

The Lectionary Advent Texts for 2002

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This Advent our world is caught in a frenzy of dis-ease. Our sense of security is shattered and the fabric of western culture is stressed and seriously weakened by crises internal and external. The times they are a-changing! And our culture's sense of progress upward and onward has been severely challenged. Strident religions and strident economies batter at the identities of the world's peoples. What will happen next? And where? Who's in charge? Now we know that apocalyptic scenarios are not confined to biblical texts. Ideologies of domination and destruction are producing catastrophic effects. We feel vulnerable in previously unimaginable ways. In the reducing and reconstituting of values, commitments, and principles primarily in economic terms, the sense of what is good, right, and just simply vanishes from the horizon. To seek economic solace without moral accountability cannot be done, not if this world is God's. Is there no vision inside to act as a compass? Is there no light beckoning?

Given permission by terrifying events to hate and polarize, human beings are pursuing extremism and exterminism, denying each other's humanity. We witness hopes and fears tearing at each other in a vortex of violence and destruction. "If you do not get your way or something displeases you, it is possible simply to blot it out."¹ Is God setting off apocalyptic bombs of all types to get our attention? Faced by competing agendas, definitions and ideologies, a sense of being marginalized, the invoking of apocalyptic literalness, codification of the world into religious/secular, true/false, clean/unclean, human beings are vulnerable to all sorts of salvific offers. Demanded responses of compliance and submission cannot be heeded as if what they envisioned is necessarily true. Critical evaluation is necessary. Otherwise the nations, groups, religions, and sects of our very diverse world remained mired in violent response/counter response as if such fury and violence would abate when confronted by superior force.

Yet, is restoration, a mending of God's world possible? Can shattered hearts and visions as well as hopes be healed? Is God at war with the world, too? In what or whom is our hope grounded? When the ground we were so certain would never shake, is shaking, is this still "my Father's world?"

The task this Advent is an imaginative reading in/of a shattered world in the light of powerful Advent texts that speak of a faithful God at work, a God whose patience has not run out and who still sends life-giving, hope-endowing sun and rain prodigally and indiscriminately to nurture the beloved creation. Advent is about the character of God, the faithful one. Note the repeated characterization of God as faithful across the broad media of images, metaphors, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs in the lectionary texts: for example Is. 64:8; Is. 61:8; 1 Th. 5:24. Trevor Hart pointedly characterizes this God who "is faithful to his original creation and renews it through the exercise of that same power which raised up Christ to life from the emptiness of death, and which, in the beginning, called the universe itself into being out of nothing. God's promised future, then, is anticipated in the midst of the older order of things not only through an

imaginative looking forward to it, but through actual irruptions of the power of the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.”² And Jurgen Moltman takes us one step further, stating that such faithfulness is on God’s terms alone: the faithful God’s gift of hope is “the thing we cannot already think out and picture for ourselves on the basis of the given world and of the experiences we already have of the world.”³

The homiletic challenge is both social: to recall alternative visions and experiences of human community focused by the gracious God, and theological: to declare that the world belongs to God not to any imperial design committed to an elitism of ethnic origin, religion, rational truth, or economics. Religion cannot be marginalized or individualized, rather it is socially intense, impacting political claims, social organization, economic structures, and ideological commitments.⁴ Corruption of the good creation is due a divine, gracious, just, massive contradiction. Not only are we nurtured by the Advent texts to live and act in certain ways, but also to think and perceive in certain hopeful ways not because of what we can see, encourage and commit to, but because of the faithful God whose ways are not our ways.

The Old Testament Readings

We are placed in the exilic, post-exilic world of 2nd and 3rd Isaiah, a world of shimmering hope and exhaustive despair. These texts arise within a community where the faithful God is fundamental to the future, without whom there is no future. The embraced but also strenuously challenged conviction is that God’s reign will be restored and God’s promises kept. There is yearning for a kingdom of justice shaped by mercy to be established by God soon. Only God can give discernment about the meaning of history and the hope of the future when the people of God are engulfed in the chaos of competing ideologies and politics. For this threatened community now “the power of history is exercised by the powerful for whom the future they plan and project is the prolongation of their present.”⁵

Isaiah 64:1-9

This, the thematic text for this Advent, raises the decisive question: who are the powerful, and what are their methods in the face of the daily struggles of our historical existence and the terror of our times? Who is more faithful, and to what?

