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Theological Observer

Lithuanian Aspirations and LWF Ambitions: In Honor of Bishop Jonas Kalvanas (1949-2003)

The sudden death of Bishop Jonas Kalvanas on April 25 is a great loss for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania (ELCL), as well as for confessional Lutherans worldwide. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will remember Bishop Kalvanas for his courageous leadership that led to a declaration of fellowship between the LCMS and ELCL, when at the July 2001 Synodical Convention in Saint Louis, delegates adopted Resolution 3-04 “To Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania.” The ease with which the resolution overwhelmingly passed can be attributed in large measure to Bishop Kalvanas’ ecclesial leadership at the ELCL meeting in Taurage, Lithuania on July 29, 2000, which declared fellowship with the LCMS, despite overt lobbying by visitors from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The German North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church (*Nordelbische*) and the Lutheran Section of the Lippe Territorial Church (*Lippische Landeskirche*) were particularly opposed to fellowship with the LCMS. Women occupy nearly all the top offices of the North Elbian Church, including Maria Jepsen (Hamburg) who was the first female bishop of a German Lutheran church. Barbel Wartenberg-Potter (Holstein-Lubeck) and Margot Kassmann (Hanover) also aggressively led the LWF caucus. Despite relentless pressure from the LWF, Bishop Kalvanas refused to ordain women. The ELCL resolution to declare fellowship with the LCMS included these statements:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania possesses and strives toward the preservation of the right and pure preaching and teaching of the apostolic Word of God, and the right administration of the Sacraments as they were instituted by our Lord Himself. This was the goal of the confessors of the Augsburg Confession (AC VII) and the Formula of Concord (FC X, 31). However, we are now faced with false doctrine which endangers the biblical and confessional identity of our Lutheran Church in Lithuania.

Rejecting this false doctrine, we confess the complete authority of the Bible and its teaching as it is rightly and unchangingly stated in the Book of Concord. Therefore we can have full fellowship with those Churches who share with us the same faith and teaching, and which do not ordain or promote the ordination of women, which do not stand for homosexual behavior, which do not make compromise on the matter of justification, and which confess that in the Holy Supper each communicant is given and receives under the bread and wine the true body and blood of our Lord.

Hundreds of Lithuanian’s attended the bishop’s funeral at Martynas Mazvydas Church in Taurage. People stood shoulder to shoulder in the aisles and balcony. Hundreds more stood outside the church. When the three-hour service ended, the crowd of mourners standing in the rain had tripled in size. The casket was carried out of the church in a solemn procession of family members, pastors, bishops,

dignitaries, brass band, and choir. Mourners with flowers lined the streets on the way to the cemetery. Hundreds followed to the cemetery for the three-hour burial service. All in all, it was a deeply moving demonstration of respect and love by the Lithuanian people for their pastor and bishop.

Bishop Kalvanas was only fifty-four years old and is survived by his wife Tatjana, a son, and two daughters. His open personality, kindness, and sense of humor endeared him to most people, even as it caused some to underestimate him. Rev. Darius Petkunas, parish pastor and theological professor in the theology department of Klaipeda University, described his bishop as a "strong personality who was nevertheless able to unite the pastors, congregations and Church Consistory." When the Lithuanian Church was emerging from the Soviet persecution in the early 1990s, it went through a period of strife and division. The church was united under Bishop Kalvanas, who was consecrated in 1995. For Bishop Kalvanas, church unity came from theological unity. He personally valued the study of theology, especially the Lutheran Confessions. The Latin he learned in connection with his previous vocation as a medical doctor served him well. He placed a high value on theological education for his pastors. He sent four men to study at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTS). In September of 2000 he brought most of his church's pastors with him to Fort Wayne for three weeks of intensive courses. In 1999 he approached CTS President Dean Wenthe with a request for the full-time deployment of Dr. Charles Evanson to Lithuania. Since that time Dr. Evanson has served as a professor in the Department of Theology at the University of Klaipeda, where most Lithuanian pastors and school teachers are educated. Kalvanas also established monthly pastoral meetings at which the clergy study theology with Dr. Evanson. In August of 2002 CTS, the ELCL, and the Lutheran Heritage Foundation co-sponsored a four-day international theological conference in Klaipeda which brought together speakers and participants from Lutheran churches in Russia, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Germany, and the United States. The theme of the conference was "Lutheran Identity in the 21st Century." A second Klaipeda Conference is scheduled for August 18-21, 2003 under the theme, "Lutheran Catechesis." Bishop Kalvanas had been scheduled as one of the speakers.

