

## THE VOCATION OF THE THEOLOGIAN: CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Shawn Copeland's invitation to address the CTSA as a plenary speaker was a surprise, an honor, and a challenge. In that invitation Shawn suggested that when we speak about the vocation of a theologian, we necessarily speak autobiographically to some degree. So it is as a theologian called to cross boundaries that I write. As such, I first entrust to you three vignettes from my youth that illustrate a call marked by independence and captivity. Second, my academic career as a boundary crosser and sometimes barrier breaker has resulted in the new Center for Religion, the Professions, and the Public funded by a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. It opened its doors on April 1, 2003. I am happy to lay out the many boundaries crossed in the development of the Center and in its proposed programs. Third, my lifelong theological passion has been the Eucharist, the sign of unity that has been such a cause for theological debate and even bloody battles and divisions within Christendom and among nations. I propose an ecumenical, relational theology in the hope of continuing the healing that ecumenical discussions have begun. In all three, crossing boundaries means living in a new kind of space. But more importantly, it also means proving that boundaries are not so much barriers as invitations to insight.

### CROSSING BOUNDARIES I: CALLED

#### *The first vignette*

It is early spring in the California foothills behind Eagle Rock (a small town between Pasadena and Glendale). A ten-year-old girl wanders alone along a narrow path and stops before a large, pungently fragrant buckwheat bush, white with tiny blossoms, each blossom no more than a quarter of an inch in diameter. She stops to look more closely. As she concentrates on one blossom she enters it and finds within it the entire universe. She does not explicate her experience then, indeed she could not possibly have done so. It remains a memory free of analysis and so simply powerful.

#### *The second vignette*

The girl, now fourteen, sits on the beach writing "God is Love" in the sand for the tides to wash around the world.

*The third vignette*

On a 40,000-acre ranch thirty miles from Prescott, Arizona, the sixteen-year-old girl wakes at midnight, full of a strange restlessness. She leaves her sleeping bag under the willow tree by the dry Agua Fria creek and goes to the corral. She bridles Jinx, a three-year-old gelding, and rides quietly away from the ranch. Once on the dirt road, she and Jinx gallop up to and along the top of the hogback, a narrow long hill. She stops, sits quietly on Jinx's warm, bare back and says the cowboy's prayer:

Lord, I've never lived where churches grow.  
I love creation better as it stood  
That day you finished it so long ago  
And looked upon your work  
And called it good.  
I know some people find you in the light  
That's sifted down through tinted windowpanes,  
But somehow you seem near to me tonight  
In this dim, quiet starlight on the plains.

She looks east toward the illumined horizon and thinks: That's Phoenix. Somewhere in Phoenix is a church and in that church is a tabernacle and in that tabernacle is the Eucharistic host. She and Jinx remain quiet under the stars.

The Eucharistic host is both the flower inviting to its cosmic center and the love of God radiating from the center across the desert, the ocean, the universe. For the next fifty years the seeker, who was then a pagan cowgirl and is now a Roman Catholic academic, would continue to experience the two desires, one for a galloping freedom, the other for binding responsibility, desires that tug at one another and enrich one another. If I were sitting on a horse to address you it would be appropriate, however startling to you and unwelcome to this hotel's managers.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES II: RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND RPP

From childhood, I have crossed most boundaries without even knowing they were there. Most little girls don't wander the hills alone. Most students don't quit high school for a year to work on a cattle ranch. Most converts don't find a way to spend nearly a year in Rome, and most parents would not have allowed their daughter to be so independent. But I was oblivious of those markers and simply did the next obvious thing—obvious to me if not to others. That's why I didn't say "Breaking Boundaries," but "Crossing Boundaries." Boundary crossers don't always see the boundary markers.

The Divinity School at the University of Chicago had no medievalist in 1965, so I pursued study of the Eucharist into the sixteenth century. I argued that the doctrine of Calvin and Beza foreshadowed the theory of transignification of Edward Schillebeeckx. I have called a long detour my twenty years of research and writing on Reformed Eucharistic theology and related doctrines (all doctrines

are related, but Christology was particularly bound to the Eucharistic polemics of the sixteenth century).

