bishop presiding. It was the recovery of an old “Catholic” act of footwashing for me. But it was quite unforgettable. While the footwashing itself will be unfolded in the next chapter, it is the first act of the footwashing that is the focus here— the act of divestment.

Divestment is, at its simplest, a removal of clothes, whereas *investment* at its simplest, is to clothe. Investment has connections with “to place in authority”; it may even mean to “lay siege to” militarily, carrying a sense of surrounding and enclosing (O.E.D.).

Divestment then carries the antithesis of investment, that is, to let go of authority, to be “un-enclosed.”

Bishop J. Robert Jacobson first stood in-vested before us, wearing the chasuble and robe, bearing the crozier, the shepherd’s staff of the bishop— a banner of authority. In the di-vestment, he stripped down to his undershirt, the white working-shirt— just missing the pack of cigarettes folded in the sleeve. There was a nearly audible gasp among us as we looked on.

The “nearly audible gasp” during the act of divestment, during the moment when Bishop became Bob, points to an understanding of address as it emerges in the midst of ambiguity.

3. Ambiguity

Ambiguity— from the Latin, *ambi*, about, and *ago*, to drive— carries with it a sense of the “doubtful or uncertain” that which is “liable to be interpreted in two ways” “the indefinite” (O.E.D.). Ambiguity implies an unsettledness, an in-definite-ness. It is on one hand the bane of the Protestant “plain sense” of the word, on the other, the bane of Cartesian knowing. Ambiguity is seen by the Protestant as a failure to explain the “plain sense.” Ambiguity is seen by the Cartesian as a failure to arrive at something certain.

Yet in this traditionary act of Lent, in the divestment, ambiguity is what is most fascinating. The divestment of the bishop was moving. It was jarring. It was something we “talked about.”

Conversants on the place of ambiguity, appear particularly in the discussion of Biblical interpretation, when the Bible appears about to become book, Bob-in-a-T-shirt.

4. Conversant: Augustine

In Augustine's (1997) methodical work on Biblical interpretation, *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine addresses the difficulties, the gaps, the ambiguities that Scripture presents. He addresses difficult Biblical texts with "phrases which seem to ascribe severity to God and the saints" (III:17), "passages of Scripture in which approval is expressed of actions which are now condemned by good men" (III: 22), texts in which "one passage [is] susceptible of various interpretations" (III: 27). For Augustine— at least for the Augustine of *On Christian Doctrine*— these ambiguities are approached as problems to be— if you will— covered by a system of hermeneutic rules.

The coverage of the rules is both broad and specific. The first paragraph of the first book in *On Christian Doctrine* names what Augustine sees as broadly one of the main problems of interpretation:

There are two things on which all interpretation of Scripture depends: the mode of ascertaining the proper meaning, and the mode of making known the meaning when it is ascertained. We shall treat first of the mode of ascertaining, next of the mode of making known the meaning (I:1).

The main part of the problem of ambiguity, Augustine says, is solved by separating what a passage means from how it is being expressed. Some of the gaps and problems in Scripture come from misunderstanding the meaning, some from mis-representing the meaning. Ambiguity is covered here in modern sounding concerns about content and delivery. First the proper content is to be determined, then an effective method of delivery is designed. Gaps and embarrassments in Scripture are covered by a good grasp of meaning, and by effective delivery.

The first and most difficult task of closing the gaps for Augustine is settling on the "proper meaning." Rules for "ascertaining the proper meaning," are spelled out in the first three books of this four-book work. The problem of "ascertaining" meaning is

broadly defined as the connection of two concepts: things and signs (I:2). “Things,” for Augustine, have to do with the real— wood, stone, or cattle— whereas “signs” are those things “which are used to indicate something else.” They point, indicate, bring to mind. Conventional signs include nods of the head, flags on ships, hand motion, a look in the eyes, and of course words (II:3). A “thing,” is passed by means of a “sign” from one to another. The careful use of signs correctly passes on a thing. The goal of text is then to pass on a “thing” accurately by means of “signs.” When a sign does not pass on the thing, then the interpretation is incorrect, and the gap appears. What is required is the proper knowledge of signs and things in order to prevent ambiguity from appearing.

Ignorance of signs (II:10) may be overcome through the knowledge of languages, especially Greek and Hebrew (II:11). Augustine also affirms the use of “heathen” disciplines that can be an aid to ascertaining the meaning of things: history, natural science (II:46), the science of reasoning, mechanical arts, dialectic, the science of numbers (II:60). Knowledge covers the gap between things and signs, the ignorance that had previously prevented “ascertaining the proper meaning.”

There are some signs however that even with full knowledge, Augustine confesses, present ambiguity.

Signs are either proper or figurative. They are called proper when they are used to point out the objects they were designed to point out, as we say *bos* when we mean an ox, because all men who with us use the Latin tongue call it by this name. Signs are figurative when the things themselves which we indicate by the proper names are used to signify something else, as we say *bos*, and understand by that syllable the ox, which is ordinarily called by that name; but then further by that ox understand a preacher of the gospel, as Scripture signifies, according to the apostle’s explanation, when it says: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn” (III:15).

When a sign “ox” refers not just to the thing “ox” that needs corn, but to the thing “preacher” that needs wages, the sign is figurative, it signifies “something else” than it names.

But Augustine also tightly binds up figurative signs. He calls for an appeal to context to see how a text may be “dovetailed” (II:2) into plainer texts. If all else fails, the figurative passage is to be read “in harmony with the faith,” as to how it may be read that it build up faith, hope and love. In rule after rule, Augustine in-vests the Bible, covers its ambiguity with a chasuble of interpretative rules.

Augustine does confess that figurative language, unclear hazy language, is “more pleasing” both to his hearers, and to himself.

But why I view them with greater delight under that aspect than if no such figure were drawn from the sacred books, though the fact would remain the same and the knowledge the same, is another question, and one very difficult to answer (III:6). He finally falls on the solution that a meaning which is “attended with difficulty in the seeking gives greater pleasure in the finding.” Yet, nothing is found in the figurative passages that is not found in plain sight.

Accordingly the Holy Spirit has, with admirable wisdom and care for our welfare, so arranged the Holy Scriptures as by the plainer passages to satisfy our hunger, and by the more obscure to stimulate our appetite.

For almost nothing is dug out of those obscure passages which may not be found set forth in the plainest language elsewhere (III:6).

In other words, for Augustine, if gaps in interpretation, ambiguity of meaning exist even after every effort at clarity, it is simply an obscurity that is a device of delivery, that stimulates exploration.

The in-vestment, the covering of the ambiguous passages is evident and at times painfully contrived. Augustine defends King David’s adultery with Bathsheba, and his

murder of her husband (which as mentioned earlier, was brought to the King's attention in the prophet Nathan's parable of the two farmers).

The immoderate desire did not take up its abode with him but was only a passing guest. On this account the unlawful appetite is called even by the accusing prophet, a guest. For he did not say that he took the poor man's ewe-lamb to make a feast for his king, but for his guest (II: 30).

While the text is covered of its embarrassment, of its ambiguity, the sense of the story is also covered, muted by the sanitizing of the character of the Biblical hero.

Augustine's foreclosure of ambiguity is purposeful. The Scriptures for Augustine are the "instruments (as they may be called)" which are to build up love. The crucial importance of building love in humankind, underpins for Augustine, the necessity for upholding and defending the authority of the Scripture:

Now faith will totter if the authority of Scripture begin to shake. And then, if faith totter, love itself will grow cold. (I:37).

Foreclosing ambiguity, is about establishing authority. It is about defending the "faith." It is about defending the "instrument" through which a community is nourished in faith, and through which a community has come to meet the world in love.

Augustine's Bible stands before us. Problems are explained. Gaps are covered. Ambiguity is resolved. In a sense the work is comforting, settling. A sense of meaning is secured for the community.

And yet at the same time the Bible is profoundly muted. The embarrassments, the ambiguity, the gaps, the awkward angular tales are wrapped up and covered by "plain" meaning, appropriate meaning. Good King David who at the next moment could be unveiled by the Scripture as adulterer/murderer, is covered over by Augustine. Only the appropriate moral stories can be heard.

The Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic of explanation, plain sense, and closure finds in Augustine an early father (at least the Augustine of *On Christian Doctrine*). Augustine's part in the conversation may be seen as a refusal to allow the Bishop to divest himself to Bob, the Bible to divest itself to book, a refusal of the presence of ambiguity. While the move is a familiar one, it is not the universal rule among the early church fathers.

5. Conversant: Origen

Origen of Alexandria in *De Principiis*, (1997b) voices a startlingly different side of the conversation. Origen considers the difficulties in the very first chapters of the Bible, the narratives of creation. The difficulties are apparent in the biblical text's presentation of a seven day story of creation. In the text, each day God calls for something to come into being. The first day God says, "Let there be light"; "and there was light"; "and God said 'It is good.'" Each day a similar litany of sayings covers the particular creations of each day. The order of creation appears as: day one— light; day two— sky; day three— dry land and vegetation; day four— sun, moon, stars; day five— water and sky animals ; day six— land animals and humankind, day seven— Sabbath rest. Origen, in the third century comments:

Now who is there, pray, possessed of understanding, that will regard the statement as appropriate, that the first day, and the second, and the third, in which also both evening and morning are mentioned, existed without sun, and moon, and stars— the first day even without a sky? (IV: 3.1)

The canonical presentation of a world with days and nights but yet without sun was not "appropriate." It could not be so. Further, in the second creation narrative, of Adam and Eve and the garden (and a talking snake), Origen again notes the non-sensicality of the text.

And who is found so ignorant as to suppose that God, as if He had been a husbandman, planted trees in paradise, in Eden towards the east, and a tree of life in

it, i.e., a visible and palpable tree of wood, so that any one eating of it with bodily teeth should obtain life, and, eating again of another tree, should come to the knowledge of good and evil? (IV:3.1)

How could God as God, as creating spirit, also be the literal gardener of Eden? How could anyone, says Origen, not notice that these stories are neither sensible or appropriate?

While these two occurrences are both in the "Old" Testament, Origen handles the New Testament in a similar way. Origen works with the temptation of Jesus by the devil as it is narrated in Matthew's Gospel, in which the devil is said to take Jesus to the top of a high mountain to view "all the kingdoms of the world" in order to offer them to Jesus if he will obey the devil.

The same style of Scriptural narrative occurs abundantly in the Gospels, as when the devil is said to have placed Jesus on a lofty mountain, that he might show Him from thence all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. How could it literally come to pass, either that Jesus should be led up by the devil into a high mountain, or that the latter should show him all the kingdoms of the world (as if they were lying beneath his bodily eyes, and adjacent to one mountain), i.e., the kingdoms of the Persians, and Scythians, and Indians? Or how could he show in what manner the kings of these kingdoms are glorified by men? And many other instances similar to this will be found in the Gospels by any one who will read them with attention, and will observe that in those narratives which appear to be literally recorded, there are inserted and interwoven things which cannot be admitted historically (IV:1.16).

Both Old and New Testaments of the canonical Christian Bible, for Origen are riddled with ambiguity. Unlike Augustine, Origen does not appeal to the correction of errors in ascertaining the correct meaning, or to the correction of errors in the expression of the meaning. Origen makes no attempt at covering these difficulties by appeals to knowledge or by resorting to rules. For Origen, it was the difficulties themselves, that held the possibility

that the text could be meaningful. If there were no such gaps, the text would result in nothing of importance.

But as if, in all the instances of this covering (i.e., of this history), the logical connection and order of the law had been preserved, we would not certainly believe, when thus possessing the meaning of Scripture in a continuous series, that anything else was contained in it save what was indicated on the surface; so for that reason divine wisdom took care that certain stumbling-blocks, or interruptions, to the historical meaning should take place, by the introduction into the midst (of the narrative) of certain impossibilities and incongruities; that in this way the very interruption of the narrative might, as by the interposition of a bolt, present an obstacle to the reader, whereby he might refuse to acknowledge the way which conducts to the ordinary meaning; and being thus excluded and debarred from it, we might be recalled to the beginning of another way (IV: 1.14).

The ambiguity of Scripture, for Origen, acts as the “interposition of a bolt,” an “obstacle” a “debarring” of the ordinary, in order to present to the reader a possibility of being, “recalled to the beginning of another way.” The interruption is the crucial opening in the text.

The ambiguity, Origen further says, is far from being a human mistake in a divine book, it is itself the intentional hand of God in the midst of the texts.

He [the Spirit] inserted sometimes certain things which either did not take place or could not take place; sometimes also what might happen, but what did not: and He does this at one time in a few words, which, taken in their “bodily” meaning, seem incapable of containing truth, and at another by the insertion of many. Now all this, as we have remarked, was done by the Holy Spirit in order that, seeing those events which lie on the surface can be neither true nor useful, we may be led to the investigation of that truth which is more deeply concealed, and to the ascertaining of

a meaning worthy of God in those Scriptures which we believe to be inspired by Him (IV:1.14).

The Spirit himself, says Origen, imposed the ambiguity, the “bolt” the “stumbling blocks,” “interruptions,” “things which either did not take place or could not take place,” “certain impossibilities and incongruities,” “sometimes also what might happen, but what did not,” into the text, so that the reader would not settle for the obvious, flat, literal meaning. The ambiguity, even more than the plain words, marks the hand of God in the text.

Origen highlights the gaps, preserves the ambiguity of the Scripture that it may meet a lived world in which the very presence of God is ambiguous.

With respect to the works of that providence which embraces the whole world, some show with the utmost clearness that they are works of providence, while others are so concealed as to seem to furnish ground for unbelief with respect to that God who orders all things with unspeakable skill and power. For the artistic plan of a providential Ruler is not so evident in those matters belonging to the earth, as in the case of the sun, and moon, and stars; and not so clear in what relates to human occurrences. . . (IV:1.7).

The often ambiguous Scripture, with much that is mystery, presents the also often ambiguous divinity, concealed in “matters belonging to the earth.”