Hopefully the next bishop will possess qualities similar to Bishop Kalvanas. Fortunately, the ELCL has men who are committed to sound, biblical, confessional theology and practice. They have received a thorough and rigorous theological education, and have significant practical experience in the parish and the church at large. According to the ELCL church constitution, a synod must be held within one year after the death of the bishop to elect his successor. It also stipulates that the bishop must be a man who has formal theological education and has been ordained and served in the pastoral ministry for ten years. Such men are available. It is thus a scandal that before the body of Bishop Kalvanas was reverently committed to his grave, visitors from LWF churches were already shamelessly lobbying for a change in the constitution and a postponement of the election of a new bishop. Such interference by foreigners could lead to dissension

in the ELCL. Such patronizing demands mirror the attitude often displayed in the political realm by "Old Europe" over against the "New Europe" – "The little children must be told what to think, believe and do." The LWF churches in Europe seem perplexed that churches in the former Soviet Union (and elsewhere around the world) find the theology of the LCMS and other confessional Lutherans appealing. In an attempt to understand this phenomenon, they resort to some very fanciful explanations. For example, an address at the Evangelical Commission for Middle and Eastern Europe, which met in Brandenburg in April of 2002, put forth this thesis: "The Theology of the LCMS comes, to a large extent, in answer to the present day needs of the people of the former Soviet Union, because it has a 'Soviet' Character."¹ The address notes that under the Soviet system, values and ideals were clearly designated – what was good and bad and evil, true and false was clearly defined. Even if all citizens did not agree with the alleged Soviet identity, it was the point of orientation. With the fall of the Soviet Union the state was no longer able to sufficiently offer a national identity. Therefore, many are turning to religious and spiritual movements to shape their self-identity. Religions that offer complete and predetermined answers in what is good and right and wrong remain more appealing to those coming out of the Soviet world. The report then posits:

Here lies the unmistakable strength of the LCMS theology. It asserts clear and unambiguous answers and corresponds therefore in a certain fashion to the Soviet ideology. An independently thinking people was out of the question in the Soviet time. The Soviet government did the thinking for the people The people rarely learned to think for themselves Here lies the strength of the LCMS theology. Here one doesn't need to think. Here is offered a complete system with a full claim to truth, which one can insert into himself The Soviet Union ideology had the proclivity for explaining all the fundamental things on the basis of the indisputable authorities and writings: Marx, Lenin and so forth The LCMS does this in the same way, in that it subscribes itself uncritically to Luther and the Lutheran Confessions and looks at these as a completely infallible foundation.²

¹"These: Die Theologie der LCMS kommt in großem Masse den gegenwärtigen Bedürfnissen der Menschen in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion entgegen, weil sie 'sowjetischen' Charakter hat."

²"Hier liegt die eindeutige Stärke der LCMS Theologie. Sie gibt klare und eindeutige Antworten vor – und entspricht daher in gewisser Weise der sowjetischen Ideologie. Eigenständiges Denken der Menschen war in sowjetischer Zeit nicht gefragt. Die Sowjetregierung hat für die Menschen gedacht Die Menschen haben selten gelernt, selbständig zu denken Darin liegt die Stärke der LCMS-Theologie. Hier braucht man nicht zu denken. Hier wird ein Komplettsystem mit einem unfassenden Wahrheitsanspruch präsentiert, worauf man sich einlassen kann. . . . Die sowjetische Ideologie hatte die Neigung, all grundlegenden Dinge auf unstrittige Autoritäten und