In 1969, with a chapter of my dissertation still to write, I became the foundation stone in the newly founded Program in Religious Studies at the University of California at Riverside. I was invited often to our sister campus at Santa Barbara where the young department of religious studies was thriving under the leadership of Robert Michaelson, who had argued before the state legislature that departments of religious studies in state schools are not contrary to the establishment clause of the First Amendment. It was early days for such departments and for the growing, but still relatively small, American Academy of Religion that I was urged to join by my mentors at Riverside, Ed Gaustad and Jeffrey Russell. When I left to join the faculty of Duke University's Divinity School in 1973, I had been elected national secretary of the AAR, on whose executive committee I was to spend eight years, during which religious studies developed its own strengths, distinguishing itself more and more from its beginnings among professors whose training had been primarily in seminaries. At Duke, I was aware that I was breaking rather than crossing boundaries. Although Roland Murphy was a visiting professor when I arrived at Duke, I was the first Roman Catholic to join the faculty in a tenure-track position. I was, and remained for my eight years there, the first and only woman on the faculty and the first woman to receive tenure.

By 1981 I had become president of the AAR. My presidential address, "Strictures and Structures: Relational Theology and a Woman's Contribution to Theological Conversation,"<sup>1</sup> outlined a complete theology informed by feminist insights with continual reference to the relation of Christianity's sacramental system to the rituals of other religions. Its arguments remain valid, I think, and I shall refer to them below. Meanwhile, in 1980 I published "The Vagina Dentata," a study of men's fear of women that combined the history of religions, in this case of the worldwide tales of vaginas with teeth and of poison maidens, with liturgical and theological studies. The article did not deter the search committee at the University of Missouri and so I was hired to found Mizzou's Department of Religious Studies. I found at MU a scholarly faculty who were also collegial and open. I set the new department on three balanced legs: Western religions, Asian religions, and indigenous religions, then called "primitive" or "tribal" religions. The broad seat on these three sturdy legs held all four of the first faculty. That seat is collegiality, the kind of collegiality I had learned at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and enjoyed at the University of California at Riverside and at Santa Barbara. I am continually grateful for those early good examples. At MU, collegiality has been not only possible, but also practical, and not only practical, but productive for Religious Studies as a department and for its individual faculty members.

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<sup>1</sup>*Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50/1 (1982): 3-17.

The Department of Religious Studies continually crosses boundaries. The inclusion of Indigenous Religions as an equal partner with the so-called "world religions" was an innovation that proved its value over and over again. At MU, the religious studies faculty have served on graduate committees in a dozen different schools and departments from nursing to music. We have affiliated faculty in other departments and a long list of cross-listed courses. We understand our task to be to understand *religion* through the study of *religions*. Our methods are those appropriate to the way each one studies a particular subject. I use historical methods and textual analysis. Our biblical studies professor is an expert as well in rituals of imperial Rome. Our South Asianist is a Sanskritist and comparativist. Our East Asianist knows not only the classic religions of China and Japan, but studies Chinese popular religions, especially spirit writing. Paul Johnson, our indigenist, is an adjunct professor in anthropology and has spent his research leaves and summers in the jungles of Honduras living with the Garifuna people, even apprenticing himself to a shaman. He spent a summer in New York doing the same thing, for thousands of Garifuna have emigrated to the United States and particularly New York. He is learning how a religion dependent upon gathering all its members to one site to perform an annual sacrifice and related rituals translates its religion in a distant land.

So how is that grist for the theologian's mill? On the Hebrews, the Babylonian captivity imposed a similar dilemma, how to survive as a religious people who cannot return to their center, to the place of their sacrifices, to Jerusalem. The earliest example that comes to mind in the New Testament is the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15. What were those at the center going to do with those diaspora Jews now Christian? With the Gentile converts? How were they to live so far from their center, Jerusalem? Christianity was then and remains an exported religion. It has coped with, or failed to cope with, that reality in different ways. Like other species of life, no religion survives in a new environment without adaptation. Those adaptations are rarely confined to a locality, but eventually reach back to the center from which they came and modify it, just as marginal comments affect the way a reader understands the text in hand. So what appear to be adaptations confined to the margins affect the way the center is understood and eventually how the center understands itself.<sup>2</sup> Efforts to maintain the status quo, to remain unmovable and unmoved, must fail or the institution is doomed to fatal weakness, a kind of osteoporosis, collapse, and death.