In a time of tearing and rending, the text pleads for God to engage in equally violent rending and tearing. Assuming the role of the divine warrior of old, God must act in compelling and decisive fashion, rending, tearing, and closing the gap between the realms of heaven and earth, coming down into human chaos to redeem, to order, to create anew. The gospels know this plaintive call to be answered in Jesus the Christ, at whose baptism the heavens are rent (Mk 1:10), at whose death the temple veil is sundered (Mk 15:38), and in whose torn, broken life the kingdom is clearly established, and whose call to discipleship bespeaks yet more violence and rending.

Yes, the images are violent. The text is strident, nervous, worried, and desperate; the chaos is real. Without the stability of God, the fragility of human beings is apparent. And “we” are not innocent, “we” are self-created aliens to God. “Our” arrogance has stripped life of grace. In Pauline terms, the old Adam is alive and well, terrifyingly so. How are “we” to respond to God’s rending and tearing? “We,” though confessedly sin-filled, are to be repentant and chastened, and to renounce the pride we have invested

in trying to save ourselves. God alone has the power to make space for life, granting the re-entry of grace and healing. God alone creates the vision that can alleviate that paralyzing sense of helplessness.

“We,” inert, drowning, but remembering, envision the theophanies of old when the earth shook and the faithful God “did awesome deeds we did not expect.” (vs. 3). Advent is the announcement of an awesome life we did not expect. As Moltmann insists in a lifetime of energetic theological reflection, “the capacity to envisage a hoped for future, far from dulling our sensibilities to the pain of the present, actually serves to heighten those sensibilities and is a powerful stimulus to resistance and reaction which itself drives us to break away from the present towards the future.”⁶ And so post-exilic Israel waits and trusts in the faithful God it knows as Father and potter (vs. 8), images of a God who crafts human beings with loving care and decisive, total commitment and who can turn what looks like endings into beginnings. “We” are all your people (vs. 9). And as Donald Shriver insistently believes, “There is politics in this ‘we’ and tenuous hope.”⁷ Jesus spent a lifetime re-defining this “we,” and so must “we,” politically, economically, socially.

Would the faithful God remain silent and secluded? Jesus himself gives answer in Luke 18:7-8.

Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort is voiced only after long and agonizing silence, the integrity of which commands respect. For such silences return if Is. 64 is fully heard. Otherwise comfort is nearly always naïve, overriding of pain, rarely embracing it. The danger is clear: the call to repentance is trivialized, rendered too easy, and certainly made superficial. Comfort opens the portals of the future and does not dwell contentedly in the present tempted to resume the old ways.

The bold word is not everything will be all right; it isn’t and it won’t be. There will be unforeseen as well as predicted, terrifying tearing and rending. Rather the boldness is fed by the presence of God, the faithful one. God has decreed and the divine council has enacted the word. Issues of jurisdiction and turf psychological, social, and economic are settled. Human longing, wounded, and in danger of being structurally demolished, will be fulfilled. The gracious Sovereign wills life. God is not at war with the world, though human beings are experiencing the war of the worlds that is ferociously destructive. To the questions “Is God able?” and “Is God willing to save?” a resounding “Yes!” is given. But there are no facile techniques or methods to be learned; the presence is freely, divinely given. The deeds of God are forgiveness and redemption, which enable new life with all its attendant possibilities to be born, to be nurtured and to grow.

Fragile we are; we know that bitter truth. What we build is always unstable; that we are learning over and over. “Comfort” is the word that overcomes life’s accompanying fear. The divine warrior of vs. 10 is mighty and victorious, strong enough to give comfort. The gentle shepherd of vs. 11 who cares for all the sheep is caring enough to give comfort. In seasons and spaces of dislocation, the gospel locates home. This is no wallpaper gospel to cover the cracks. What is cracked, crumbles; what is deeply wounded, organically and structurally fails. But God has decided. The word is spoken, the decree enacted. God directs human beings toward the future. The word drags us forward, forward toward homecoming.

Only a word? The whole world rests on such. “We” remember how it all began: “God said.” The word will have its way, the word spoken by the faithful God.

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

What does the faithful God envision? What will the fatherly shepherd and attentive potter caringly craft? What divine vision empowers hope? Jesus read this text in the synagogue gathering in Nazareth (Lu. 4:16-30) declaring, “Today, this scripture has been fulfilled.” The Spirit, while drawing human beings into the future, begins work here and now.