The Bible is ambiguous not by mistake, but by the act of God himself. It is opened by its ambiguity, its frailty, its nakedness. Divestment in Origen appears as seeing the Scripture itself standing before its hearers in its ambiguity, in its nonsensicality, in a T-shirt, in order to lead the hearers into the way of that which is not obvious— namely faith in the Mystery itself.

Origen’s work to point out ambiguity is the polar opposite of Augustine’s work to cover ambiguity. Augustine’s handling of ambiguity seems common-sensical; it sits as we have seen in the lineage of the dominant hermeneutic. Origen’s less familiar embracing of

ambiguity continues to present a challenge to understanding, even as the Bishop's divestment brought, "an almost audible gasp." Further conversants need to be called forward to take up this unfamiliar way.

6. Conversant: Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur (1978) brings Augustine and Origen together in a conversation on language. Natural language, he says, is polysemic. Polysemy is the feature of words that gives them the ability to mean more than one thing. Ricoeur builds on a sense of language that relies not on one, but on two kinds of entities: "the semiotic entities, that is to say, the signs, and the semantic entities, the bearers of meaning" (p. 121).

Semiotic entities take up Augustine's connection of sign and thing. This kind of language is finite. There are a finite number of characters in each language, a finite number of signs signifying the world of things. With respect to signs and things, in terms of semiotic entities, one can — as Augustine — speak of correctness and truth in interpretation. The container is a basin. The robe is an alb. The text is from the Gospel according to John.

Semantic entities take up Origen's positive sense of ambiguity. For Ricoeur it is the *sentence* that cannot be contained within semiotic signs, because sentences are *events*, with a speaker and a hearer and a meaning. Sentences have what Buber would call, an "I-Thou structure." In the midst of the actual contact of I-thou, in the semantic dimension, in the event, what is happening is something that cannot be described as simply correct or false.

With the event comes the openness of temporality; with the speaker and the hearer, the depth of individual fields of experience; with meaning, the limitlessness of the thinkable; and with reference, the inexhaustibility of the world itself (p. 123).

With the event of the divestment, then, comes the ambiguity of the *sentence*. If it could be said with some certainty that the robe, *semiotically*, is an alb, when it is removed with a "speaker" and a "hearer" the event becomes a "sentence" and becomes polysemic. It

comes to mean something different for each of the “hearers” — for those in bare feet in the chairs. It comes to have a sense for me as pastor barefoot before the people with a Bishop — in a sense my “boss” — that was different from the others sitting with me. The di-vestment would have a different meaning, if any, for a visiting “hearer” unfamiliar with the liturgical service. The event has a different meaning also dependent on the “speaker” — the one divesting. A female colleague spoke to me of the event of “divestment” in her own context, a fairly conservative male-dominated community. The meaning of a female pastor divesting in front of the congregation took up a meaning that it did not in my own context. The divestment by a woman took up and challenged a sense of sexuality that did not appear in the same way when a male pastor was the “divester.”

In the event of divestment, the polysemic depth of language shows itself. Fully understanding the divestment would mean to set out to unfold the senses of the various “hearers” and having done that, acknowledging that understanding the event would perhaps take on a rather different sense with a change in “speaker.” Understanding of semantic entities, of the ambiguous sentence, is never finished.

Polysemy as the nature of the sentence event is also a threat. Polysemy can become a sort of ambiguity which can be “a case of dysfunction” when the “situation of discourse requires only one interpretation” (p. 126). Ambiguity is not an acceptable situation “each time the discourse requires only one interpretation.” There are times when it is necessary to know what exactly is going on. In a brief encounter with industry, an incident in working with dynamite comes to mind. How do I set the fuse? When will it go off? How far away do I need to be? More to the point of this context, there needs to be un-ambiguously a Bishop, before he can divest itself, a Bible before it can divest itself, before the opening has a place to appear.

Ricoeur reasons that three strategies have come forward to address the threat of ambiguity in natural language: ordinary language, scientific language and the metaphor (p.

120). Ordinary language seeks to repress by definitions, the total semantic range of a word. Exchange of question and answer within a conversation allows the hearer to check the semantic choice of the speaker, and to allow the speaker to verify that the message has been correctly decoded by the hearer. Ordinary language reduces the polysemy of words. Scientific language, on the other hand, attempts to eradicate polysemy. Scientific language uses definition extended far beyond the ordinary. Scientific language introduces technical terms that denote only quantitative entities. Mathematical symbols, even signs which can be read but not vocally uttered are invented in scientific language.

Ricoeur sees the third strategy, metaphor, as both preserving polysemy, the I-thou event of the sentence, while avoiding dysfunctional ambiguity. Metaphor, he says, acts to “confuse the established logical boundaries for the sake of detecting new similarities which previous categorization prevented our noticing”(p. 131).

In other words, the power of metaphor would be to break through previous categorization and to establish new logical boundaries on the ruins of the preceding ones (p. 131).

If ordinary language hand-cuffs polysemy, and scientific language destroys it, Ricoeur’s sense of metaphor preserves polysemy within limits. The result is what Ricoeur calls, interestingly, a “thickness” of text, a text that is, and yet is also becoming something else.

Like Origen, the “bolt” leads to a deeper way, a way of text “thickness.” The thickness, though, does not come from Alexandrian cosmology, it comes from the nature of language itself.

7. Conversant: Gadamer

Gadamer (1989) addresses a sense of ambiguity in his discussion of tradition and the emergence of the question.

Tradition, says Gadamer, is not that which one finds, it is that in which one finds oneself.

History does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live (p. 276).

In the midst of history, in the midst of tradition, the individual, as we have heard, inherits a certain understanding, inherits, in a positive sense, a certain "prejudice" (p. 276).

But interpretation, says Gadamer, is about the ongoing "working out" of the fore-projection, and revising of the fore-projection. The "working out" of our understandings also does not happen because we have decided to isolate our prejudices and assess them. The "working out," begins when an event, an encounter in traditionary material, a conversation, "provokes" our given prejudices, our given understandings (p. 299). Only when foreconceptions are *provoked* does interpretation begin in earnest.

That is, when we are "driven about," when the event jars us, when the bishop divests, when the Bible's good King David seduces his neighbours' wife, at the moment of ambiguity, interpretation begins. Understanding begins with the rupture, with the opening of what we had always simply just known. The rupture calls into question the givenness of the traditional discourse.

Understanding begins. . . when something addresses us. This is the first condition of hermeneutics (p. 299).

Gadamer speaks of the provocation as a being "broken open by the question" (p. 363). The question breaks open what had been simply answers. He is the Bishop, the spiritual leader. It is the Bible, the Word of God. Again in Gadamer, the question is not methodical but ontological. One does not set out methodically to interrogate, to ask questions, rather questions "come to mind," "occur," "arise," "present themselves" (p. 366). Questions happen to us.

Dealing with the question that “breaks open” the foreprojections of the interpreter is, for Gadamer the nature of interpretation. The embarrassment, the “bolt,” the ambiguity, is the opening, the possibility of a renewed understanding. Gadamer’s profound word in the conversation is that the question, the ambiguity is not a problem to be foreclosed, it is the provocation which breaks open the possibility of understanding anew.

8. Understanding address in the midst of ambiguity

From the context of pedagogy in secular education, David Smith (1988) provides a starting point to this “understanding” of address in the midst of ambiguity. Smith notes that one of the temptations in pedagogy is to “presume to speak as though one’s (professional) discourse is already closed, that it is self-sufficient, self-contained” (p. 276).

First there is Bishop J. Robert Jacobson, fully vested. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine appears to tightly enclose the discourse of the Scripture. Ascertaining meaning and “delivering” the meaning are divided. Ascertaining meaning is directed through the application of a set of rules which forecloses ambiguity. Difficult texts are over-read with reference to plain texts.

The over-reading, on the one hand appears common-sensical. The clear interprets the unclear. On the other, the over-reading, reads out of the text what Brueggemann (1993) calls the “little stories” that do not fit” (p. 58). Both “religious orthodoxy” and “critical rationalism” have willed repression of the little stories, the little stories of hurt. When God or the saints are “severe,” when heroes demonstrate “inappropriate behaviour,” when Scripture approves actions “which are now condemned by good men.” The repression may also be suppression, the over-reading by those in power. The little stories speak differently than the dominant “clear reading.” The result of over-reading, of interpreting by the “plain” text is a much clearer word, but a much narrower one as well.

Augustine's move to foreclose ambiguity is a move akin to the Protestant Cartesian pursuit of the plain certain text. In order to interpret the text the Protestant Cartesian perches above the text to get clear of the ambiguity. Allegorical readings, ambiguous readings are foreclosed by the Protestant so that Scripture could stand against authoritative tradition. The Cartesian perches high above the world and himself in order to see everything in the clear light of reason. What is left of the Scripture, when Augustine and the Protestant Cartesians are finished, however, is less, much less, than was there when they started. What is left is only this tightly controlled, *hermeneutically-sealed* discourse. What is left is a too-obedient child. Smith again:

The more tightly controlled a discourse, the more surely suffocated the very thing it is attempting to clarify or set free (p. 276).

Then there is Bishop J. Robert Jacobson laying the chasuble over the altar rail, then the robe, then the clerical shirt. In a T-shirt, Bob washes feet. And there is an almost audible gasp. In the gasp, is the opening, the ambiguity.

Smith calls for the honoring of ambiguity, as that which "brings forth a new speaking" by taking seriously the finitude of understanding. If understanding is not constantly unfolding, then conversation is left with little purpose.

When everything is perfectly clear, speech grinds to a halt, or reduces to chatter, because there is nothing more to be said (p. 277).

To honor ambiguity is to welcome the emergence of the question. Our understanding is "provoked" is given the possibility of newness at the emergence of the question. To honor ambiguity is to recognize the oddity and to hear it through, putting one's own settled understanding at risk. The risk is founded on the confession that the other may understand something better than us. To honor ambiguity is to point out the gaps that appear, rather than to over-write them with plain texts. Little stories, the voices of the stranger, the child, the suppressed, are a particular opening to understand; we may never have listened to them

before. To honor ambiguity is to welcome these sources of ambiguity “not as pathology but rather as essential to the very survival of speaking, thinking, and acting” (Smith, 1988, p. 281).

The bishop removes his cross from around his neck. He removes the chasuble and lays it over the communion rail. Then he removes his white robe. Finally the white collar of the clerical shirt is removed, followed by the shirt itself. In a worn, short-sleeved T-shirt, Bob stoops to pick up a towel, and an old chipped white water basin. He comes to us and kneels down.

In the midst of the traditionary act of di-vestment we are “driven about.” Questions arise. We are jarred from something. What is happening? Is it that the Bishop is simply “acting out” the traditional message of Jesus humbling himself as a servant? If it is, why does it strike us so oddly? Is it because the text itself is that jarring? Or does the oddity come from its being a “Catholic” act happening in a Protestant context? Or does the shock come from a Bishop undressing before a crowd? Or is there something else?

As I stand in front of the text, however, in the context of this paper, in the context of these conversations on ambiguity in Scripture, I hear these words in the traditionary act of divestment:

If you came looking for the Truth that the Community infallibly speaks,
if you came looking for Clarity that a Divine Book infallibly presents ,
if you came looking for Certainty that objective method produces indubitably,
then you have come to the wrong Person.

What you get is this human being in a T-shirt,

This book in its nakedness,

These human words. . .

And that is enough.

Is that a clear interpretation? Does the act of divestment finally add up? Is it settled? If it is, then, as we have seen, this interpretation has ultimately failed.

When everything is perfectly clear, speech grinds to a halt, or reduces to chatter, because there is nothing more to be said (p. 277).

9. Postlude

So the sermon hymn comes to a close with a somewhat unsteady amen, and the organist gestures the choir to sit down. Fresh from breakfast with his wife and children and a quick runthrough of the Sunday papers, the preacher climbs the steps to the pulpit with his sermon in his hand. He hikes his black robe up the knee so he will not trip over it on the way up. His mouth is a little dry. He has cut himself shaving. . . . In the front pews the old ladies turn up their hearing aids, and a young lady slips her six year old a Lifesaver and a Magic Marker. A college sophomore home for vacation, who is there because he was dragged there, slumps forward with his chin in his hand. The vice president of a bank who twice that week has seriously contemplated suicide places the hymnal in the rack. A pregnant girl feels the stir of life inside her. A high-school math teacher who for twenty years has managed to keep his homosexuality a secret for the most part even to himself, creases his order of service down the center. . . . The preacher pulls the little cord on the lantern light . (Buechner, 1977, p. 23).

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Chapter 6. Maundy Thursday - footwashing: In the midst of play

1. Traditional act

In a worn, short-sleeved T-shirt, Bob stoops to pick up a towel, and an old chipped white water basin. He comes to me, kneels down, and with a small smile, and with an occasional glance, takes one of my feet into his hands. All the while a voice is reading these words:

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him (John 13:1-4).

The warm water washed over my feet, and the soft towel dried them. When we all were washed— the teen-age boy, the child, the elderly woman, and myself— we put our socks and shoes back on and returned to our seats. The congregation was singing:

Kneels at the feet of his friends; Silently washes their feet;

Master who pours out himself; For them.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love; Show us how to serve

The neighbours we have; from you (Colvin, 1995, p. 765).

2. Introduction

Excerpts below are taken from the Interpreter's Bible:

[Exegesis of] 13:1-5. The date of the Last Supper is definitely fixed as Nisan 13, by the words **Before the feast of the Passover**. . . . The struggle is over, and Jesus looks forward with confidence. Death henceforth is merely his hour. . . . Jesus devotes himself to **his own who were in the world**. . . . Words recorded in the older tradition (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27) are here illustrated by an enacted parable. It was the slave's duty as the guests reclined at table before the meal began, to come behind the couch and lave their feet. As none of the disciples would compromise his claim to eminence by undertaking a servant's task, Jesus left the table and performed the menial duty. . . . The meaning of discipleship in its humble-mindedness and its life of mutual service is clear from the example of their Master. A further mention of the traitor [Judas] serves both as a Christian apology and as a warning to forearm the disciples against the shock which the betrayal will bring to their faith. . . (Howard, 1952, p. 679-688).