From 1985 to 1987, the Department of Religious Studies cooperated with the School of Journalism to offer three annual symposia. We addressed American Religion and International Politics, Islam, and Religion and American Politics. The panelists included some of the finest religion writers and religion scholars in the country. The moderator for all three symposia was Howard Simons, then

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<sup>2</sup>See my article "Speaking of Margins," in *As Leaven for the World*, ed. Thomas M. Landy (Franklin WI: Sheed and Ward, 2001) 77-87.

the Curator of the Nieman Fellows at Harvard. Richard Ostling, then religion editor for *Time* magazine, was a regular participant and advisor. Martin E. Marty was part of the first and third panels, and Robin Wright, Bruce Lawrence, and Roy Motahedeh were panelists for the Islam symposium. National and city-desk editors who attended the symposia asked us to form an institute for religion and journalism at Mizzou, but the then dean of the School of Journalism was not inspired to cooperate in that venture. Nearly twenty years later, the idea blossomed into the new Center for Religion, the Professions, and the Public. To Journalism we have added Medicine, Nursing, Health Professions, Business, Law, Social Work, and Engineering. Psychiatry and Psychology will join us in the near future.

We believe the Center will fill a critical need in higher education by drawing together the various professions and the public they serve in a common effort to address the fundamental conflicts in values, practices, and perceptions that are inevitable in an increasingly religiously plural United States. As the interprofessional committee for RPP worked with me on our proposal, hoping for a major grant, all of us were surprised and pleased by the degree to which the different professions found common interests and needs. Our work was made easier by the fact that MU is such an appropriate place for such a Center. It is a Research I/Land Grant institution with twenty professional schools and colleges located on a single campus, a condition that facilitates meetings of professors and students from the different professional schools and the College of Arts and Science. The new Center will implement a broad research, education, and public outreach agenda, with national application. The goals of the Center are to encourage multidisciplinary research and collaboration among scholars, students, religious and professional leaders, and the public. Together they will study the religious perspectives that impinge on the relationships between professionals and the public they serve. The Center's research will move from theory into direct application—improving professional training and practice, addressing the religiously plural needs of the public, and making a difference in the lives of professionals and those they serve.

The Center's team consists of an executive staff, a core faculty already resident at MU, senior fellows drawn from a national pool through applications on our website, and junior fellows drawn from among the graduate students in the participating professional schools and the department of religious studies. We have begun a national survey to test awareness of the problems professionals and their clients may meet with regard to religious and cultural differences. As is the case in the department of religious studies, the faculty and fellows will utilize the tools of scholarship appropriate to their task: the critical analysis of historical documents, religious texts and rituals, ethnographic and anthropological studies, ethical codes, professional manuals, and curricular materials. The Center will offer seminars, lectures, conferences, focus groups, and media presentations for the diverse professions, religious leaders, and the general public. We are building an interactive website and will disseminate research results through *Confluence*,

the Center's E-Journal, articles in professional journals, books, meetings, and presentations, and through the development of new curricular materials. The results we look for are a greater professional and public understanding of and tolerance toward the diversity of religious values in contemporary American society that lead to enhanced professional practice and interaction, and greater public satisfaction with professional services.

How does such a practical and interprofessional relation with Religious Studies affect the work of a theologian? It requires one to think deeply about Christianity and its divisions and about the relations of these divisions to the religions now becoming more visible and audible in North America, such as Native American religions and the "world religions" and their divisions. Now we understand that we must include as well relatively small groups like the Garifuna. Theologians need also to consider how they can assist professionals to understand that all share a formation rooted in European and Christian presuppositions that are a part of their own training and cultural backgrounds in the United States, and that they must not only acknowledge this formation but go beyond it to understand a now religiously diverse public. Professionals need to understand how the religions and the derivative cultures form the worldviews of themselves and the publics they serve. It behooves professionals to attend to the differences between their own worldviews and those of their patients, clients, and media consumers if they are to serve them well. These differences may be particularly sharp in cases of healing and death, but they arise as well in the often unconscious editing a reporter does in the very act of interviewing and that editors perform based on their own culture and worldview without realizing that they are "editorializing." A Vedic village in Iowa has been built according to Hindu principles which not only determines the circularity of the layout of the village, but such details as the direction that water must flow around the homes. Chinese perceptions of cosmic forces probably don't enter into the calculations of most engineers and architects, but they may need to know those matters if their clients are Hindu or Chinese or if they are employed in India or China.