The Lutherans in Lithuania are worthy of more respect than this. The patronizing rhetoric expressed in the Brandenburg Address is more reflective of the verbal nominalism of Soviet propaganda than the true state of the Lithuanian people. Lithuanians are quite capable of thinking for themselves. When they chose a theological course instead of a sociological-based ideology, they are labeled narrow. Many Lithuanian pastors including the late Bishop Kalvanas have been repeatedly frustrated by the one track intolerant gender agenda of many European Lutherans. One Lithuanian pastor reflecting on a "conversation" he had with a LWF visitor who attended the funeral services noted: "He never once asked me what we wanted, he simply told me what we should do."

Despite hemorrhaging membership losses in the liberal churches of Western Europe and Scandinavia, the leadership of the established Lutheran churches continues to force their agenda on churches who have no desire for it. Bordering Lithuania to the north is Latvia. Archbishop Janis Vanags expressed a common sentiment found among these churches: "For churches which have lived under persecution, liberalism has nothing to offer because it has nothing to die for." The struggling, emerging Lutherans often find strings attached to the financial help they are offered from their brothers in the West. Individual pastors and congregations are courted and tempted with financial rewards to change their doctrine and practice.

Bishop Kalvanas spent his last Sunday on earth preaching to his congregation and feeding them the body and blood of the risen Lord Jesus. This is what Pastor Kalvanas was doing on Easter Sunday. Five days later he joined the angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven with whom he will give thanks and praise to the Holy Trinity for ever and ever.

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:2-3)

Timothy C. J. Quill

**Revisiting the *Missio Dei* Concept:
Commemorating Willingen, July 5-17, 1952**

Last July saw the fiftieth anniversary of the World Missionary Conference meeting held in Willingen in July 5-17, 1952. On August 18-21, 2002, Willingen, a small town in the German state of Hesse, was chosen once again to stage a fiftieth anniversary congress in commemoration of this historic event. Important

deren Schriften zurückzuführen: Marx, Lenin usw. Die LCMS tut dies in gleicher Weise, indem sie sich unkritisch auf Luther und die lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften bezieht und diese als völlig unfehlbare Grundlagen ansieht."

dignitaries and theologians were invited to this congress to present papers on the theme that made the Willingen Conference famous: the mission of God.¹

Does Willingen deserve such a worthy recognition? Although World Missionary Conferences convene at regular intervals, Willingen 1952 may indeed be hailed as the watershed event for promoting a conceptual change in missions itself. It introduced a concept that—as basic as it may sound—had been lost: the mission of the Triune God is the starting point for any reflection on missions. To this end, it expressed its purpose and conviction that “the missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God himself” and it provided a definition to match it: “Mission has its source in the Triune God. Out of the depth of his love to us, the Father has sent forth his own beloved son to reconcile all things to himself that we and all men might through the Holy Spirit be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God.”²

In the years that followed, Willingen actually seemed to accomplish what it sought to do: to usher in a theological shift in the conceptualization of missions and offer a broad enough base for all to follow. Overall, morale was low in the post-world war period. The church had little theological hope to stand on in view of human calamities and shortcomings all around. More specifically, selfish expansionist models had ruled the day, greatly eroding the little integrity of missions that still remained. Many mission fields such as China were resounding with an unequivocal and forceful cry “missionary go home.” Heated debates attacked the strategy of German missiologists, who had capitalized on the secular *Volkstum* principle of the Third Reich, merging First Article structures into their church planting efforts. Elsewhere, theologians were suspicious of the conservative Anglo-American revivalist mission, concluding that it was nothing more than the romanticism of self-expressive piety coupled with idealistic notions of world domination by Christianity within one generation. This does not even take into account the colonial (“Vasco da Gama epoch”) entrapments that missions were still struggling with and attempting to overcome. Indeed, missions were viewed as mere human endeavors fraught with error that needed to be infused with a good dose of a deeper reflection into the nature of God, His