[Exposition of] 1-3 Certain key phrases in the narrative

With only four august phrases to preface it, the evangelist begins his tale. But these four phrases strike the note of the whole narrative and give us a key how to read what otherwise we might be stupid enough to misunderstand. For what is to follow seems to be a sorry story of defeat and ignominy; of a life thrown away, and that for nothing; . . . So it might seem. And yet that Figure, beaten, bleeding, surrounded by guffaws of mockery. . . remains somehow through it all majestic, imperial, even awesome. All this is cunningly foreshadowed in these introductory words, **When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of the world** (Gossip, 1952, p. 679).

The *Interpreter's Bible*— though aging— is still a common fixture in pastor's studies. It presents a page divided horizontally into three parts. The upper section presents a copy of the Biblical text for commentary; the second section (excerpted above) a presentation of "exegetical" work; the third section (excerpted above) presents the "exposition." While other commentaries do not follow this page layout, the pattern is familiar sounding.

There are two things on which all interpretation of Scripture depends: the mode of ascertaining the proper meaning, and the mode of making known the meaning when it is ascertained. We shall treat first of the mode of ascertaining, next of the mode of making known the meaning (Augustine, 1997, I:1).

The Exegesis means to explain— from the Latin *ex*, out and *plano*, level— to make plain or level (O.E.D). The exegesis of the commentaries appears as a sort of laborious examining of the text, to explain the text in order to work out the plain meaning. Another voice in the genealogy is again evident:

Rule 1: The purpose of our studies should be the direction of the mind toward the production of firm and true judgments concerning all things. . . (p. 3).

Rule 2: We should be concerned only with those objects regarding which our minds seem capable of obtaining certain and indubitable knowledge (p. 5).

(Descartes, 1961)

The work of exegesis is caught up in the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic. Texts are worked to produce a plain meaning then the meaning is delivered to the people.

But on Maundy Thursday, in the traditionary act, the Bishop divests himself and washes our feet. The Bishop appears to be "playing" a role. He *is* Jesus. The four of us, asked to participate the day before, "a teen-age boy, a child, an elderly woman, and myself" *are* Peter, Andrew, John etc.. More specifically, the Bishop, tall, married, Canadian, living in 1995 *is* the single, Jewish, Jesus living in 30 A.D.. We, "a teen-age boy, a child, an elderly

woman, and myself,” are more specifically, the twelve *adult male* disciples. We are playing at something— the Bishop and the four of us. And the congregation looking on is involved in the play.

In the midst of the footwashing, the text of John 13 is being interpreted in a rather different way by the bishop, the four of us in our bare feet, and the congregation looking on, than in typical exegesis and exposition.

3. Play

Play— a word related in meaning to the Latin *ludus*, to play, is taken up in J. Huizinga’s (1950) exploration of play *Homo Ludens*. Play, says Huizinga, is as a voluntary stepping out of ordinary life. Play is a “stepping out” into a *place* which is set apart for play.

The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds (p. 10). Play takes place at a certain time or moment and is at some point “over.” Yet play can be repeated at any time, and with endless variation. Play is also serious, it wants something to “come off,” to work, whether it is a crossword or a competitive game (p. 10). Play knows it is “only pretending” and at the same time, does not know it.

Every child knows perfectly well that he is “only pretending.” Yet the devotion and absorption of the play abolishes the troublesome ‘only’ feeling (p. 8).

If the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic seriously sets out to perch high above the text in order to methodically produce a meaning, what is happening in the traditionary act of the footwashing is quite different. It is play. The relationship of play to interpretation is taken up by Gadamer as a clue to hermeneutics.

4. Conversant: Gadamer

a. Introduction to play and interpretation

It is Gadamer's (1989) discussion, "The ontology of the work of art and its hermeneutic significance," that brings forward the possibility of the interpretation of text as play. Gadamer calls for the absorption of aesthetics by hermeneutics (p. 164). The call has more to do with the effect that absorption would have on hermeneutics than the effect of hermeneutics on aesthetics. The move acts to shift the sense of interpretation from explanation to understanding.

Hermeneutics must be so determined as a whole that it does justice to the experience of art. Understanding must be conceived as a part of the event in which meaning occurs, the event in which the meaning of all statements— those of art and all other kinds of tradition— is formed and actualized (p. 165).

If the interpretation of text becomes kin to the interpretation of art and music, something radically different than the work of the *Interpreter's Bible* appears.

In aesthetics, Gadamer takes play as providing "a clue to ontological explanation," to understanding art, and "all other kinds of tradition." His bringing together of play with the interpretation of art and the hermeneutics of text makes fascinating connections with the act of the footwashing.

b. The subject of play

In a common game of ball, what appears on the face of it, is a player playing with a ball. But play, as Huizinga had noticed, and as we know, is not really play when a player uses a ball in such a detached way. It becomes play when the player "loses himself" in play (p. 102). In the common language of sport, a player that does not take the play seriously in the way of going "all out" is named "spoilsport"— not "losing" oneself in the game is to cheat the game. In fact, Gadamer continues, when a player is really "in" the

game, it is not the player that is playing the game, but the game is “playing” the player. When a player is “in” the game, the player is not the initiator, the *subject* of the action, the game is. The game simply *reaches presentation* through the players (p. 103).

In aesthetics, the work of art, like the game is “not an object” which the art-lover in a distant, detached way observes, evaluates, or explains.

Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it. The “subject” of the experience of art, that which remains and endures, is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it but the work itself (p. 102).

The *subject*, the actor in the game is the game itself. The subject, the actor in the artwork is the work itself. The game, the art-work, reaches presentation in the players, in the play of the artist and the interpreters.

The *subject* of the footwashing, the active agent, appears as the text of John 13. The bishop, the four, and the congregation are the way the text reaches “presentation.” The John text “plays” us. The John text catches us up. Experiencing the text in this way is not simply analyzing the text, or explaining the text— to work it. It is to have the text, game-like, catch us up. To interpret a text using play as the clue, is to let the text “play” us, to let it move us, to let it be “brought to presentation” among us.

Taking play as a clue to hermeneutics, the way of the exegetes in the commentaries is a sort of withdrawal from the text. It appears as acting the part of the “spoilsport.” The one who will not quite let the game be the *subject*. The one who must stay outside the game’s magic.

c. The place of play

Play, says Gadamer requires a playing field— a closed world. The game is played in the arena, or the pitch, or the gymnasium. Or the game may be played by a child with her

dolls in an equally complete “world of her own.” The game is played in an enclosed space. Inside that space only the game matters. So to go into that space, must be a matter of choice— to willingly leave the “world” behind.

In aesthetics, obvious places of the “play” come to mind— the theatre, the concert hall, the gallery.

In our case, we gathered in the church, also a sort of closed world. A closed world in which old texts carry great respect. In which the bishop and the pastor wear their “uniforms” that are different from the rest of the gathering. The four participants were willing to participate— even barefoot. Inside that space, for the time of the game, only the play matters.

The game in that place includes the possibility of being watched by those other than the players. But the spectators are not uninvolved in the play even though they are, on the face of it, just “spectators.” The closed world of play, may be in a special sense “for” the spectators. This is as apparent in art as in sport:

All presentation is potentially a representation for someone. That this possibility is intended is the characteristic feature of art as play. The closed world of play lets down one of its walls, as it were (p. 108).

The world of play “lets down one its walls” in a certain sense, permitting the watchers of *play* to make up the fourth wall. The watchers may become the fourth wall, “that closes the play world of the work of art” (p. 108). They are the crowd at the game. The art lovers at the gallery. The audience at the play. Gadamer refers to the play of spectators in the case of the religious drama specifically.

The religious or profane drama, however much it represents a world that is wholly closed within itself, is as if open toward the side of the spectator, in whom it achieves its whole significance. . . . When a play activity becomes a play in a theatre a total

switch takes place. It puts the spectator in the place of the player. He— and not the player— is the person for and in whom the play takes place (p. 98-99).

We, the bishop and the four of us, are at the front. The congregation watching appears as the fourth wall. They are meant to be there; without them we would not do the play. They are meant to be present at the presentation. The play of the religious drama appears as open on one side: it is *for* the spectator. The spectators are a part of the play, the fourth wall. The presence of the gathering completes the play-world of the text.

d. The movement of play

Play, Gadamer continues, always involves some sort of movement; a player always needs *something* that responds to his countermove. A cat at play chooses a ball of wool because it responds, it rolls, even unrolls. A ball game intrigues people in the same way, the ball does “surprising things of its own accord” (p. 106). “Something” brings with it movement, the unexpected and the unpredictable.

In aesthetics, play-like, the work of art “bounces,” it has a sort of depth to it that makes it interesting. And it also bounces differently, it is taken in different ways by different people in different places.

As a clue also to the “movement” of play in the interpretation of text similar expectations arise. A good text has some *bounce* to it. It is a text that keeps our attention, that has something about it that occupies us, interests us. The nature of the interesting text is that it also “bounces” differently— it is capable of being played differently. Each year the text of John enacted before the people plays out very differently. For the couple who have had their first child the tale of “foot-washing” and manual care sounds different from last year. For the woman who has the past months been manually taking care of her dying twenty-three year old son in her home it sounds differently— moreso for the young man himself. The text— a good text— seems to have a life of its own.

e. Play as imitation and interpretation

Play, Gadamer says, is about imitation. It is to play out what one has seen before. In its earliest form children play by pretending, even by dressing up. The child-in-heels would not say that she is “playing” Mommy, but that she “is” Mommy. The imitation is all about acting out what the child has come to know. The imitation has a familiar look. It is Mom. Or Dad. Or Someone. But beyond imitation or repetition of the known, play also imitates and repeats differently. The game is never quite the same.

But we do not understand what recognition is in its profoundest nature if we only regard it as knowing something again that we know already— i.e., what is familiar and recognized again. The joy of recognition is rather the joy of knowing *more* than is already familiar (p. 114).

Watching the “child-in-heels” is pleasant when we recognize that it is Mom or Grandma that is begin imitated. It is wondrous, when the imitation shows us something *more* about the child, or about Grandma or about ourselves— even when we can’t quite put our finger on what that “something more” is. When the play is an interpretive imitation.

In aesthetics, Gadamer’s relation of the imitation of play, and the imitation and interpretation in music is the most striking. Gadamer argues that though recorded music is exact imitation, people do not give recorded music the same status as music played by the orchestra— even if the recorded music is by the original author. Nor do people ever regard reading the exactly imitative musical score as the same as hearing a musical performance of the musical score.

Thus we do not allow the interpretation of a piece of music or a drama the freedom to take the fixed “text” as a basis for a lot of ad-lib effects, and yet we would regard the canonization of a particular interpretation, e.g. in a gramophone recording conducted by the composer. . . as a failure to understand the actual task of interpretation. A “correctness” striven for in this way, would not do justice to the

true binding nature of work, which imposes itself on every interpreter in a special and immediate way and does not allow him to make things easy for himself by simply imitating a model (p. 107).

In the play of music, there is a boundness to “imitate” the musical score, but there is also an expectation that the presenting musicians will interpret the music. It is characteristic, and obvious, in fact, in the performing arts generally.

The performing arts have this special quality: that the works they deal with are explicitly left open to such re-creation and thus visibly hold the identity and continuity of the work of art open toward its future (p. 119).

In crossing the hermeneutics of music over to the hermeneutics of text, Gadamer suggests, that like music, it is necessary to “think of the whole of interpretation in a way that is bound and free” (p. 107). It is bound to the “game,” to the work of art, the text, the subject matter, but it must also be free to bring to the presentation of the music, text, subject matter, one’s own sense of the piece.

The Bishop washes our feet. As he takes up John 13 before us, we recognize something familiar. He is “playing” Jesus. But with the dressing up, and the imitation, there is or may be something we didn’t know beforehand. The human hands. The water basin. The T-shirt. The eyes. The warm water. The rough hands. The soft towel. All serve to more than imitate, to say something we can’t quite put our finger on. But it is said none-the-less.

f. Play as repetition and originality

Games are among us to be repeated. The original “game” of soccer, the first ever played, would never be considered *more* a game of soccer than the one played today—simply because it is “back” at its original source. The particular hermeneutic of games is that they are to be repeated, and that they are meant to be repeated differently.

The “temporal structure” of festivals, like Lent and Easter, have a similar shape, notes Gadamer. No one in celebrating a festival is too concerned with what the “original” festival was exactly like. No one looks to re-create the “authentic” festival. The festival is understood to be that which is repeated, and repeated differently, yet still to be “the festival.”

From its inception— whether instituted in a single act or introduced gradually— the nature of the festival is to be celebrated regularly. Thus its own original essence is always to be something different (even when celebrated exactly the same way). . . . It has its being only in becoming and return. A festival exists only in being celebrated (p. 122).

Turning to aesthetics, Gadamer notes that the original presentation of the music, by the author, with the original instruments, in the original hall, is no more original than the performed music in this place, in this time.

The performance of a play. . . cannot be simply detached from the play itself. . . .

The work of art cannot be simply isolated from the “contingency” of the chance conditions in which it appears, as where there is this kind of isolation, the result is an abstraction which reduces the actual being of the work. It itself belongs to the world to which it presents itself (p. 105).

At a recent wedding, the processional music chosen was a popular Country song by Shania Twain. The music somehow was jarring. It did not “work out” in the setting of the processional. After the ceremony, one of the gathering mentioned: “The problem was the recording. If a soloist had sung the piece, she could have sung it for the ceremony.” The repetition of the music must be a repetition for *this* place, in order for the music, in a curious way to have integrity. Gadamer would say of music:

Every repetition is equally an original of the work (p. 110).