The Center staff devised a series of questions that may help readers to understand the kinds of issues that the Center's programs will address:

- Are health care providers prepared to recognize and accommodate the spiritual needs of their patients?
- How well do journalists report on the influence of religion and spirituality in local, national, and international events?
- Can an understanding of various religious traditions help social workers better serve their clients?
- During the research and development phase of their work, do scientists and engineers consider how cultural and religious differences may affect the reception and application of new technologies?
- How well do Americans understand the religious traditions of their fellow citizens?

- What challenges and opportunities do demographic shifts provide for businesses?
- Will the answers to these questions affect the American legal system?

The study of religions is developing a practical side that makes it a player in international politics, business, health care, philanthropy, and legal concerns such as the establishment of a world court. Is there a corresponding development in theological studies?

The answer is in the June 2003 issue of *Theological Studies*. Its theme is "The Catholic Church and Other Living Faiths in Comparative Perspective." The lead article by James Fredericks contains in its title, "Rejecting Nothing That Is True and Holy." Under that banner the issue contains articles that examine the attitudes of Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism with regard to other religions and a concluding essay on interreligious dialogue. The ecumenical movement of the twentieth century is entering the twenty-first century with an increasing awareness of practical exigency. Theologians are enriching their understanding of and fidelity to the Creator by embracing those whose religions have built another interpretation of reality. As they do so, as theologians reach out to their brothers and sisters from other parts of the world and from other faiths, they need to consider as well what advice they may be called upon to give to professionals regarding their practice. Can an Evangelical doctor or a Catholic doctor or nurse pray with a dying Muslim or affirm the dying Muslim's desire for union with Allah and for Paradise? If you think it is possible, then how do you explain why and how to do that to busy health professionals so that they can adopt principles for their actions before they meet the actual challenge? If you think it is not possible, what advice would you give to health professionals so that they can put the well-being of their patients ahead of their own spiritual comfort without violating their own spiritual principles? Theologians must be willing to tackle these questions head on if they are to assist professionals to think through their own responses. The crossing of so many barriers will raise new questions requiring new solutions.

Theologians respond to their culture and to the changes within that culture. If that were not true, theologians would have closed the book long ago and practice would pose no challenge. Responding to cultural changes is not a task for one theologian to tackle alone. In the case of religious pluralism in North America, it can be done only through collegial conversation and reasoned argument with experts and practitioners of different religions. Ecumenism is not a choice any longer; it is a necessity.

### CROSSING BOUNDARIES III: DOING THEOLOGY

In the hope of contributing to that conversation, I want to draw upon five years of ecumenical experience as a member of the Roman Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue in the USA. During those five years we hammered out the volume on

justification.<sup>3</sup> During those semiannual, five-day sessions it became clear that even within the same culture, traditions shape quite different ways of understanding God's call and our response. Even within the same culture, it is often difficult to listen and to hear what is being said as the speaker intends to be heard. One example may suffice. From the Reformation until today, many Lutherans have understood *fides caritate formata* (faith formed by love) differently from Roman Catholics. All the way back to Melancthon, Lutherans have understood that phrase to mean faith informed by works. For them, charity is a work, something one does when one loves God or turns to the neighbor to give alms, feed the hungry, and the like. Certainly charity does those things, but first it is a theological virtue, a gift given by God. It results in works but cannot be reduced to the works it inspires. During parts of two five-day sessions I produced Catholic texts from the sixteenth century and other times, especially those that comment on Romans 5, in an effort to make clear Roman Catholic teaching on the gift nature of charity. I don't recall what finally broke the ice; I think it may have been a comparison to the Lutheran notion of faith that is itself a gift and that proves its Godly origin by inspiring good works done for the neighbor. Luther used the biblical image of the good tree bearing good fruit to explain how gratitude to God for Christ's work of salvation grasped by faith issues in service to the neighbor.