¹Various topics such as these were presented: “Understanding and Misunderstanding of the *Missio Dei* in European Churches and Missiology,” (Tormod Engelsviken, Norway), “*Missio Dei* in Practice: The Struggle for Liberation, Dignity and Justice in African Societies,” (Klaus Nürnberger, South Africa), “The History and Importance of World Mission Conferences in the 20th Century,” (Wolfgang Guenther, Director of the Missionsseminar, Hermannsburg, Germany), “*Missio Dei*—Its Unfolding and Limitations in the Korean Context,” (S. Chai, South Korea), “*Missio Dei*—Poor as Mediators of the Kingdom of God and Subjects of the Church,” (Paulo Sues, Brazil), and “*Missio Dei* Today—Identity of Christian Mission,” (Theo Sundermeier, Professor of Ecumenical and Religious Studies, Heidelberg).

²In the sectional “The Missionary Calling of the Church,” *International Review of Missions* 41 (1952): 562.

purpose, and mission to the world. Then, perhaps, one could better align one's motives and derive justification for doing missions.

Against this backdrop of defective mission motives, Willingen did actually strike a blow for purity into the mission endeavor: Our mission must reflect God's mission. Before and after 1952, leading missiologists and theologians such as Walter Freitag, Karl Hartenstein, and Karl Barth had done much to contribute to this thought. The mission of the Triune God was encapsulated in the byword, *missio Dei* (Latin for defining God's own mission).³ The mission of God embodies the work and person of Jesus Christ. He stood for the exclusive claim over salvation against all belief systems of other religions. This was paired with the concept of salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*), which promoted a specific mediation of salvation that is bound to the church's preaching and witnessing activity and that sets itself apart from other providential activities and struggles at overcoming political and social oppressions. Furthermore, they also added an eschatological motif that instilled a strong sense for the "otherness" of Christ's kingdom in this world and that its completion was still outstanding at a time to come. These and other related themes found their expression in numerous publications. The seminal work of Georg Vicedom in 1958, *The Mission of God*, is one of them.⁴

Unfortunately, the situation has again changed for the worse. Some may attribute it to the event in New Delhi in 1961 when the World Missionary Conference was placed under the auspices of the World Council of Churches.⁵ Thereby, it is often argued, genuine and impartial missionary reflection had to give way to a deliberate ecumenical and conciliar agenda. This became most evident at the 1973 conference in Bangkok, an emotionally charged meeting, which replaced much of the traditional soteriology (including conversion) with inner worldly agendas, of which Peter Beyerhaus had been so critical a few years before in his brief contribution, *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption*.⁶

³For a detailed history of the concept "missio Dei," see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 389-393 and H. H. Rosin, *Missio Dei: An Examination of the Origin, Contents and Function of the Term in Protestant Missiological Discussion* (Leiden: Inter-university Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, 1972).

⁴Georg Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*, translated by Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965). Another notable contribution was Johannes Blauw, *Missionary Nature of the Church: Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (London: Lutterworth, 1962); originally published as *Gottes Werk in dieser Welt: Grundzüge einer biblischen Theologie der Mission* (München: no publisher, 1961).

⁵As a result of this fusion, the oversight body of the World Missionary Conferences, the International Missionary Council (IMC), was changed to the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

⁶Peter Beyerhaus, *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption*, translated by Margaret Clarkson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971). Beyerhaus also authored the famous Frankfurt Declaration of 1970.

In fear of seeing two-thirds of the world's population denied the right to eternal salvation and based on Beyerhaus' scathing criticisms, the evangelicals consolidated and formed their own movement in July 16-25, 1974 in Lausanne, Switzerland, and tried to salvage, by way of their famous manifesto, the *Lausanne Covenant*, traditional values such as the uniqueness of Christ, conversion, and the sinful nature of mankind. Sadly, though, the Trinitarian framework Willingen espoused so much had little bearing on this movement then or in any later documents.⁷ Instead, within it the church and the promotion of its numerical growth took central stage.