Now if it can be said that the hermeneutics of aesthetics and the hermeneutics of text have something to say to each other, even need to absorb each other; if the hermeneutics of text can take its clue from play, and can be effected by the hermeneutics already operating in aesthetics (especially in the performance arts); then the “bringing to presentation” of the text, even the “reading” of a text, may also be said to be “an original of the work.”

Every repetition is equally an original of the work (p. 110).

g. Play, the footwashing and the interpretation of text

When the bishop stoops down to wash our feet, when the bishop glances up at us in the midst of the washing, it is not that the Bishop is repeating the act of John 13? Is it not in a sense the case that in this particular interpretation of text, this footwashing, that the presentation is “an original of the work” — in the way of play, in the way of music, and in the way of the festival in which it is performed? And is it possible that indeed, play is the clue to the interpretation of text in general?

It is surely a different sort of hermeneutic than the usual working combination of exegesis and exposition in Biblical commentary. Yet in the footwashing, and in religious music, and in other liturgical acts this hermeneutic of text is evident. While the interpretation of text through play seems a radical notion, and collides head on with the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic, other conversants are available who have indeed approached the interpretation of *text* playfully.

5. Conversants: The Rabbis

In the rabbinic literature, commentary on the text may be seen to have the character of play. Playing the text appears in the rabbinic literature, not as drama, but as conversation. Rabbinic work takes the form of *Midrash*. Midrash is from the Hebrew *darash*, meaning “to study,” “to investigate,” “to go in quest of.” Bruns (1992) notes however, that more

loosely midrash can be taken to mean “account.” It may mean to “recount”— to tell, recite, recant; or it may mean to “account for”— to explain.

That is, midrash is concerned to tell about the force of the text as well as to address its problems of form and meaning (p. 105).

Midrash dealt with interpreting Torah instruction, interpreting both the force of the text and the difficulties in it. Within the midrash are the *Halkha* and the *Agadah*. *Agadah* (narrative) retells the Biblical narratives, and includes also material that is not biblical, such as stories of the lives of rabbis (Kugel, 1986, p. 70). *Halakha*, “rule of conduct,” connected to the Hebrew *Halak*, to walk, is interpretation about how to walk in God’s Torah. Some of the *Halakha* was written down and codified in the *Mishna* in the second century C.E.. *Mishnah* and other rabbinic material were passed on orally for centuries following its writing under the general name, “Oral Torah” (Kugel, 1986, p. 68).

The Midrash sets out to enhance the text. The way of the Oral Torah is evident in the midrash with Song of Songs 1:2:

[1]-A. “O that you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth! For your love is better than wine”: [this is the Biblical text under discussion: Song of Songs 1:2]

[1]-B. In what connection was the statement made?

[1]-C. R. Hinena b. R. Pappa said, “It was stated at the sea: “[I compare you, my love] to a mare of Pharaoh’s chariots” (Song 1:9).

[1]-D. R. Yuda b. R. Simon said, “It was stated at Sinai: ‘The song of songs’ (Song 1:1)— the song that was sung by the singers: ‘The singers go before, the minstrels follow after’ (Ps. 68:26).

[2]- A. It was taught on Tannaite authority in the name of R. Nathan, “The Holy One, blessed be he, in the glory of his greatness said it: ‘The Song of Songs is Solomon’s’ (Song 1:1).

[2]- B. “[meaning] that belongs to the King to whom peace belongs.”

[3]- A. Rabban Gamaliel says, "The ministering angels said it: 'the song of songs'" (Song 1:1).

[3]- B. "the song that the princes on high said."

[4]- A. R. Yohannan said, "It was said at Sinai: 'O that you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth!'" (Song 1:2).

[5]- A. R. Meir says, "It was said in connection with the tent of meeting"

(*Songs of Songs Rabbah* cited in Neusner, 1990, p. 143).

The Midrash on this text from the Song of Songs sounds radically different from the work of the *Interpreter's Bible*. The *Interpreter's Bible* presents one author as exegete (who may quote other authors) and one author as "expositor" disconnected from the first. The commentary of the Midrash is made of many voices taking up different positions around the text. The midrash reads what appears literally to be a romantic love-song as a song of God's love for Israel. So, the sages search for the ways in which God had "kissed" Israel in other canonical texts: at the crossing of the Sea before "Pharaoh's chariots"; at the covenant of "Sinai"; during the reign of "peace" of King Solomon; at the "tent of meeting." Each of the voices take their turn, one following the other.

The rabbis say that the midrash works by "linking up the words of Torah with one another" (*Midrash Rabbah, Hazita* [Song of Songs] 1.10.2 cited in Bruns, 1992, p. 109). The Song of Songs links with the sacred story, with the crossing of the Sea, the covenant of Sinai etc..

Words of Torah need each other. What one passage locks up, the other discloses (*Midrash Rabbah, Bemidbar*, 19: 7, cited in Bruns, 1992, p. 109).

The text do not *answer* and explain each other, they un-lock, open each other, not to a definitive answer, but to many interpretations.

Indeed, the text is treated as something moving rather than fixed, something that is always a step ahead of the interpreter, always opening onto new ground, and, ("lest

you assume” that you finally have a handle on it) always calling for interpretation to be begun anew (Bruns, 1992, p. 111).

Midrash has the character of play.

Midrash appears as the play of *conversation* between many speakers “bouncing” a text back and forth. Like play, the conversation is at times playful and at times very serious— a heated argument about the text is not uncommon. And as is often the case in the play of conversation, no single interpretation is finally settled on. The midrash appears after all not as one reader in front of one book, but as several people gathered together around the compiled multiple-book Torah. Because the interpretation is in the midst of people listening for application, what appears to be desired is for the text not to say less, but more; not to say one thing for one place and one people, but to say many things for this particular place, for this particular people, in this particular time.

One rule in the midrashic game is evident. That is to be anchored to the text. Somehow, however remotely, as Joseph Dan (1986) writes, the talk is about a given text:

No boundaries were set to the manner in which the connection between the idea and the text could be proven. It need not be logical or literal; midrashic interpretations of verses seldom follow logic or the literal meaning. It even became one of the main aesthetic elements of this literature: to produce a surprising, elegant, and novel connection between the ancient text and the modern idea expressed in the work. As long as the basic norm was preserved— that every notion presented in the work is derived (even in the most far-fetched manner) from the ancient text— everything was permissible and the minimum requirements were regarded as fulfilled (p. 10).

A second rule in the game is nearly obvious enough to miss entirely: the interpretation must be spoken in the midst of the community and risked to the conversation of others.

Hence the principle that the conversation itself is the true author of all that is said in it; no one participant in the conversation can claim original authorship or final authority, because what one says derives from the give-and-take of the conversation itself, not from one's own subjective intention (Bruns, 1992, p. 114).

The sacred texts and the rabbis present a way with text that Gadamer's hermeneutic suggests. The texts and the rabbis play with each other.

6. Conversants: Various

A sense of playfulness with Biblical text is far from common— but not altogether lacking either.

Gregory the Great would speak of the text as that which “moves”— like the wheels of Ezekiel— to where the people are.

When those went these went, and when those stood these stood, and when those were lifted up from the earth the wheels were also lifted up together and followed them : for the spirit of life was in the wheels (Ezek 1:21): just so with *lectio divina*; it corresponds with the state of the student; it goes, stands, is lifted up with him, like the wheels, according as he is striving after the active life, after stability and constancy of spirit, or after the flights of contemplation (*Homilies in Ezekiel* , II.ii, cited in Dudden, 1967).

The active subject in Gregory is the text, as Gadamer would say, moving of its own, in the midst of the play.

Current conversants on play are found almost solely among the story-tellers who still remain.

Marc Gellman's (1989) beautiful little book *Does God Have A Big Toe?*, is one of the most interesting recent examples of those who play well with the text. For Rabbi Gellman, the Torah stories are played with some freedom. The creation story is one told

with the angels asking God after each day, "Is it finished yet." Each day God says "Nope." On the sixth day God creates human beings to be "his partners." He cautions them that whenever they don't think he's doing enough he is still their partner. And reminds Himself that whenever He doesn't think they are doing enough, they are still His partners. After the seventh day the angels ask, "Is it finished yet??" God replies, "I don't know. Go ask my partners" (p. 3). The wonderful play of Gellman does not repeat what the text says, nor does he say what it "means," yet the playful re-storying opens the text into a world of meaningfulness for the hearer.

Friedrich Buechner's (1979) imaginative play with the Bible in *Peculiar Treasures* is also particularly delightful. There is Eve, who "like Adam, spent the rest of her days convincing herself that it had all worked out for the best" (p. 35); or Goliath who, "stood ten feet tall in his stockinged feet, wore a size 20 collar, a 9 1/2 hat, and a 52 inch belt" (p. 41). The play is quite wondrous. The text "bounces." We are moved to chase it. Oddly, Buechner prefaces the work by apologizing somewhat for his playfulness, stating "no intent to deceive."

Walter Wangerin Jr. (1996) playfully presents the Biblical texts in *The Book of God: The Bible as a Novel*. Wangerin's introduction to the footwashing story is a sample of his play:

The room was spare. There were few ornaments in the house of the Essenes. Along the wall another narrower table held water and towels. A rug received the sandals of the people as they came in. Already the candles were lit. It was dusk outside.

Breezes bent the candle flames. Shadows were gathering at the high ceiling (p. 578). Interpretive play is not a simple repeating of the text. Wangerin, like Buechner and Gellman, plays with the details of the text. And the effect is again quite wondrous. The text comes alive.

One particular attempt at play-interpretation outside of story-telling has recently emerged. Ralph Milton's periodical *Aha* presents Christian interpretation on the texts for the week. The periodical presents "dancing with the text," a collection of quotes from preaching conferences in which clergy discuss the assigned lectionary texts. The web sight related to *Aha* is significantly called "Midrash." The playfulness of the midrash is at least *designed*. The play, however— in the print journal and in the midrash— is rather disappointing. The dancing is often trite, and the midrash web site, often loses itself in tangents and diatribe. One logs on mainly for Milton's quite wondrous story-telling.

7. Understanding address in the midst of play

The implications of the traditionary act, of the profundity of play, are quite fascinating though certainly not direct— not every text can be simply interpretively "acted out" like a footwashing. Yet the playful act of the footwashing provides a clue to a way of playful interpretation of texts— distinct from the dominant hermeneutic of the *Interpreter's Bible*.

The Protestant Cartesian perches high above the text in order to see what it means clear of the accretions of tradition. In the footwashing, it is a traditionary act that is "taken in hand" and enacted. The footwashing takes the text in hand and the text "plays" the interpreter. Interpretive play entails laying hands on the traditionary text, a participating in the tradition by those who are not interested in "explaining" it, but who are interested in "sitting at the feet" of the text, in understanding the text. Who are interested in how (or whether) the text addresses them.

The Protestant Cartesian also sits objectively purged of his own subjective involvement. In the footwashing the interpreter kneels before the people he knows and loves. A people with whom he has a history. I now know "first-hand" so to speak, of being the footwasher. Since the first experience of the footwashing with the bishop, I have been

the “Pastor Sid Haugen” who before the congregation divests himself of red stole, flax alb, clerical shirt, and— Sid-in-a-T-shirt— takes the towel and basin and washes feet. Handling those young soft feet, and those old calloused ones, those women’s feet, those men’s feet, those children’s feet, is an exceedingly odd experience. The memories of being the footwisher are inscribed in my mind. I remember looking up to the face of a man with whom some months before I had sat as his marriage dissolved in front of our eyes. The young girl whose teenage issues had been more than she could handle one Thursday afternoon. And others with whom I had simply shared many Sunday mornings. And I will not soon forget those eyes looking down to me at the moment. In the midst of my subjective involvement with the people, the act was even more meaning-ful. Interpretive play means the interpreter risks personal involvement with the people.

The Protestant Cartesian sits above the text in an attempt to peer back and discover the original meaning behind the text. In the traditionary act, the footwisher rather stands with the people before a text. Interpretive play imitates and interprets the text. Because the interpreter is in the midst of the people— a people that includes the interpreter himself— it must be re-played, re-cited for this place, for this people, on this day, while still imitating the “score” of John 13. What Brueggemann (1991) has called “interpretive obedience” only makes sense as it happens in the midst of the people, playing the text out for the sake of the gathering. Only in the midst of the people does the “music” need to be played differently.

The Protestant Cartesian sits high above the text in order to see what original *event* lies behind the text. The traditionary act carries rather a sense that seems related to the playing of music, to the dancing of the dance, to the remembrance of the festival. Interpretive play takes the text not as an unfortunately layered over, dust-covered, inauthentic, muted text which under examination will produce a cold hard fact. Interpretive play rather takes it place in front of the text, and in the interpretive imitation, re-creates the text, in a sense, re-creates what Gadamer would call, “an original of the act.”

Like the playing of music, interpretive play carries no guarantee that the people will “get it.” Interpretative play must recognize that the sense of the text it seeks to impart is not an “object-like” message that has been exegeted from the text, to be delivered like a pizza. It is “an original of the act,” it is a presentation of address. It is the presentation of address in music, in dance, in art, in the reading of text, in midrashic conversation. But the delivery of some clear meaning is not the way of interpretive play. Dancer Anna Pavlova is said to have answered the question, “What did your dance mean?” in this way:

If I could have said it in words, I wouldn’t have danced it (Milton, 1982, p. 30).

Playful interpretation is not, of course, the dominant hermeneutic in the church. The Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic still dominates, still explains, makes level the texts. The acute problem of Protestant Cartesian interpretation is that it just might “work.” That it just might *ex-plain*, make level. That it just might work the text to a single meaning, work it to a standstill. The danger is quite unintentionally voiced in a telling comment by William Empson (1947) about two types of literary critics:

An appreciator produces literary effects similar to the one he is appreciating, and sees to it, perhaps by using longer and plainer language, or by concentrating on one element of a combination, that his version is more intelligible than the original to the readers he has in mind. Having been shown what to look for, they are intended to go back to the original and find it there for themselves. . . .