Verses 1-3 craft a vision of redemption given voice by a human being raised up, empowered, authorized by the charismatic God to speak words of gracious gospel (good news) to dis-spirited, wounded, lamenting human beings.⁸ The news is unbelievable, impossible, unrealistic: what is broken will be mended, for the divine potter knows how; what is wounded will be healed, for the fatherly shepherd knows how.

The vision is of a restored community that is theologically, economically, and socially whole. But the power to create such a reality already shared with the Spirit inspired human agent of grace is to be shared further: “they” the vision-enveloped ones are called to build and rebuild urban community (vs. 4) in covenant with that awesome community of the faithful God and the gospel-declaring human being in their midst.

God speaks (vs. 8, 9) of a covenant faithful affirmed, justly established, overflowing with gracious bounty, easily recognized, readily embraced, and persistently evangelical. The human recipients of this gosselled-vision declare a time of festive rejoicing, wearing their garments of grace that clothe the people of this new world (vs. 10), convinced that the vision will have its way as surely as the fertile earth enables growth (vs. 11). Irresistible this is. No conditions are given, for this is the work of God. Yet what is given is a simple, enticing invitation of world-creating words spoken to downtrodden, crushed human beings. Just words? Such a vision releases activism and energy, having a reflective impact on ways of living in the present. Church history is replete with figures who know that this is true, to mention just two: Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Calcutta.

2 Samuel 7:1-11; Isaiah 19:2-7

These two texts, popular in any Advent lectionary, remind us of the careful faithfulness of God to Israel’s most remembered, though flawed hero. In the former David proposes, but God disposes. David would build a temple for God, but temple building is not the same thing as kingdom building where God is sovereign and the king is the covenant-faithful son. David would honor and build for God, but God knows better and does wiser, given the life experience of God’s all too human son. What God would build in and through David’s heirs, through Jesus, great David’s greater son, God would build for all: the kingdom of God, a kingdom superior to all imperial schemes devised by human beings. The striking, disruptive history of the Davidic line, a history of sin, brokenness and loss, is a stark reminder that the faithful God alone can grasp the threads of continuity and weave anew the kingdom in the middle of the human experience of discontinuity. This is no human work, for such cannot stand up against the assaults of human pride, arrogance, war, and terrorism.

The latter text is a more nuanced vision with penetrating impact on the Christologies of the New Testament. Voiced in a context of imperial threat, it declares in no uncertain

terms that, though God uses imperial powers, their arrogant protestations to the contrary, God will work God's will. God remains the caring, fatherly shepherd and responsible potter. Imperialism does not lead to enlightened life for all; it generates only darkness and hopelessness for most. But its destiny, too, lies in God's hands. Imperialism claims the furthestmost horizons, seeking to blot out any other claims to ultimate authority and power. That is idolatry assaulting God's role as the dominant reality. God's perspective includes the empires, but theirs does not include God.

Thus God has once again taken up the divine resolve. Reining in imperial pretensions and designs is a vigorous, violent process impacting human history in painful ways, given the human lexicon of sin. The throne names declare hope-filled possibilities of unanticipated newness not born of evolutionary inevitability and progress. For the latter are the grandiose plans of human engineering, managed power, administrative technique, or passionate fervor called terrorism.

This king's reign will be gloriously public, not confined to the individual, private sphere of life, when justice and righteousness will determine conduct, not economics.⁹ Shalom will characterize reality (vs. 7).

Our Advent reading knows Jesus as this reversal, this king. He is the subversive alternative who challenges imperial claims once and for all. Through him God's reign will prevail. Christology is (among many other things) the extended exploration of the issues of sovereignty (Who's in charge? "Mighty God"); presence (Where is God? "Everlasting Father"); agency (What does God do? "Wonderful Counselor"); and social well-being (What does God will and give? "Prince of Peace").¹⁰

The Epistle Readings

These texts are a variety of epistolary beginnings and endings accompanied by paranesis. ("Discourse whose aim is to exhort or persuade the reader or auditor to do good.")¹¹ A beginning knows the answer to the questions: "Where" and "In what do we stand?" An ending raises acutely the question of the future as regards both its shape and quality, especially in light of the daily pace of historical living and the terror of history as human beings have experienced it.