In twentieth-century dialogues there was a will to understand and to find common ground. The dialogues of the late sixteenth century, on the other hand, provide an example of those in the political and religious minority seeking understanding while the collocutor on the side of the politically powerful sought to convert his opponent. A basic agreement was possible, however. In *The Colloquy of Montbéliard*,<sup>4</sup> I wrote that "the sacramental mode" might have provided ground for agreement between the Reformed and the Lutheran disputants (p. 99). I understand the sacramental mode to be primarily relational in the terms I have outlined much earlier in "Strictures and Structures." At this time, I would like to give that relational theology a new twist as a way of finding a mediating vision that may contribute to resolving entrenched differences such as those between Reformed and Lutheran theologians in the late sixteenth century. So let us look briefly at the background to the Colloquy of Montbéliard.

In 1586 Theodore Beza, John Calvin's successor in Geneva, and Jacob Andreae, a Lutheran theologian at the University of Tübingen and advisor to the Duke of Württemberg, were called to Montbéliard to assist Count Frederick in determining whether the town might continue its French liturgy and the Reformed theology that supported it or whether they would conform to the 1555

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<sup>3</sup>*Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*, ed. H. G. Anderson, T. A. Murphy, and J. A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985).

<sup>4</sup>Jill Raitt, *The Colloquy of Montbéliard: Religion and Politics in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

decree that each area would embrace the religion of its ruler, in this case the ardent Lutheran, Duke Ludwig of Württemberg. The argument that began with the Eucharist was driven quickly to a dispute over Christology and other doctrines. I suggest that had the two opponents understood the sacramental mode, they could not have argued so vehemently concerning the spatial location of the body of Christ. Briefly, the arguments are these. Strict Lutherans like Andreae had no use for what they called the "pussyfooting" (*leisetreten*) compromises of Melancthon who had agreed to change article X of the Augsburg Confession. The unaltered text of 1530 said that the body of Christ is *given* to communicants. The altered version of 1541 that accommodated Calvin's doctrine said that the body of Christ is *offered* to communicants. "To offer" allows for the Reformed doctrine that only the faithful receive the body and blood of Christ offered to the "mouth of faith" through the power of the Holy Spirit. The impious, those without faith, receive only bread and wine. Lutherans, with Catholics, argued that everyone who receives communion receives the Body and Blood of Christ, the faithful to their benefit and the impious to their damnation. But Lutherans had rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation and had no equivalent doctrine to put in its place. They were content to say that Christ is bodily present in, with, or under the bread and wine and so, recalling the confession of Berengarius, is received orally by every communicant.

During the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Christ may be present simultaneously on many altars, said the Lutherans, and can be so because the humanity of Christ shares the ubiquity of the divinity of Christ. The Reformed accused the Lutherans of confusing the natures of Christ which Chalcedon had kept distinct. Instead, Calvin and Beza taught that the bread and wine retain their substantial natures during the Lord's Supper but become instruments of the Holy Spirit who, through them, unites the faithful to the body of Christ where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Beza summarized the points on which the Lutherans and the Reformed agree:

1. The Lord's Supper is composed of two things, the signs and the signified.
2. By the Lord's command, the signs are bread and wine and the signified are his body and blood.
3. Jesus Christ and his benefits are inseparable.
4. The signs and the signified are joined by a sacramental conjunction.
5. The signs are not bare and empty but present to both worthy and unworthy what they signify.

Beza then summarized their disagreements: The Württembergers teach that the sacramental conjunction of the bread and the body is both real and substantial so that with the bread, the body is received into the mouth by both the worthy and the unworthy. The Swiss<sup>5</sup> affirm a sacramental conjunction which they teach

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<sup>5</sup>Beza spoke of "the Swiss" even though he knew that Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's

is relative so that the body remains in heaven and the bread on earth. The body is therefore not presented in its corporal essence to the mouth of the worthy and the unworthy.