The analyst is not a teacher in this way; he assumes that something has been conveyed to the reader by the work under consideration, and sets out to explain, in terms of the rest of the readers experience, why the work has had the effect on him that is assumed. As an analyst, he is not repeating the effect; *he may even be preventing it from happening again* (emphasis added, p. 249).

The traditionary act, the liturgy comes to the rescue of the preacher, as it constantly seeks to “make happen again” the traditionary texts. Liturgy— from Greek *leitōs* public,

and *ergon*, work— means, however, the *work* of the people, an unfortunate etymology. But the music of the organ that precedes the liturgy with its *pre-lude* and closes it with the *post-lude* reminds us, however, of what is surely going on in the middle.

8. Postlude

The next act of the Maundy Thursday service, appears in a different light as these conversations on play close. In it the bishop behind the altar says these words:

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread.

And gave thanks. Broke it.

And gave it to his disciples saying, "Take and eat.

This is my body, given for you."

Do this for the remembrance of me.

And again after supper, he took the Cup.

And gave thanks, saying, "Drink from this, all of you.

This Cup is the New Covenant in my Blood.

Shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this for the remembrance of me (Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, p. 89).

Every repetition is equally an original of the work (Gadamer, 1989, p. 110).

Chapter 7. Maundy Thursday/Good Friday: In the midst of tradition

1. Traditional acts

Maundy Thursday closing act:

As the service on Maundy Thursday closes, the last story of Thursday is read. The service that begins with footwashing, continues with the Supper, concludes with the reading (Mark 14) of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the seizure of Jesus in the garden by the mob, and the subsequent flight of the disciples. At the conclusion of the reading, accompanied by a gentle voice reading Psalm 22, the pastor beckons a number of assistants to come forward.

The assistants solemnly join the pastor in the chancel. The candles are extinguished and removed. The service book is closed; the book and the brass stand are taken away. The communion ware is removed from the altar and taken away. The red paraments are stripped from the lectern, pulpit, and the altar, and taken away. When all is removed, the pastor also removes his stole, and the flax alb. The lights are shut off. The people leave in the dark, naked church.

Good Friday

Friday the people gather still in the stripped worship space. The pastor without vestment reads the lesson, the unadorned reading of the Passion of our Lord : the trial, the sentence and the crucifixion of Jesus. At the end of the service the following dialogue takes place:

Pastor (bearing the cross) in the narthex: Behold the life-giving cross on which hung the salvation of the world.

People: O come let us worship him.

SILENCE

Pastor (bearing the cross) in the nave: Behold the life-giving cross on which hung the salvation of the world.

People: O come let us worship him

SILENCE

Pastor (placing the cross) in the chancel: Behold the life-giving cross on which hung the salvation of the world.

People: O come let us worship him .

SILENCE

Again this day we leave in silence. A lone cross now stands at the front of the church.

2. Introduction

The last traditional act of Thursday is the stripping of the worship space, the ceremonial removal of all that we had held dear. Until at last we sit in the dark. The stripping enacts the disappearance of color and beauty and meaning when Jesus is “taken away.”

On Friday, into the darkness, the cross is processed in from the narthex. But on the morning after the last night of Lent, on Easter morning, when the people arrive, the worship space will be again completely aglow with white paraments, banners, candles, Easter lilies and the music of trumpets.

The stripping of the paraments, the processional of the cross, and the later re-covering of the paraments on Easter day, sits behind the conversations about tradition.

3. Tradition

Tradition is from the Latin *trans*— across, and *dare*— to give (O.E.D.). Tradition at its simplest speaks of the knowledge, doctrines, customs, practices, that are transmitted from generation to generation (O.E.D.). But as that which is handed on, tradition also bears with

it a sense of age and authority. That which is traditional tends to be binding on those who receive it.

Ricoeur (1983) speaks of three aspects of tradition. The *traditions*, are the texts that are trans-dare, given forward. The traditions come forward as proposals of meaning. The term *traditionality*, speaks of the dialectic between “sedimentation and innovation.” Traditionality is the way in which the traditions, the given-forward, become meaningful. Finally, Tradition, with a capital T (*La Tradition*) is that which makes a claim to Truth.

The traditionary acts of late Thursday and Friday, and that will follow on Sunday morning, enact a stripping and a re-newing of the worship space. This movement of tradition is taken up in various conversations.

This paper has spoken often of the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic that seeks to “get clear of” tradition. We have “kept an eye” on the Protestant Cartesian wall thus far. These conversations will involve taking up a more prolonged conversation with the dominant hermeneutic itself, in the context of Biblical hermeneutics.

4. The Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic

a. A reading of Luther

The dominant hermeneutic appeared in the midst of the genealogy earlier, a genealogy that placed the hermeneutic in the lineage of Luther and the Protestants. The dominant hermeneutic becomes more readable in the light of Luther’s work set as it was against the interpretive ways of the Middle Ages.

Interpretation in the Middle ages might be characterized by a deep piling up of tradition. Interpreters take up Origen’s way with Scripture. They hold to levels of meaning in Scripture— four or more levels are discerned. The four senses were common enough that they were repeated in a simple rhyme:

The letter shows us what God and our fathers did;

the allegory shows us where our faith is hid

the moral meaning gives us rules of daily life

the anagogy shows us where we end our strife (Grant, 1963, p. 119).

Usually in the Middle ages, however, the four-fold set of meanings did not come from a recognition of ambiguity and a subsequent opening of deeper meanings as in Origen.

The allegorical method captivated the Latin world, and could be used more freely since it had ceased to be dangerous. Neither St. Hillary nor St. Ambrose regarded it as an instrument of speculation as Origen had done. The Latin Fathers made their allegories conform to orthodox theology (Smalley, 1964, p. 20).

Almost all of the biblical interpretation between 650 A.D. and 1000 A.D. is marked by rigid adherence to the interpretation of the Fathers whose “antiquity” and “authority” commanded respect (McNally, 1959, p. 11). During the Middle ages the allegory in adding to the meanings, only added further authoritative layers to the already authoritative closed sense of the word.

The multiple, orthodox interpretations of the time became incorporated into a unique form of text, the gloss. “Gloss” is from the Latin *glossa*, itself a transcript of the Greek γλῶσσα — tongue. The gloss had connection with “speech” and was given as a direction for the Biblical lecturer. The gloss takes the form of notes written on the text itself, in the margins and between the lines— sometimes covering the page. The glosses grew in length until the Bible— between the lines, and on the edges— was literally covered.

The “Gloss” begins with the Prologue of St. Jerome. The text follows, glossed in varying degrees in the marginal and interlinear spaces. Its authorship is a topic of much debate in subsequent centuries, which currently places Anselm of Laon as a major contributor. Authorship in the *Gloss* itself, is simply given as “diverse doctors at diverse times” who had ordered the glosses and who “are of the greatest authority in the eyes of all” (*Glossa Ordinaria*, cited in Smalley, 1964, p. 56). The particular glosses of each of the

biblical books are given no specific “author, ” they come rather from various anonymous authorities, chiefly the Fathers, but including scholars of the Middle ages into the early twelfth century.

It is a curious collection. It appears as a text-book that does not wish to change the text, but wishes to interpret the text on the margins, between the lines. The interpretation is to give gloss, “tongue,” voice to the text. A portion of the gloss on Psalm 1 from the early twelfth century shows the way of the gloss (the Psalm itself is italicized):

Wash me yet more, that is, more than I am able to ask, that you may forgive what conscience fears, and add what my prayer does not presume; *from my iniquity*, that is, from adultery, murder, giving increase of virtue, that no filth may remain in me. Or *yet more*, that is, not only from actual but also from original sin wash me and cleanse me. (*MS. Royal 3.C.V. fo. 104*, cited in Smalley, 1964, p. 57).

At first sight it seems to mirror the oral story teller’s concern about oral stories trapped in text. The gloss could provide tongue, voice for the present teaching of the Bible. But this Middle ages gloss-tongue is also “written in” as part of the written text— it is written voice no less than the text itself. The gloss, after all, are the words of the “authoritative” Fathers, of the authoritative tradition. The anonymity of the work only increases its hold, the words are simply “there” — they do not appear as a human footnote. The scriptural page was literally full, between the lines and down the margins. The vast *Glossa Ordinaria* of the 12th Century had immense influence in the waning Middle ages. The *Glossa*, as it was called by scholars in its own time, comes to be described as, “the tongue of Scripture,” and until the 17th century, remained the favorite Biblical commentary.

It is at this point, that Luther bursts onto the scene. His part in the *hermeneutic* conversation is not so much the sound of the hammering of the 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg chapel, but the sound of tearing. It happened in the winter semester of 1513, which Bruns (1992) notes, is a “symbolic moment.”

Luther instructed Johann Grunenberg, the printer for the university, to produce an edition of the Psalter with wide margins and lots of white space between the lines (p. 139).

In a profound moment, Luther stripped away centuries of the authoritative interlinear and marginal notes from the Bible. The anonymous gloss, states Luther, are the “merely human writings” of the fathers.

Our endeavor must, therefore, not be to put aside the Scripture and to direct our attention to the merely human writings of the Fathers. On the contrary, putting aside all human writings, we should spend all the more persistent labor on the Holy Scriptures alone (*Weimarer Ausgabe* cited Bruns, 1992, p. 145).

Scripture alone, *sola scriptura*, becomes a guideword for interpretation. To really “hear” the word, the marginal and interlinear notes of the authorities had to first be stripped away. Thus cleared, the “persistent labor” on the Holy Scriptures alone was to find the plain meaning:

In the interpretation of Holy Scripture the main task must be to derive from it some sure and plain meaning, especially because there is such a variety of interpreters. . . (1989, p. 121).

Allegorical sense similarly was part of the problem. The allegories of the Fathers stood not as moments of playful allegorical address, but as permanent, traditional, authoritative discourse. Luther under-cut authoritative allegorical interpretation that pretended to “prove” anything. Allegory, he said, could not be authoritative.

The historical account is like logic in that it teaches what is certainly true; the allegory, on the other hand is like rhetoric in that it ought to illustrate the historical account but has no value at all for giving proof (1989, p. 122-123).

Luther’s appearance in the hermeneutic conversation is one that calls, at the time of its eruption, for the “stripping away” of that which authoritatively buried the text in the

past, in order to hear an address for *that* day, a fresh word. It was, in the light of the closure of the gloss and of the scholars, a necessary move.

But Luther's eruption, Luther's stripping away the tradition is not yet a "method" of interpretation. It is not yet a "hermeneutic."

b. The spawning of the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic

The broad practice of *stripping away tradition* as a hermeneutic is in part resisted by Luther in his debates with the Anabaptists. But the Protestant hermeneutic already was making an appearance in Luther's own work. After the clearing of the gloss, and as the Reformation proceeded, Luther would explain in the Smalcald Articles (1958) the rejection of: the Mass, purgatory, vigils, pilgrimages, fraternities, relics, indulgences, (Article 2), the invocation of the saints, (Article 2), monasteries (Article 3), and the papacy (Article 4). These are, for Luther, "human inventions," "idolatries," "illusions of the devil," "contrary to the fundamental article that Christ alone, and not the work of man, can help souls" (Article 2). A sort of iconoclasm, a sort of clearing away of everything that might distract from the "fundamental article" begins to appear already in Luther as a hermeneutic. It is a hermeneutic that is continued in the counter-tradition work of the Protestants. Flacius, among the earliest, as we have seen, offers a *key* to decipher Scripture that eliminates the necessity of attending to tradition.

The persistent stripping of the tradition as a *methodical hermeneutic* makes its appearance much more intensely in the work of the historical critical school that still dominates biblical hermeneutics. Doconinck-Brossard (1991) tells of Richard Simon's founding of the historical critical method in 1678 (p. 138). Simon, acquainted with Calvinism since his early childhood in Dieppe published a book which in one aspect refuted the protestant argument of the plainness and simplicity of the Bible, but in another extended the Protestant stripping of tradition.

Simon divested *himself* of all previously held beliefs, and insisted on the need to work with an unprejudiced mind. The rise of Cartesianism in France is noticeable in Simon's approach. Free from prejudice the critic would rebuild his own basis of certitude through close analysis of the text. He especially analyzed the repetitions in the Pentateuch. He noticed that the sequence of events in the Creation narrative are not arranged in an orderly way. He argued that it is difficult to believe that one author would write of the creation of the first woman in Genesis 2, when woman had already been created in Genesis 1. Through further close analysis, he came to the conclusion that the Pentateuch could not have been written by one author: Moses. The historical-critical school that sprung from this work, took its task as that of editing the errors in the Bible brought on "through length of time or negligence of the Transcribers" (cited in Doconinck-Brossard, 1991, p. 138).

The text again is alone the concern, past tradition is rejected, including the tradition of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The stripping off of tradition was now inside the Biblical text itself. Though the approach undermined the simple plain sense of Scripture that the Protestants sought, it was still guided by a desire for certainty— now the certainty of Descartes (1961).

Rule 1: The purpose of our studies should be the direction of the mind toward the production of firm and true judgments concerning all things. . . (p. 3).

Rule 2: We should be concerned only with those objects regarding which our minds seem capable of obtaining certain and indubitable knowledge (p. 5).

Rule 3: Concerning the subjects proposed for investigation, we should seek to determine not what others have thought, nor what we ourselves conjecture, but what we can clearly and evidently intuit, or deduce with certainty; for in no other way can knowledge be obtained (p. 8).

The work of the critical schools within the Biblical text takes many forms. The conservative work of Joachim Jeremias (1972) on the parables begins with this general statement:

The parables confront us with the difficult problem of recovering their original meaning. Already in the earliest period of all, during the first decades after the death of Jesus, the parables had undergone a certain amount of reinterpretation. At a very early stage the process of treating the parables as allegories had begun, a process which for centuries *concealed the meaning of the parables in a thick layer of dust* (emphasis added, p. 13).