Both are about the faithful God. But faithful to what? Each knows the answer: to the loving triune nature, to the giving of grace gifts, to the calling and creating of community, to the undergirding of hope. The faithful God is a decisive, interventionist, side-taking, gracious God. Thus the paranesis is both grounded in God's character and action and is comforting because of the future to which it beckons. Paranesis makes no sense if we stand alone facing the future, for it is lacking comprehensive vision, depth, stamina, and ultimate horizon. Beginnings and endings remember and so know who God is. Grounded in God, paranesis generates dynamism and energy. "Another future becomes perceptible. The laws and forces of the past are no longer 'compulsive'. God's messianic future wins power over the present. New perspectives open up. The deadliness of progress towards the economic, ecological, nuclear and genetic catastrophes is recognized; and the modern world's lack of future is perceived. The way becomes free for alternative developments."¹²

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

This is a typical, carefully crafted, Pauline prayer of thanksgiving that sets the

issues in the Corinthian church within the vast network of God's grace and the wider story of redemption in Christ Jesus which is a reality now (vs. 9) and yet to be completed (vs. 7). Forgiven, welcomed, cherished, splendidly gifted, they are grace-rich in ways that they grasp faithfully, in ways in which they abuse that grace, turning it into private schemes of personal aggrandizement, and in ways that Paul has yet to teach them. But the letter is only at its beginning; the ground must be clearly identified before moving on to the issues; then Paul will proceed to build carefully. Knowledge of grace given is a matter of intellectual grasp and heart felt intensity. Visceral verification is required. The issues will be evident. Paul's strategy is to revolutionize the Corinthians' past, giving them a new past that will change their future completely.

The Corinthians are a diverse community called together into relationship with Christ and one another so that mutuality may thrive. Graced freely, they are to give freely.¹³ Notice that nothing is said of an answering trust, yet. The solid ground is God's faithfulness that is the continuing expression of God's love. Living in the sphere of shalom is a gifted place in which Christ's redemption has made them blameless. They wait in a context in which God has done and will do all that is necessary for shalom. Yet the future is incomplete now, but given in Christ. Their challenge will be to see more clearly the grace that already gifts them and the peace that already sustains them. The verb in vs. 6, translated "confirmed," and the verb in vs. 8, translated "will sustain," are the same. All this extraordinary work is of God.

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Elemental reduction with roaring, rending, reducing – we know how to envision that. The images are emblazoned in our memory and inescapable, marring the genesis of a new century and a millennium. But human shortsightedness is transcended. Slowness and forbearance are not the same thing.

The faithful God exercises forbearance for salvific reasons: that salvation may be for all. God is the God of the second-chance, whose forbearing can be taxing for human beings impatient to decide the issue. Jonah confronts God about what that means for Ninevah (Jon. 4:2) and Jonah does not like it at all.¹⁴ Salvation's schedule is not ours to determine, no matter how much we want to shorten the time. It is a matter of God's power, God's time, God's newness.

But if this is God's attitude, it is to be ours as well. Faithful maturity will inherit the new creation. Christians match God's patience with their own. And the results will be extraordinary: righteousness, now homeless, will have a permanent home. And so we wait, experiencing in ever new ways the evidence of God's mercy. Who, what, where, when, how is the evidence of our mercy given and displayed? Mercy must complete the work of patience. Only so will righteousness find a home.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

The lectionary selection includes the last half of the final paranesis (vs. 16-22) about intra-communal relationships, although the first three imperatives (vs. 16-18) clearly move beyond the Thessalonian church; a blessing (vs. 23); and a theological confession (vs. 24) that shapes everything, including this Advent 2002.

What do we know? What does that knowing generate in the community and in the world? The fundamental issue at stake is the collision of two differing visions of social reality and a struggle over who has the authority to shape society understood to mean

an ever widening series of concentric circles: the church, the empire, the world, all of which are comprehended within the realm of God's shalom.

Rejoicing in God's shalom and faithfulness is radical critique in an imperial system that proclaims its own peace as emperor-given and emperor/elite-driven and that is intentionally wholistic and therefore intolerant of alternatives. Praying in such a world is a matter of persistent attitude and intercession generating deeds that implement in a clear but limited fashion the alternative vision of reality. Notice that the imperative to pray is bracketed by rejoicing and thanksgiving. Only the reality of the gospel sustains any imperative. If God is not faithful, no imperative has any ground to enable the hearer becoming doer to stand. Thankfulness is driven by the vision of gracious redemption and its sensed-presence in this world, and that is grounds for rejoicing anywhere and any time in this imperial world.

The last set of imperatives (vs. 19-22) exemplifies the struggle to discern the good will of God in a culture filled with conflicting alternatives. The attainment of clarity is envisioned as a rational, emotional, and critical struggle in which the Spirit, always attentive, plays a major role.