The Reformed and the Lutherans agreed that Christ is presented to communicants through a sacramental conjunction. They consider then the manner of the conjunction in terms of the Aristotelian categories of substance and relation. Neither side stopped to consider that the modifier "sacramental" might provide a way to rethink their differences. If, instead of moving the dispute too quickly to the location or locability of the body of Christ in space, Beza and Andreae had focused on what they held in common about sacraments, they might have reached agreement. For they did agree that sacraments are common things that, through the Word, signify a great mystery, the union of human beings with God.

At this point, I would like to do some anachronistic role-playing to bring the Colloquy of Montbéliard to an agreeable conclusion. Let's suppose that Andreae says to Beza: "I agree that the heart of our dispute concerns the nature of sacraments and how they present what they signify. You wish to interpret the sacramental conjunction as a relation between the bread and the Body of Christ through the use of metonymy, a particular form of metaphor. Lutherans place that conjunction in the power of the Word of God to effect what it declares, thus when Christ says that this, *touto*, is my body, he means that this bread is now my body. We believe that faith grasps the Word without questioning how it is effective."

Beza responds: "The Reformed also believe the Word of God and that through the Holy Spirit, the faithful are united to the substance of the body and blood of Christ so that they become "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone." But sacraments are not sausages. Sacraments signify something other than themselves, but something used by the Holy Spirit to effect union with Christ. When John Calvin insisted that the bread and wine are instruments of the Holy Spirit, he meant that during the Supper, their common purpose as food and drink is transcended so that while they remain what they are, they become a means of uniting believers to Christ where he is, in heaven."

Andreae interrupts, objecting to the last of Beza's statements: "That's the whole problem. Where is Christ? Can we agree that the risen Christ is real and at the same time a mystery? Perhaps the category of place as we understand it, has no place in our debate. If we were to prescind from it and leave the nature and condition of risen human bodies as beyond our ken, how would our argument be altered?"

Beza responds: "It would remove a major stumbling block to our agreement. If we stop thinking about Christ as risen to a place and you stop thinking about

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successor in Zurich, would disallow a sacramental conjunction of the kind that Beza argued for.

Christ being chewed between people's teeth, we could return to the point of the Lord's Supper and affirm that it is a means of sacramental union between the faithful and Christ."

Andreae adds: "Yes, and Lutherans could agree that only the faithful are united to Christ, that is to say, only in the faithful are the benefits of the sacrament realized, even though both the worthy and the unworthy receive the consecrated bread and wine and with them, the body and blood of Christ."

Beza interrupts: "Careful! Can we not agree that the bread and wine are *in some way* the body and blood of Christ since we really can't say exactly how the sacraments are effective symbols? If we want to discuss the theology of it further, the Reformed say that the sacramental union works through metonymy.<sup>6</sup> For example in the Lukan account of the Last Supper, there is a double use of metonymy; for first, the cup is taken for that which it contains, as the cup is taken for the wine that is in the cup. Second, the wine is called the covenant or testament, whereas in reality it is only the sign of the testament, or rather of the blood of Christ by which the testament was made; neither is it an empty sign, although it is not the same as the thing that it represents. Or let us look at the Markan account. The bread and the wine are changed, not in nature but in quality, for without doubt they become tokens of the body and blood of Christ, not because of their own nature or force of words, but by Christ's institution, which must be recited so that faith may find what to grasp, both in the word and in the elements. This is a figure of speech called metonymy, that is to say, the giving of one name, signification, or meaning for another: so he calls the bread his body, which is the sign and sacrament of his body: and yet it is a figurative and changed kind of speech-meaning so that the faithful do indeed receive Christ with all his gifts and become one with him.<sup>7</sup> I know that you think differently about the sacramental union and that your sacramental theology leads to a Christology that the Reformed question. But could we not lay aside these theological explanations and agree upon the fact of a sacramental union of the elements and the body and blood of Christ for the spiritual nourishment of the faithful?"

Andreae responds: "I could agree to that if you would agree that when the bread is offered through the liturgy, the mystery of the incarnate and risen Christ is present also in its truth and in its reality. Then we might achieve peace and an end to the theological and actual wars between us and our people."

"To that I can certainly agree," sighs Beza with evident relief.