Again in Jeremias, the interpretations of the past are presented as “dust,” that which conceals, buries meaning. The exegetical task of Jeremias is that of digging out from the rubble of past interpretation an original text by peeling off the layers of interpretation. Jeremias lists the ten “laws of transformation” (p. 113), in which the parables can be seen to gather “dust” and that obscures their original meaning. Among the laws of transformation, Jeremias argues that the early church shaped the parables of Jesus to relate to their actual situation which was far removed from that of the life of Jesus in Galilee. He argued that the early church added allegorical interpretations to the parables. He argued that the early church changed the addressees of the parables from opponents of Jesus to the disciples so that the parable would again speak to the church’s situation. These added layers, Jeremias argued, obscured the meaning of the parable as spoken by Jesus. Jeremias sets out to identify when such transformations appear in each of the parables, to strip off that interpretation from the text, and so recover the original single meaning of the parables of Jesus.

In the interpretation of the footwashing text from John, various standard commentators deal with historical critical issues. Brown (1970) sets out a number of the most authoritative commentators. Bultmann sees a single source that underwent editing

(verse 4-5 originally belonged to verse 12-29, while verses 7-11 were added later by the evangelist. Part of verse 1 and all of verse 3 were original. Verse 2 was a redactional gloss). Boismard thinks that two complete accounts have been combined, one a “moralizing” account, one a “sacramental” account, one a symbol of humility, the other a symbol of baptism. Boismard sees the “moralizing” account as the more original (p. 561).

Bultmann (1958), indeed, presents a still more thorough form of stripping the traditions than revealing an “original” text. For Bultmann, even the original text is to be stripped of its trappings through “demythologizing.”

To de-mythologize is to deny that the message of Scripture and of the Church is bound to an ancient world-view which is obsolete (p. 36).

Bultmann argues that the mythological worldview of the Scripture is not acceptable to modern man whose thinking is shaped by science. Modern man relies on rational causes for events— not on angels or miracles. For Bultmann the method of “stripping” is “demythologizing” a stripping away of the “obsolete” mythological world-view of the Biblical text, that the true kerygma, the kernel, the message, may be heard

More recently the rather controversial Jesus Seminar has emerged— quite unintentionally appearing as a caricature of historical critical work. *The Five Gospels: The search for the authentic words of Jesus* (Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, 1997) presents itself as a “collective report of gospel scholars working together for six years on a common question: “What did Jesus really say?” (p. ix). These “Fellows of the Jesus Seminar” collected and voted on the 1500 sayings attributed to Jesus from the four Gospels as well as from the non-canonical *Gospel According to Thomas*. Each saying was brought forward for examination individually. Each Fellow was given a vote with colored beads. A red bead was a vote that the words that were “most probably spoken” by Jesus; a pink bead (“a weak form of red”) was a vote that the words were “less certainly” traceable to Jesus, or that had “suffered modification in transmission.” A bold black bead was a vote

that the words were “inauthentic Jesus words,” “placed on the lips of Jesus” by admirers. A grey bead was a vote that the words were judged somewhere between black and pink (p. x). Each vote was given a value. Red was given three points, Pink-two, Grey-one, and Black-zero. The votes were added up, divided by the number of participants and with the use of a mathematical key, were numerically determined as red, pink, grey or black sayings. A numerically generated “color coded report” of the results was then published.

The work of the Fellows produced as well, a new “Scholars” translation that they avow has carefully removed historical accretions. It removed the “faintly Victorian” diction of the NRSV (p. xiv), the over-capitalization in the NRSV (p. xvi), in order to “desacralize” terms that were originally secular. Yet in their attempt to remove historical accretions, the translation also sets out to remove “sexist” language where not required. While the move is commendable in one sense, one wonders about the action of tearing off accretions with one hand while *adding on* that which has particularly concerned the twentieth century with the other, *while never owning up to the situation*.

The Jesus Seminar, like the others in the Protestant Cartesian tradition, strip tradition, peel off the “accretions,” remove the “dust,” until, it is hoped, a word, a true authentic, single word can be heard.

The stripping of the “dust” by Jeremias, the removal of “accretions” by the historical critical school, the “demythologizing” by Bultmann, the blatantly Cartesian sifting by the Jesus seminar, appears as a methodical stripping of tradition. The method seeks ardently, it would seem, the address that came to Luther. It seems to be saying:

If only we could— like Luther— find the exact text, the original word, the one beneath the “dust” of the ages, beneath the “accretions” of the past, then maybe we could really hear something. If only we could discover the Original authentic words of Jesus, then the Word would really speak. If only we could de-mythologize,

if only we could remove the ancient myth clinging to the message, then we could really “get at” the kernel, the real thing, and we could hear the Word speaking.

The “stripping of tradition” as a methodical hermeneutic as we have seen, does have roots in Luther’s own writings. Yet, there is also another reading of Luther that puts the methodical “stripping of tradition” in a different light.

c. A re-reading of Luther

It is Ebeling (1964) who brings forward another reading of Luther’s hermeneutic. The reading might well begin with Luther’s own story of his turning point in the Tower

I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, “the justice of God,” because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly by punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience. . . . Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul. . . . Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that “the just shall live by faith.” Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through an open door to paradise (Bainton, 1950, p. 49).

Of his turning point, Luther tells of being in the midst of tradition, of being, “an impeccable monk.” In the Tower, with the Scriptures, he says, the force of the Word, the address, broke through the traditions of the “impeccable monk” to set him free, to reveal the “open door to paradise.” The traditions, note well, were not first peeled away in the story, the address of the Word broke them.

Ebeling (1964) notes in “Word of God and Hermeneutic”:

Scripture possesses *claritas*, i.e., it has illuminating power, so that a clarifying light shines from it, among other things, also on the tradition (p. 80).

The clarity of the word is not in its simplicity, it is in the clear light which comes *from* the Word. Luther would say that the Scriptures “are a spiritual light far brighter even than the sun.” (cited in Ebeling, p. 80). The clarity is not the Bible itself, but the light that comes from it.

Luther in many cases, would say that it is the Word that breaks through even the “text” of Scripture itself. The Word tore its way through the Biblical text itself to be a living, “spoken” Word. Luther would say that the sermon is about the breaking forth of the Word, breaking forth from its containment in the Scripture text itself.

In the New Testament the sermons are to be spoken aloud in public and to bring forth in terms of speech and hearing what was formerly hidden in the letter and in secret vision. . . . That too is why Christ himself did not write his teaching, as Moses did his, but delivered it orally, also commanded to deliver it orally and gave no command to write it. . . . For that reason it is not at all the manner of the New Testament to write books of Christian doctrine, but there should everywhere, without books, be good, learned, spiritually minded, diligent preachers to draw the living word from the ancient Scriptures and constantly bring it to life before the people, as the apostles did (*Kirchenpostille* , cited in Ebeling, 1964, p. 87).

The preachers were to attend to the Word breaking from its confines in text, and let this divine work be heard among the people. Luther would say that The Word, is not simply Bible, the Word, is that which breaks through the Bible. The Word is neither text, nor presentation, it is the act of God:

When we preach and hear the Word, we are hearing and witnessing the performance of a divine work; for the Word is not ours but our Lord God’s (1959, p. 301).

In this way, Luther speaks *here*, at least, not of the interpreter's tearing away of traditions so that the distractions are removed, but rather of the force of the Word tearing through the traditions that bear them, and that also bind them, blowing the notes off the margins and the vestments off the altar, that something new may rise.

Luther could as much as say that *sola scriptura* is not a *method* one uses for interpretation. He as much as says that the Word alone from the midst of the Scripture, as Ebeling said, shines "among other things, also on the tradition" (p. 80).

If the Word, the address, is what bursts *through* the tradition, *from the midst of the tradition*, then methodical interpretive stripping of the tradition is misguided. Rather interpretation is *attending* to the address of the Word. Preaching is "bringing to life" the way the Word shines through the Biblical text. In the light of Ebeling's reading of Luther, the methodical stripping of the parables by Jeremias, the saying of Jesus by the Fellows, the myths of Scripture by Bultmann, appears as a destructive Protestant habit, as habitual iconoclasm.

5. The recovery of tradition in Gadamer

Tradition is caught between the Protestant iconoclasts, and the Catholic iconophiles. The Protestant hermeneutic appears to take up tradition habitually as that which is to be "stripped away," as accretion, as dust, in order to hear a clear word. Whereas, the Catholic hermeneutic obediently claims that the Scriptures cannot be understood without the tradition present. In the centuries-old confrontation between the two sides, Gadamer (1989) brings forward a sense of tradition that is not a static truth passed from one world to the next which one must either obey in a certain Catholic sense or overcome in what has become a Protestant sense.

Tradition, and everything else that is given forward, *trans-dare*, is alienated from its original meaning, estranged from its own world, in a word, dead.

It is not only the written tradition that is estranged and in need of new and more vital assimilation; everything that is no longer immediately situated in a world— that is, all tradition, whether art or the other spiritual creations of the past: law, religion, philosophy, and so forth— is estranged from its original meaning (p. 165).

Because of the estrangement, the deadness of traditionary texts, hermeneutics, interpretation, is required to “unlock” them. Traditions, the “torn fruits” using Hegel's image, are estranged, and need to be “understood,” need to be interpreted back into the world.

It is universally true of texts that only in the process of understanding them is the dead trace of meaning transformed back into living meaning (p. 164).

Gadamer to the Protestant hermeneutic, would say that stripping back the tradition to recover the original tree, the word alone, the “authentic words of Jesus,” the parable free of “dust,” would not recover the vitality, the address, of tradition. Recovering the original would only recover the restatement of a dead text, alienated from the present world. Rather, the dead tradition is to be transformed, brought to life, not by explaining it, not by stripping it to its original act or author's intent, but rather by “understanding.”

Understanding begins with prejudice. Understanding begins with recognizing that we start in a world, in a history, in a tradition.

History does not belong to us; we belong to it (p. 276).

Understanding begins, as the Catholic hermeneutic would say, within a certain community, within a certain history, within a certain tradition. Scriptures cannot be understood without the tradition present in the authoritative church. Understanding first of all, means owning up to being a part of a certain tradition, a certain history.

Beyond owning up, understanding is also a participating in the tradition (p. 290). The belonging to tradition however, is not simply an obedient acceptance of what is passed forward. Tradition for Gadamer, is not to be simply adopted, tradition is that which is handled by the receivers, and handled with effect.

Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves (p. 293).

Tradition is not simply the “thing” one receives forward. Tradition is the story that is actualized. The allegory that changes for this present world. Indeed, it may even be received as a lineage one must “keep an eye on.” Gadamer would add that each age, in fact, has to understand what is given forward “in its own way” as it takes up the tradition, “in which it seeks to understand itself” (p. 296).

Gadamer in fact would go further. We understand the traditionary material *only* if we understand it differently than in its original form (p. 297). We understand the tradition only when we “actualize” it into our own present world. In the understanding of tradition both the receivers and the tradition move. Both are changed by the other (p. 293).

The movement of tradition, the movement of the present receivers, however, is not an easy taken for granted, process. There is always a “tension” between the text and the present. The *question*, the rupture, the ambiguity arises as the text and present meet. Interpretation is to take this question seriously, to take it up in hermeneutic conversation.

The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naive assimilation of the two but in constantly bringing it out (p. 306).

Gadamer’s sense of tradition provides the possibility of a place for Protestant and Catholic interpreters to speak, for traditionalists and for reformers. Tradition in one sense is placed back in the hands of Protestant interpreters as something generative of understanding, as something in the midst of which address emerges. Tradition in another sense is placed back in the hands of Catholic interpreters as that which must be taken differently by each age, as the age seeks to understand itself in the midst of tradition.

6. Understanding address in the midst of tradition

The opening act has slipped away from our direct gaze. The paraments were stripped, one by one on Maundy Thursday. The worship space was drained of color. Friday, the cross is brought in. Sunday, the white paraments will appear in the worship space, and with them the Easter lilies. Yet the act has spun in the background throughout the discussion of tradition. The acts with the paraments appear as a manifold allegory of interpretation.

The letter shows us what God and our fathers did;

the allegory shows us where our faith is hid

the moral meaning gives us rules of daily life

the anagogy shows us where we end our strife (Grant, 1963, p. 119).

In a *literal* sense, the paraments are stripped from the worship space. The cross is processed in on Friday. On Easter Sunday the community gathers to a worship space that has been transformed to a place of rising, white paraments and trumpet-sound. Literally the enactments tell of the life and death and rising of Jesus of Nazareth.

Allegorically, the acts appear as the way of “tradition,” which Gadamer presents. The traditions are always in motion. Following the seasons of the year, the traditions regularly and repeatedly are taken off and put on. They are taken off like the coming of winter. They return like the coming of spring. The traditions are presented as a repeated, expected, annual, enactment of dying and rising. With the turning of the years as well, traditions are always being received forward somewhat differently than last year. Gradually as the seasons repeat, the traditions are taken up differently. The community, the people gathered, and the one in the flax alb, “hold” these traditions in their hands. And the traditions “hold” them.

Allegorically, the procession of the cross is about something that Gadamer’s understanding of tradition strains to encompass. The cross is imposed in the processional.

It is neither sought nor expected. Tradition, perhaps Ricoeur's *La Tradition*, the Tradition that makes a claim to Truth, or Heidegger's tradition that becomes "self evident" dies not easily but as a rupture. The address, The Word of God, as Ebeling's Luther would say, could on one hand gently pour from the midst of tradition, but on the other it could tear the tradition apart in its speaking. In its rupture, the gloss may die. Paradigm's "shift." What is held dear is taken away. The Christ is killed. Yet the cross itself, prepares for yet another address.

The acts also bring forward a *moral* sense. The Protestant hermeneutic, the methodical iconoclasm of stripping away the traditions, which became even more devastating post-Descartes, appears as an odd desire for death. The methodical stripping of the tradition says, "If only we take off the traditions then we will hear. If only we rid the text of the accretions, the dust, the allegory, then we will arrive at some original, authentic word— then we will be addressed." Stripping the traditions *as method* is wanton destruction. Story is put to death, and with it the possibility of human beings sharing their human experiences. Allegory is put to death and with it the sense of depth and mystery of the world. Myth is put to death, and with it a place for the people to "dwell." Ambiguity is put to death and with it the presence of real conversation. Play is put to death, and with it the meaningful involvement of the interpreter, the people, and the text.