In a first century culture replete with statues of Tyche (chance) and Moira (fate) in every major urban center, God's community may count on God's commitment: the faithful One will do it. Paul's whole epistolary corpus builds on that confession. Paul knows the heart of God revealed in Christ; Paul knows the yearning passion and compassion of this God committed to the redemption of the fallen creation and who has paid the price of such commitment.

Romans 16:25-27

When all is said and done in this his most intense, theologically demanding, epistle, Paul returns to the confession of the faithful God and demonstrates that the highest and most basic response to the gospel is praise. "Now" we have to do with this God in the midst of the realities of this world in which no human being is to be perfunctorily discarded. "Now" this God providentially and profoundly at work though "long ages," has made clear what God is about in no uncertain terms: in and through Christ the world was created, Israel called to be God's own people, and now Jews and Gentiles obtain salvation through justification by faith – glorious. God's gracious lordship over the redeemed creation is manifest.

"Now" is the time and place, not for grimacing endurance, but the time and place to stand, to be tested and to praise.

The Gospel Readings

Mark 13:24-37

Chapter 13 is usually read in a negative fashion predictive mode: the future is filled with darkness and cataclysmic events, yet programmed and controlled. Hope is often a casualty in this reading, and apocalyptic fury is allowed full control. Thus the future beyond the gospel's conclusion that is the focus of Mk 13 is seen as dark with rending, tearing, and elemental dissolution. Yet that future is no darker than Mk 14, 15, in which the awesome commitment of God to human redemption becomes reality.¹⁵ Jesus' passion encourages and challenges us to see the hope in Mk 13, too. There are intentional evasions and key silences if this is a purely apocalyptic text. There is no

timetable; instead, there is a denial that a human being has the capacity to possess such knowledge (vs. 32).

A genuine future is anticipated (vs. 26 “they will see the Son of Man”); warnings occur in the context of promises (vs. 13 “you will be hated... but he who endures... will be saved”). There is no doubt, hope exists in the midst of intense agony (vs. 11 the Holy Spirit is active “when they bring you to trial”). That the salvation of the elect comes through unspeakable suffering, trouble, and rejection the text makes very clear (13:3-23), for the empire always strikes back. There is no room for a superficial view of life that avoids embracing loss and catastrophe. Yet the hopes as well as the fears of all the years are gathered there, too. The positive elements dominate: the world-wide mission of the gospel (vs. 10), the arrival of the Son of Man with the symbols of imperial power for all to see (vs. 26), the gathering of the elect (vs. 27), and the definitive establishment of the realities embodied in Jesus’ words (vs. 31). What Jesus said will be done. The faithful God who is Father will do it (vs. 32). As to how God will do it, the cross and resurrection speak passionately and eloquently. The scope of the Son of Man’s sovereignty is indeed cosmic, overwhelming all opposition. This text is not about the extinction of what we know, where we live, and the history we have made; this text is about the yet future-redemption and completion of God’s purposes. Moltmann captures for us the spirit of this hope at work in disciples: “The modern apocalypses of annihilation... can be confuted only through active intervention on behalf of life. All is not yet lost. People who love life liberate the future from fear of the world’s end, and from the death wishes of apocalyptic terrorists.”¹⁶

The challenge of existence in such a world is captured in a surprising imperative: “keep awake.” What does that mean? Do not be surprised or caught off guard, for there are tasks to be done (vs. 34). Do not drift off, caught up in the network of your own interests and security arrangements. Do not be lulled to sleep and thereby miss the opportunities.¹⁷ Which are? “A model of time which requires the future to be extrapolated from the past and the present, which denies alternative possibilities, radical changes, real novelty, unpredictable irruptions in the historical process, is a model in the interests of those who must suppress alternative possibilities if they are to maintain their own power in the future.”¹⁸ Keep vigilant about that. That vigilance requires an encounter with John the Baptist (see below).

The bumper sticker read: “Jesus—don’t leave earth without him.” That requires a counter-question: “Why live on earth without him where he calls us to live and die in hope?” The temptation is to be so apocalyptically minded or so security minded so as to be no earthly good. Keep vigilant about both the dangers and the possibilities.

Mark 1:1-8; John 1:6-8, 19-28

John the Baptist is the guardian, the sentinel at the vestibule of the gospel; he is the firm, steady, unrelenting reminder that God’s decisive work has begun (Is. 40:3) countering imperial arrogance and desperate despair, but also that it has begun in unexpected places, among marginal human beings, and in subversive ways. The faithful God has acted; now is the time to respond.