Of course such agreement was not possible in the viciously polemical culture of the late sixteenth century, possibly not even today although contemporary linguistics may provide a common method for facilitating ecumenical agreement

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559 edition) IV.xxvii.21.

<sup>7</sup>The explanation of the passages from Luke and Mark are taken almost verbatim from *The 1599 Geneva Study Bible*.

on the sacraments. I hope to pursue Beza's use of metonymy in the light of recent linguistic recoveries of this mode of speech.<sup>8</sup> I want to investigate as well the possibility of examining Beza's own doctrine as to its roots in Aristotle's representational signs, and in Plato's instrumental signs<sup>9</sup> or as I would prefer to say, participative signs. Both traditions entered the rhetorical discussions of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists. Calvin and Beza received their early training in Paris as rhetoricians, a fact that at least partially accounts for their more flexible sacramental theology as over against the eclectic medieval theology of Gabriel Biel that was part of the training of the Augustinian Martin Luther. But that will be another paper at another time.

So there was a theological solution to the dilemma at Montbéliard even though the *rabies theologorum* prevented the two disputants from discovering it. The solution consisted in the acceptance of the Word's invitation to a truly mystical union, real beyond our sensible realities. It required a language that combined an analogical imagination with linguistic tropes that relate time to the Eternal and space to the Omnipresent, in short, that allow for effective sacraments.<sup>10</sup>

My hope is not only to propose a way for better ecumenical understanding, but also for explaining the Eucharist in ways that I think would be helpful to parishioners in the twenty-first century. Attempts to explain the mystery signified by sacraments, to capture it within rational argument, result in disputes as theologians explain one or another facet of it, take the part as the key to the whole and then set one partial argument against the partial argument of their opponents. They lose the purpose of sacraments in disputes about how they are effective.

<sup>8</sup>For a recent discussion of metonymy, see "Workshop on Metonymy," Hamburg University, Germany, June 23-24, 1996. Abstracts, which I am using here, are available on the web at <<http://www.psyc.leeds.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search/metaphorAbstracts/index.pl>>, which website includes "Historical Semantics and Cognition," Freie Universität Berlin, September 18-21, 1996.

<sup>9</sup>See Rudi Keller, "Rules and Tools: On the Relation between Meanings and Concepts," at the Berlin conference mentioned in the note above. I prefer "participation" in Plato—in fact, I would like to think of metaphor as a participative way of thinking rather than the dialogical "is/is not."

<sup>10</sup>Given my long occupation with the development of the Center for Religion, the Professions, and the Public, I need to retool theologically. I prepared to address the vocation of the theologian by reading David Tracy's *The Analogical Imagination*. Subsequent conversation with David encouraged me in hoping that I might have something to say in this unlooked-for opportunity to address the CTSA.

On the use of metaphor, under which metonymy falls, see the discussion between Roger Haight and Robert Masson on symbol and metaphor in *Christology: Memory, Inquiry, Practice*, College Theology Society Annual Volume 48 (2002), ed. Anne M. Clifford and Anthony J. Godzieba (Maryknoll and New York: Orbis Books; Edinburgh: Alban, 2003) 47-91.

The key, in my view, is in the word "relation" or, if you prefer, "participation." From their beginning, humans have attempted to establish a relation with transcendent powers that they understand to be at work in this world and in themselves. They want to participate in the power of life, in sacred reality, and they have devised rituals to effect that participation, that effective relationship.

For Christians, at the Last Supper Christ intended to establish, and so in reality did establish, means to maintain, even to deepen, the loving relationship of himself to his disciples and of all Christians to one another in other times and places. It is possible precisely because Christ is risen into mystery, into a fullness of life beyond our dreaming, certainly beyond any idea we can have of it and so beyond our categories of space and time. Neither Beza nor Andreae had difficulty with the aptness of the bread and wine to signify the body and blood of Christ. But what body? The appropriate question for Beza and Andreae was not where the body may be but what is the nature of that body in which St. Paul declares those who communicate participate. How can we be one body and that body both the church and the body of Christ? That union, says Ephesians, is a great mystery, a great sacrament. The Word assures our faith that it is so in some way, but although the Word established the sacraments, it does not tell us how they do their work nor where, if *where* is a category that we can apply, and I don't think that it is. But Beza and Andreae both tried to apply "where" to determine where the body of the risen Christ is now, on the altar, in heaven, or both. It is a false question because it assumes a purely rational answer, a space-time answer such as one would give to the question, "Where is John Paul II?" The answer to the question, "Where is the body of Christ?" asks a relational rather than a locative question because Scripture presents the risen Christ as a Eucharistic, ecclesial reality. It is at this point that I want to pick up a paragraph from "Strictures and Structures":