Finally, *anagogically*, the acts may carry this sense. In the movement of the paraments the community is called to believe that the God who brings winter, also brings spring. In its most hard and difficult sense, the God who brings birth also brings death. Yet anagogically, the cross that is imposed on Friday is not imposed to bring despair, even though it does bring darkness and death. For Luther— often, at least— everything is Grace, everything is that which comes from above. The Word that blows through the traditionary Scripture to address, and open paradise is Grace. The Word that also might bring destruction to the most cherished Tradition, to the Christ himself, is still Grace, though we

cannot see it in the dark. Anagogically, in front of the dark and naked worship space, in front of the cross being imposed in the Friday processional, members of the community in the midst of the darkness, summon one another to wait, to wait again, and to wait yet a third time in the silence, and to pray.

Pastor: Behold, the life-giving cross on which hung the salvation of the world

People: O come let us worship Him.

SILENCE

7. Postlude

It happened that last Good Friday, prayers were offered for Mike, a young man of a former parish, a son of a friends, whose cancer had come out of remission with a vengeance. He was 23 years old. Two months later, the phone rang. Mike had died. I was called back to take part in the service. We gathered as community to say good-bye to Mike. To offer prayers. To hear readings of Scripture. We did it knowing that not any of this would explain the meaning of the casket at the front of the church, with a blue-robed graduation picture perched atop it. Hopes and dreams were swept away. Silence remained. The lone cross would be standing there behind the casket. For a time all we could do was gaze at the cross we had suffered, and pray.

Chapter 8. Easter Vigil - community: A place for pedagogy

1. Traditional acts

The Vigil Service marks the time of waiting of the last day of Lent. The service begins with gathering light. We begin in a side-room beside a small fire. The large paschal candle, the Christ candle, is lit from a small fire. Each of the gathering bearing a small taper, lights from the candle or from each other, with the words, "The light of Christ." We process into the dark worship space lit now faintly by the gathering candles. Gathered in the faint light, the service of readings begins. We listen to four ancient stories of God's faithfulness in past days: creation out of the darkness, the opening of the Red Sea before the threat of the armies of Egypt; the preservation of the three men thrown into the fiery furnace; the arrival of life and breath for the valley of dry bones. In the midst of the readings the people sing old familiar songs of hope in the darkness: Abide with Me, Go Down Moses, My Faith Looks up to Thee. Finally, the service of the waters is the last act of the week. Still in the faint light, the people rise to confess their faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed, then they come forward to be marked again with the sign of water on the forehead, a remembrance of the mark of baptism.

Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, and marked with the cross of Christ, forever.

All the while the gathering sings:

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes.

From the bondage of sorrow all the captives dream dreams;

Our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.

With bold new decisions your people arise (Manley, 1995).

As the week closes we wait together in the dark, and we remember who we are.

2. Introduction

The Easter Vigil service is a service in three parts. The Vigil takes place in a darkened worship space, darkened since Thursday night. In the first act of the service, *the service of light*, a faint light is brought to the darkness through the small lit tapers the people carry in. In the second act, *the service of readings*, ancient stories of God's faithfulness in dark times are read. The last act of the vigil, *the service of the waters*, is a remembrance of Baptism, with the sign of the cross marked now from the font, on all that desire to participate. It marks also an important time for the baptism of new initiates into the church community.

Community— from Latin *communitas*, common (O.E.D.)— carries a sense of a society, a people. They are a people with something in common. A common bloodline, or a common geographical location. Community, especially in the context of Christianity, has ties with communion— the communion of saints. Communion— from the Latin *communio*, participation (O.E.D.)— carries the sense of “participation of something in common.” Community as communion, in the church in particular, holds a primary sense of going forward to receive the bread and wine at the communion rail. It is wedded to a sense of participation. First communion and confirmation in the church are about a sort of preparation to participate, to take part in the community as communion.

The end of the week, the community gathers and waits. The days are about waiting when God is dead. They are about waiting when light is not visible, when only the memory of light is available. At this end of the season of Lent, memory, and the community in which memory is held, appears— the realm of pedagogy.

3. Pedagogy

Pedagogy— from the Greek, *pais*, child, and *ago*, to lead— carries the sense of teaching, direction, instruction (O.E.D). It also carries within it a sense of community,

children are taught by parents, teachers, pastors, priests, coaches. Children, are “lead along” “brought along” by those who belong with them, by those to whom they are bound in trust. Pedagogy in this sense, is also about the teaching of initiates, newcomers, converts, apprentices. Pedagogy may quite conservatively, be simply about leading “into” something. Leading into knowledge about mathematics, history, reading, religion. Leading into *Hamlet*, the Bible. Leading “into” the community which brings child and teacher, apprentice and master, initiate and pastor together.

On Saturday, the community gathers in the dark to wait together: to light a candle, to hear readings, and come forward to have the water marked on their foreheads. In the midst of these acts of the community, and in conversations about these acts, lies an understanding of pedagogy.

4. Conversant: Augustine

Augustine’s (1997) *On Christian Doctrine* is concerned with directing the exegesis of the Bible, a concern that has become deeply integrated into the much later Protestant Cartesian wall. A part of the work, however, also takes up a rather different aspect of interpretation, the pedagogical aspect of the initiate interpreter’s “steps” to wisdom.

Augustine lays out seven steps for the initiate: fear, piety, knowledge, resolution, counsel, purification of heart, “stop or termination — wisdom” (II:7). Before the interpreter interprets, a way of life is to be entered, a community is to be entered. The steps— unlike the steps of Descartes— are not steps away from the tradition of the community, they are steps into the tradition of the community.

The first step is “fear” of God, an awareness of awe and reverence born of standing beneath the Maker of all. Fear of God, is also awareness of human finitude. In interpreting text, fear of God, awe of God, says that if there is a place above the text, above the world

where everything is clear and certain, only God sits there. The first step to interpretation, Augustine says, is the first step to wisdom known from the Scriptures:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7a).

The significance of the Lenten act of imposing ashes on the forehead is recalled— to live knowing that we are human, limited. That we see only what we are able to see from this human place in history.

The second step is piety. Piety, says Augustine, is the sort of submission that does not “run in the face of Holy Scripture” but submits to its authority, to believe

that whatever is there written, even though it be hidden, is better and truer than anything we could devise by our own wisdom (II:9).

Piety carries a sense of discipline, of following the community’s word over one’s own wisdom. Piety carries a sense of not ascending above the Scripture, but of sitting at its feet, as Mary sat at the feet of Jesus in the Gospel story (Luke 10:38–42). Piety is considering that what the Scripture speaks in our ear is “better” than our own wisdom. Beyond “fear,” accepting our own finitude and limitedness, piety is to sit “at the feet of” that which is “greater.” The way of the community gathering in Lent, sitting in the nave, facing the chancel where the one in the flax alb presents the Word, is again recalled.

The third step is knowledge. Knowledge, for Augustine, calls for a broad reading of the whole Scripture.

The most skillful interpreter of the sacred writings, then, will be he who in the first place has read them all and retained them in his knowledge, if not yet with full understanding, still with such knowledge as reading gives (II:12).

The initiate requires a sort of broad reading of that which is delivered, even if the reading is not with “full understanding.”

Specifically, knowledge is a broad reading of the canonical Scriptures, which at the time of Augustine was still not entirely set. Augustine, consequently, is obliged to include a

list of the books of Old and New Testaments. But before the list Augustine gives this instruction to the initiate about what books to “prefer.”

Accordingly, among the canonical Scriptures he will judge according to the following standard: to prefer those that are received by all the catholic churches to those which some do not receive. Among those, again, which are not received by all, he will prefer such as have the sanction of the greater number and those of greater authority, to such as are held by the smaller number and those of less authority (II: 8).

The advice, which indeed shaped the closing of the canon, is a powerful reminder of what the initiate is reading in reading “Scripture.” In gaining knowledge from the reading of the canonical Scripture, a student is reading *that which has been broadly received by the community as authoritative*. Knowledge comes from reading, a becoming familiar with the community’s authoritative tradition.

To understand the last “steps,” it is significant for Augustine that this broad knowledge of the Scripture produces a finding, a theme, a rule that is shot through the whole:

For in this every earnest student of the Holy Scriptures exercises himself, to find nothing else in them but that God is to be loved for His own sake, and our neighbour for God’s sake (II:7).

The rule, from the two commandments of Jesus (Matthew 22:37-39) provides a sort of guide to reading for those seeking knowledge in the Scriptures.

In the light of the “rule of love” the next steps are about application. Resolution is to resolve to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Beyond hungering for righteousness, “counsel” is the *doing* of love. Being in the community is not simply knowledge, it is not simply to know the rule of love, but to desire and to do the rule. Purification of heart is the

next step, which speaks both of having a sense of the presence of God, and having a sort of determination and single-mindedness, to seek and to do the “truth” (II:7).

Finally the last step is to “stop,” is to “enjoy” peace and tranquillity. Wisdom is not only learning and “doing” love, it is finally to enjoy a sense of tranquillity.

Augustine speaks of pedagogy of the initiate in the seven steps. Pedagogy is most obviously related to step three: knowledge. Knowledge called for the broad reading of the community’s authoritative texts, a “committing to memory” of the texts, or at least a becoming “familiar” with them.

And in this matter memory counts for a great deal; but if the memory be defective, no rules can supply the want (II:9).

On one hand, pedagogy is about a broad reading of the authoritative texts of the community, about a building of memory. Further, pedagogy is also about the initiate taking one’s place in the community for which the text is authoritative. Crucially, knowledge is attained in the midst of the steps, in the midst of the walk with the community, in the midst of ashes on the forehead, sitting at the feet of the Word, and loving the neighbour.

Augustine’s seven steps, and the acts of Saturday, sit fascinatingly beside Gadamer’s understanding of *Bildung*.

5. Conversant: Gadamer

Bildung, for Gadamer, carries a sense of coming into culture, of pedagogy. If not a seven-step Augustinian direction, Gadamer (1989) agrees that *Bildung* entails a certain “rising up.”

Every single individual who raises himself out of his natural being to the spiritual finds in the language, customs, and institutions of his people a pre-given body of material which, as in learning to speak, he has to make his own (p. 14).

For Gadamer, *Bildung* is a making one's own the community's collection of language and customs and institutions. It is acquiring an understanding, which as we have seen, in the midst of conversation, in the midst of the emergence of the question, will constantly be in motion. But, for Gadamer, arriving at an understanding begins— as Augustine has said — with a broad “reading” of the “pre-given body of material” the tradition in which one finds oneself. A making it “one's own.”

The pedagogy, the reading appears for Gadamer, as a formation of memory. Memory, for Gadamer is not simply a mental ability that in remembering succeeds in holding on to something, or in forgetting fails.

Memory must be formed; for memory is not memory for anything and everything. One has a memory for some things, and not for others; one wants to preserve one thing in memory and banish another. It is time to rescue the phenomenon of memory from being regarded merely as a psychological faculty and to see it as an essential element of the finite historical being of man (p. 16).

Forgetting may not simply be a failure of memory it may also be an act of memory. Some things we “banish” from memory, some things we carefully preserve. The memory is formed first at least, in making “one's own” a “pre-given body of material,” the language, customs, and institutions of his people.

Augustine's third step, knowledge, appears in the light of Gadamer, to be about the initiate not simply remembering certain Scriptures, but forming a certain memory, a “memory” built from the authoritative memory (Scriptures) of the community. More broadly, pedagogically, the child, the initiate is *led* to the authoritative “memory” of the community— *Hamlet*, the Bible, Algebra, Science, Carpentry, Ecology. For the initiate, for the child, pedagogy in one sense at least, is a being led into a community's tradition.

Also in Gadamer's hermeneutics, Augustine's other steps are no less important to pedagogy. The initiate, the child, is lead not simply into knowledge, the memory of texts.

The child, the initiate is led into a way of walking. Hermeneutics is always about application, about a tact-ful way of walking.

For Augustine's Christian community, the way was marked by humility, piety, knowledge, resolution, counsel, purity of heart, wisdom. In the acts of Lent the ashes, the worship space, the footwashing, the stories, the prayers, the hymns all appear as part of the way the community teaches its way of walking. They are a way that the initiate, the child, may take the community in which she finds herself as the communion in which she takes her place.

6. Understanding pedagogy

The conversation of Gadamer and Augustine raises what has largely been passed over thus far in the unfolding of the traditionary acts of Lent. If, in one way, the Protestant Cartesian wall is to be pushed against to open meaning, to allow the audibility of the emergence of address in the midst of the story, in the midst of allegory, in the midst of myth, in the midst of ambiguity, in the midst of play, and in the midst of tradition, this is not to "rule out" the place of simply "learning." For the discipline of humility, of knowing that there is much to learn. For the discipline of piety, of "sitting at the feet" of someone, of reading— if not the certainty of *truth*— at least the widely held tradition, the common trust of the community. For the discipline of reading even "if not yet with full understanding, still with such knowledge as reading gives." For the discipline of learning the "steps," the "ways to walk" of a community, of learning to make a community "one's own."

The preacher who tells us what it "means" and the teacher who tells us what it "means" are re-covered, in a certain sense, in the context of these conversations about the Vigil. The preacher/teacher appears in the role, the positive role, of pedagogue. The people gathered before the preacher/teacher need to build a "memory" without which nothing "can supply the want." The people gathered need to simply read, and be read to. They need to have the texts interpreted— as of old:

Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading (Nehemiah 8:7-8).

But the readings, the interpretation of the preacher/teacher, must not be those of the certainty of the Protestant who has finally gotten behind the accretions of tradition. The interpretation must not be the cold certainty of the Cartesian who has finally purged himself of prejudice, and peeled the text back to some original, factual event.