John’s preaching is the theme of resistance, the refusal to trust God’s saving work. No one is more subject to God’s judgment than the human being who assumes innocence before God and superiority to others. John’s role is tearing and ripping, challenging and holding accountable. The world is being disconfirmed and destabi-

lized, subjected to radical critique. Repentance, forgiveness, and baptism are all caught up in the networking of the gracious God. The heavens are indeed rent (Mk 1:10), but this rending is a scandal. The kingdom is being manifest in one who submits to baptism and does not meet expectations, but openly transgresses boundaries. His ministry begins in the wilderness, a place of new beginnings, tough struggles, complete failures, hopeful beginnings, decisive encounters with God, and a place marked by the absence of networked human centers of power and control.

For Mark, John is the transition: the promises of the past are coming alive; John's call is to respond in the present, and he announces what God is about to do in the future.¹⁹

For the fourth gospel, John's Christological testimony is primary. Simply seeing Jesus, John knows Jesus is the work of the faithful God. He is the first to see with insight and to give witness to the light in a grand array of Old Testament texts and images.

Luke 1:26-38

This is what the faithful God will do! As God has so often done in the past, God begins with a powerless person, marginal in the extreme, who knows and trusts God who is faithful to her. Experiencing the poignancy of contradiction, Mary comes to know and commit to new creation not being born out of the old. For with this faithful God, nothing is impossible (vs. 37).

For Luke, Mary is here the first, faithful disciple, a true learner of the ways of God. Her pilgrimage is plotted by Luke in his gospel. In fact, Luke's birth stories are peopled with such learners of the ways of God. But finding favor is also dangerous since it generates conflict with the powers that be.²⁰ Mary will come to know that in the most painful of experiences.

Mary's child will be Davidic and permanent, the Son with whom the new creation becomes reality. He will know how to deal with the powers that be, though in a totally unexpected fashion. The world will be seen as crisscrossed with grace.

Luke 2:1-14; Titus 2:11-14

These two texts employ the language of the imperial ideology of the Roman empire (Savior, Lord, God). In the first century world of the gospel, it was clear to all who the savior was, announced in inscriptions, buildings, festivals, on coins and through the presence and actions of armies—the emperor whose acts were gospel, whose decrees were sacred writings, and who appeared in splendor carrying out divine functions. These two texts are both subtle and revolutionary. In declaring Jesus to be the answer to the question “Who is savior?” the radical critique of all other answers in all other spaces, all other times, and in all other ideologies is boldly, conclusively, definitively narrated. The epiphany of grace has occurred, and it is not the emperor or any power with imperial claims.

Such grace is for all; we are to be “educated by the grace of God's coming.”²¹ Such discipline (the Greek ideal of *paideia* now redefined) is the work of the faithful God in us human beings.

“No eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him” (Is. 64:4b).

Notes

- ¹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 299.
- ² Trevor Hart in Richard Bauckham ed., *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 66.
- ³ Quoted in *ibid.*
- ⁴ Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire, Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 1. This is a stimulating book that offers a fresh reading of Matthew for troubled times when imperial claims are extensive.
- ⁵ Bauckham, 19.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.
- ⁷ Donald W. Shriver Jr., *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 171.
- ⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, vol. 2 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 212ff.
- ⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, vol. 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 81ff.
- ¹⁰ Carter, 100ff.
- ¹¹ Benjamin Fiore, "Parenesis" in vol. 5 *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 162.
- ¹² Jurgen Moltmann quoted in Bauckham, 110.
- ¹³ See Richard B. Hays, *1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster /John Knox, 1997), 17-21.
- ¹⁴ Fred Craddock, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude 3* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995), 121.
- ¹⁵ Donald H. Juel, *A Master of Surprises: Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 77-88. A most insightful and helpful discussion of chapter 13.
- ¹⁶ Quoted in Bauckham, 120.
- ¹⁷ Following Juel.
- ¹⁸ Moltmann quoted in Bauckham, 170.
- ¹⁹ Lamar Williamson Jr., *Mark* (Louisville: John Knox, 1983), 30.
- ²⁰ Keith F. Nickle, *Preaching the Gospel of Luke, Proclaiming God's Royal Rule* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 16f.
- ²¹ Thomas C. Oden, *1 & 2 Timothy, & Titus* (Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 52.