If one moves from physical, temporal, quantitative concerns and undertakes to explain the efficacy of the sacraments through the category of relation, one discovers a means of understanding the role of intention which is part of any human, indeed of any intellectual-volitional act, including our perception of the divine activity. The Lord's Supper is believed to draw communicants into a deeper, truer, more *real*, if you like, relation with Jesus Christ. That is its purpose. The category of relation [mediated through the use of metonymy] then makes possible fruitful discussion concerning the role of the bread and wine as signs of Christ's salvific intention. For signs are directed toward understanding. The signs that are sacraments are concretions of intentions, in this case God's intentions, and so have real meaning, i.e., are real for Christian believers.<sup>11</sup>

Sacraments begin in the homely and end in the wholly Other, in the God beyond knowing. They exist to relate the temporal to the eternal, the creature to

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<sup>11</sup>"Strictures and Structures," 5-6.

the creator. They bind the individual participants not only to Christ but also in Christ to one another. Thus prodded by my work in historical theology, I put on my systematic hat to consider what Beza and Andreae failed to consider and what I did not discuss in "Strictures and Structures": the relation of the two doctrines of the Eucharist as the body of Christ and of the Church as the Body of Christ.

If the Eucharist signifies and makes present the sanctifying bodily reality of the risen Christ and if the body of Christ is also the people of God who are fed the one bread and given the one cup, then the mystery of the Eucharist is doubled. But Scripture and tradition present both aspects to faith and so offer the double mystery to theologians to ponder. The Eucharist is the body of Christ; the body of Christ is the Church, the people of God. As Bernard Cooke has expressed it, Christ died a man and rose a community.<sup>12</sup> If that is so, what can the Second Coming mean? It is a doctrine I have had no way of grasping until recently when I understood that when faith truly grasps the paschal event, it brings with it the grace to die to self and to rise for others. If Christ's resurrection grace is active whenever one dies to self and rises for others, then the Second Coming may be that glorious day when we are no longer curved in upon self, but free to stand straight, to look to the risen Christ who stands beside us in our neighbor, when we have all learned to live for others.<sup>13</sup> That day is not yet showing even the faintest glimmer of dawning, but it is hope's object. On that day faith, hope, and charity will meet and peace and justice will kiss.

When theologians resort to poetic, even romantic language as I just did, they are acknowledging limits to their ability to explain God. That is not a bad thing! Reason can take us only so far. I am not suggesting that theologians stop speaking and writing about God, because the vocation of the theologian is to do just that, to engage in God-talk. But perhaps there exist boundaries that we must cross in silence.

As much as I may desire to understand my horse's pain when she develops a limp, I cannot. I can only use my experience of pain as a fellow mammal to try to know what she feels. In doing so, I inevitably anthropomorphize my horse. As much as I may want to understand God's desire to unite us all in the Body of Christ, I can only use my experience of desire and my experience of bodied being to try to grasp God's action in raising Christ and drawing us into union through that risen and sacramental body. In doing so, I inevitably anthropomorphize my God. Should theologians, like Job, clap their hands over their

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<sup>12</sup>See also John P. Hogan, "People of Faith and Global Citizens: Eucharist and Globalization," in *Liturgy and Justice: To Worship God in Spirit and Truth*, ed. Anne Y. Koester (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2002) esp. 50.

<sup>13</sup>For what this might mean concretely, see M. Shawn Copeland, "To Live at the Disposal of the Cross: Mystical-Political Discipleship as Christological Locus," in *Christology: Memory, Inquiry, Practice*, 177-96.

mouths and stop speaking? If the theologian is not only a speaker but also a lover, than the answer is obvious. Some boundaries are crossed only by entering the heart of a tiny flower, by silence under the stars.

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