The interpretation, in pedagogy, must be interpretation *by* those with ashes on their foreheads, and *for* those with ashes on their foreheads— human interpretation within a human community. It must be a telling and retelling of stories, a weaving and reweaving of allegories, a playing and re-playing of texts, for the sake of those who gather to make the community “their own.”

7. Postlude

On this last day of Lent what emerges is not address but silence. What happens on Easter Vigil, is that of waiting for a word that is *not* now being spoken. Waiting in the dark when no Word breaks through. No skies open. When Jesus is dead. And God is silent. As we had waited in the dark when Mike’s graduation picture sat on top of his casket. As we will wait again in days to come.

The community on this night, rehearses their ways. Hearing no present word emerging, the community is lead through a breath-taking set of acts. The community in its darkness, holds a small candle. The community in its silence, calls from its memory the stories of times when God did speak into the silence. The community in its uncertainty,

steps forward to take their place again among those who depend, in the silent darkness, on the rising again of address.

Chapter 9. The Last Refrain

1. Introduction

When I set out to begin this work, it was the traditionary acts of Lent to which I was drawn. How is it that the ashes on the forehead, the palm processional, the footwashing, the night Vigil are so full of meaning, meaning-ful? How is it that the people seemed to find in these acts an “address” a sense of being profoundly “spoken to?” How is it that these acts are meaning-ful in spite of the absence of the usual forms of delivering meaning, the explanation, the analysis, the sermon?

At the same time, I realized that similar questions arose in many situations in my more formal teaching and learning experiences. In those situations, a certain poem, a certain novel, a certain history, could be analyzed and explained, and yet that is not what the teacher or the student sought. What was it that brought the learning to “address” to that place where the text was “meaning-ful,” to that place in which the hearer was “spoken to?”

The intent of this paper, then, has been to unfold this understanding as the opening abstract set out:

It seeks to understand the address that is still emerging in the midst of the traditionary acts of Lent. It seeks an understanding of the ways of address for those who yet teach in the hope that something will “speak” to the hearer. And for those who gather round them.

As Saturday closes, and with it the final act of Lent, the last refrain is to be played.

2. Refrain

Re-frain— from the Latin *re-*, back, and *frango*, to break (O.E.D)— is literally a repeated “break back” in a musical piece. The refrain repeats a theme throughout a piece,

though it may be played differently in each appearance, set as it is following the sense of each particular verse.

What is left to do after the verses have been played, is to play the final refrain. What is left to do is to recall the ways the refrain has borne the various verses before, and to play, now bearing the whole piece one last refrain— passionately. With hope that the refrain itself goes on resounding when the people have finally gone on their way.

3. Recalling appearances of the refrain

a. The two motifs

This work, unfolding the sense of address in the traditionary acts, seems to have been held together by a kind of “refrain” that emerged at various places in each of the chapters. The refrain of the piece has two motifs, one preparing the way for the other. One is the militant pounding of a drum. The other is an airy flute imagining possible worlds.

b. The militant motif

The militant motif of the refrain sounds as a battle cry against a dominant force. That dominant force is a hermeneutic that resides commonly in educational enterprises, a hermeneutic so common that it is almost invisible. It is almost unquestionable. It simply in Heidegger’s sense of tradition, “is.”

The preacher studies the Bible— exegetical commentary in hand— to find out what it “means,” then delivers the meaning to the congregation. The teacher studies *Hamlet* — analytical textbook in hand— to find out what it “means” then delivers the meaning over to the students. The learner’s task is to take note of the meaning of the Bible, the Sacraments, *Hamlet*, World War II, Capitalism and learn it. The congregation “recites” the meaning back to the preacher in the creed. The learner “recites” the meaning back to the teacher in the examination.

The militant motif strikes the drum first in the genealogy. The invisible, unquestioned, dominant hermeneutic is made visible. It appears in the genealogy. It appears not as a timeless truth. Not as that which has always been. It is presented as a human move, a move which has fathers. It appears as a hermeneutic which has come from Luther and from Descartes. It has been called here by the names of its parents, the Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic.

This Protestant Cartesian hermeneutic is presented graphically, as the interpreter, the teacher, the preacher standing “before the mess of finitude” and making a “move.”

He takes as it were, a position above the text. From this position, he clears the text of the mess. He strips off old interpretations, silences the multiple voices of allegory, in order to hear the text alone. . . . The preacher, already above the text, clear of its

familial connections, now slips on a labcoat. Now the preacher *peers* behind the text. The militant motif bangs the drums repeatedly against this Protestant Cartesian move that methodically attempts to “rule out” the sense of address in the traditionary acts of Lent.

The motif battles against the silencing of story— ruled out by the dominant hermeneutic because it is told *in the midst* of an “I,” it is not objectively distanced. The motif battles against the destruction of allegory— ruled out by the dominant hermeneutic because it places the text *in the midst* of multiple meanings. It battles against the destruction of myth— ruled out by the dominant hermeneutic because it is presented *in the midst* of gods and miracles and un-historical happenings. It battles against the removal of ambiguity— ruled out by the dominant hermeneutic as that which places a text *in the midst* of confusion and embarrassment. It battles against the exclusion of playful interpretation— ruled out by the dominant hermeneutic as it places the text *in the midst* of both the speakers and the hearers.

The militant motif of the refrain brought the taken for granted, dominant hermeneutic to visibility. The motif placed the taken-for-granted hermeneutic in a human genealogy. The dominant hermeneutic— now taken as one of many possible human ways of interpreting— is

drummed into silence by the militant motif of the refrain. Long enough, at least, for another sound to be heard, a very different sound.

c. The elusive motif

In the wake of the militant motif, the elusive motif of the refrain can be heard. The elusive motif sounds a search for new ground. It calls for the unfolding of another understanding of address as it emerges in the midst of the various traditionary acts of Lent. In the midst of each act, the elusive motif sounded differently.

The elusive motif sounded in the midst of genealogy, in the midst of finitude. Finitude is about knowing ourselves to be part of a people, a people who are in the midst of a certain genealogy. There is indeed no place to “get above the mess” and describe the world from above it, with “objective certainty.” Genealogy calls for taking one’s place in that finitude, “owning up” to certain relatives, “keeping an eye” on some of them, claiming others. Genealogy calls for taking up conversations with that lineage, finding “a certain sense” in the “mess.” Yet genealogy also knows that the “certain sense” will change. The next child will change it. That other reading of Luther changed it. Descartes changed it. Heidegger changed it. “God only knows” what next child will change it. The interpreter takes a certain place in the mess of finitude, aware that she is saying what others have taken up in some way before, aware also that what she is saying will be taken up differently in the future. Taking a place in the midst of finitude is to take our place *in* the mess. It is to take our place as interpreters not above a text, but *in front* of a text. Where the people, the text and the interpreter mark each other with ashes. And where, not isolated in methodical purity, but in the midst of the texts and the people at Ash Wednesday, and on a “grassy spot” outside Round Hill Cemetery, we found ourselves addressed.

The elusive motif sounded again in story. Story appears as perhaps the most human way that people talk to each other. Story is a way that speaks without pretending that what is

said is either permanent, or objective or universal. It is a way we talk to each other without saying that we have it all settled, for all time. Yet story dares to “make sense” of the events of our lives. A story is constantly “clasping” into itself the events of the next day, or the world of the next teller of the story, or the world of the next “hearers” of the story. Story is constantly changing, gathering in the world. Yet at the same time, the story is not simply the “moved” it is also the “mover.” The story invites the next teller, the next generation to know the world as this story has told it. We stood not above the stories ferreting out their permanent propositional meaning, but in the midst of the stories, the changing, meaningful, personal stories. In the midst of these stories, we found ourselves addressed.

The elusive motif sounded again as allegory was unfolded. Allegory bespeaks a sense of mystery, a sense of depth of meaning in experience. In the depths of language allegory unfolds this meaning-fulness. Words that bear the experiences of others bear this meaning-fulness: the biblical (not simply the literal) Samuel, the allegorical (not simply the literal) Nisa. Words that bear the places they have been bear this meaning-fulness: *All Glory Laud and Honor*, Anon. We stood in the midst of the processional of color and word and sound and found that they had a way of “speaking to us,” of suddenly opening other meanings from their depths— even if what was spoken most profoundly in this human allegory was the mystery of the unspeakable.

The elusive motif sounded again in the midst of myth. Story again appeared, though not simply story as the purposeful human sharing of experience. Myth, story as “dwelling place,” sounds out a sort of invitation to human beings to find in the ancient myths a possible world not only to describe a past, but in which to envision a future. The myths are denied a place as “historical” truth by the dominant hermeneutic— though as we saw in story, the myth-story was not intended to make a claim as “historical” truth. In any case, the myths now appear more clearly as human stories, as human ways of making a home in

the past, human ways of forging a sense of Hope in the future. Yet, as we knew at my father's funeral, though the stories were not "historical" we found ourselves addressed.

The elusive motif sounded again in the midst of ambiguity. The appearance of the "bolt," of the ambiguity in text, is not to be seen— as it is in the dominant hermeneutic— as a sign of pathology. It appears rather as the emergence of the question, the opening to understand differently. The questions that emerge in the midst of ambiguity, are not questions of methodical interrogation designed by the interpreter. These questions rather rise to the surface in the midst of ambiguity. They are questions that go on rising in spite of every attempt to close them off. Questions that call for a renewal of human understanding. We knew this as the Bishop became Bob-in-a-T-shirt. We were addressed.

The elusive motif sounded in the midst of play. Presenting a text playfully— dramatically, musically, or in a "group discussion"— is not simply a way of "involving the people" so that they will pay attention, so that the "facts" can be delivered. The imitative and interpretive play is part of the integrity of the piece itself. In a sense, every repetition of the game, the music, the text, is "an original" of the work. In the midst of the act of footwashing, we were addressed.

The elusive motif sounded in the midst of tradition. Tradition is not that solid authoritative thing that is given forward which we must either obey or strip away. It cannot be simply stripped away because it is that in which we already are. It is that which we already have in our hands. Tradition is that through which address shines. In the midst of these impermanent, living and dying and rising traditions throughout Lent, address arose.

The elusive motif sounds differently as Lent closes, with the appearance of pedagogy in the community. In the community there is a place for just reading, and being read to. There is a place for the preacher to stand before the people and for the teacher to stand before the students and tell them what they need to remember in the midst of this community. There is a place for students to listen, to sit at the feet of a community's scriptures, to learn the steps of a

community. And yet, the motif repeats that the way of learning those steps, is not, must not be, clear of the “mess.” It must not be teaching and preaching as though what is taught is the unalterable, eternal doctrine, the objective, certain fact— the heavy foot of the dominant hermeneutic. Rather, what is “read by” the people, what is “read to” the people must be the human traditions that are *only* the “common trust” of the community, but that are also *crucially* the “common trust” of the community. From the midst of the community, address emerges.

If the militant motif bluntly drums down the dominant hermeneutic, the effect of the elusive motif is less obvious, it seems less possible to “pin down.” Yet one thing appears again and again.

In the midst. The elusive motif calls for taking up a place *in the midst* of a genealogy. It calls for an understanding *in the midst* of our own prejudices, our own fore-projections. It calls for an understanding *in the midst* of that which is handed forward from the past— tradition. It calls for an understanding *in the midst* of the changeable, impermanent, ambiguous, human words of story, allegory, and myth. It calls for understanding that continues to be unfolded *in the midst* of the play of the people, the interpreters, and the texts themselves.

Now, finally, the refrain appears this one last audacious time. A sending hymn. An imploring. An addressing.

4. The last refrain

For those “who yet teach in the hope that something will “speak” to the hearer.”

Tell stories. Tell the stories of what our people have come to know, whoever your people may be. Tell the stories as honestly as you can. Tell them as stories, as the purposeful, meaning-laden narrations of interested, prejudiced parties. Tell them obediently, faithful to the sense of what has been handed down. Re-tell them interpretively, actualizing

the stories for the sake of the people in whose midst you tell them. Tell the stories in such a way that students are invited to make sense also of their own life stories. Tell the mythical stories in all their meaning-fulness that the people may find for themselves a home in the past, and a possible future.

Embrace mystery. Life does not always “add up.” Present before the people that which you do not understand, that which indeed, your people do not understand. The wondrous. The deep. The puzzling. Present before them the ambiguous that has brought with it the rising of questions. Present before them the profundity that allegory acts to unfold. Explore the ambiguous and profound questions not to arrive at a closing answer, but to unfold a deeper understanding of the thing itself.

Play. It is, as Gregory said, in the midst of the people that we hear address. Play calls for the pastor’s involvement with the congregation, the teacher’s involvement with the students. Play calls for the abolishing of the methodical distance of object-ivity with people. Play calls for care. Play calls for the abolishing of the methodical distance between teacher and subject matter. Play calls for a transparent enthusiastic enjoyment of the text, or perhaps an honest transparent dislike of the text. Play, also as Gregory has said, is already present inviting us. The Scripture is already in motion. So is *Hamlet*. So are the live texts of education. The people are already in motion. You are already in motion. Follow the play of the text and the people and yourself.

Teach. Teach the “common trust.” Before the story can be re-told, a story must be told. Before the allegory can be re-woven, a sense of meaning must be woven. Before the ambiguous gap opens, something coherent needs to be known. Before the play begins, the game must have a shape. Before the tradition can be moved, the tradition must be held. Then, when the people have been taught, then, because it is “the common trust” and not the “facts telling themselves,” not a Book dropped from the clouds, something else may happen.

5. Postlude

. . . and for those who gather round them:

Because what you are “sitting at the feet of” are not the “facts” — as you long suspected. Because what you have been hearing are stories, allegories, myths. Because what you have been taught are human traditions, you are called to join the game. To tell the story. To pose the question. To find a deeper meaning. To add your human voice to the traditions because they are yours to handle. It may be that it is your voice that is just what the old tradition needed to finally wake up, or to finally die and return to dust, that something new just now emerging in the midst of us, may speak.

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