As far as the other main movements go, such as the Roman Catholic movement, the Conciliar-Ecumenical, the Lutheran World Federation, and that of the Orthodox Churches, the *missio Dei* concept was enthusiastically embraced.⁸ Unfortunately, much of its original content was replaced with particular ideas and agendas so that unanimity in terms of theology will hardly be reached. The plea of the late Lesslie Newbigin that "the mission of the church is to be understood, can only be rightly understood, in terms of the trinitarian model," was heard but interpreted in many different ways.⁹ Much has to do with the *filioque*, inter-religious dialogue, the role and ministry of Christ, the church versus the world, and soteriology. When, for example, the World Missionary Conference in Melbourne, 1980—convening under the theme, "Thy Kingdom Come,"—portrayed Christ predominantly as an example in order to justify their war against corporations and governments that bring poverty, injustice, and oppression, the Eastern Orthodox churches (consistently Trinitarian) countered "that Christ is sent into the world not as a teacher, example, etc., but as a bearer of this divine life that aims at drawing the world into the way of existence that is to be found in the Trinity."¹⁰

With the theological impasse more evident than ever, Lutheranism is well advised to heed the famous plea of Willingen and arrange its missiological reasoning on a Trinitarian base and framework. To be sure, the purity of motives and strategies will not prevail for long in the face of human depravity and imperfection. Inadvertently, other motives and strategies will replace those, inferior ones by far. Careful study of scriptural, creedal, and confessional

⁷This must be said especially in view of its other significant document "The Manila Manifesto" of 1989, in James Scherer and Stephen Bevans, editors, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization, 1. Basic Statements 1974-1991* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 292-305.

⁸One may see the LWF missiological presentation, *Together in God's Mission: LWF Contribution to the Understanding of Mission*, number 26 (Hannover/Neuendettelsau, 1988).

⁹Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; and Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 118.

¹⁰"Go Forth in Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission," Scherer, 205. Therein also, "Your Kingdom Come," 30.

thought—of which Luther’s Explanation to the Creed may be singled out—offer the best resources for a sound discussion on the existing confusion of what missions really is. In view of a structure of God’s mission, the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has called for a proper distinction to be made “between missionary work that includes the preaching and teaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments carried out by missionaries who are ordained pastors and other work carried out by other workers in the mission field.”¹¹ This and other pleas would certainly assist in adding clarification to the mission of the Triune God and the exact nature and mediation of His salvific work in this world.

K. Detlev Schulz

Looking Behind the Veil

I recently enjoyed attending yet another set of symposia at the institution I call my alma mater. Many of the presentations found an appreciative hearing among those interested in Confessional Lutheran theology. However, I found one often-repeated assertion at the exegetical symposium, whose focus was worship, to be misleading. Several times the presenters mentioned that in the tabernacle constructed by Israel in the desert a curtain or veil separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. While this is a common assumption and many Bible translations make it appear as if there was a curtain and many Bible handbooks and commentaries state as much, it simply is not the case. The *paroketh* that demarcated the Most Holy Place is mentioned twenty-four times in the Old Testament (in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers). The Hebrew text never presents it as a curtain behind which were the Most Holy Place and the Ark. Instead, it is clearly stated that the *paroketh* is *על־אֶרֶץ הָעֵדוּת*, “above the Ark of the Testimony” (Exodus 30:6), making it a canopy, not a curtain. Moreover, many English translations call the *paroketh* a “screen” at Exodus 35:12, 40:21. However, *הַמָּסָךְ* can also be understood as a covering (2 Samuel 17:9). This is made especially clear at Numbers 4:5 when instructions are given for dismantling the tabernacle to move it. The Levites are to take down the *paroketh* that is an overshadowing (*הַמָּסָךְ*) of the ark and drape it (*סָכַךְ* same root!) over the ark. (The same verb is used of the cherubim’s wings *overshadowing* the mercy seat.) While most translations speak of the high priest going “inside” or “behind” the *paroketh* (which would imply that the Hebrew text uses the preposition *אֶחָר*), the Hebrew actually says he is to go *מִבַּיִת לַפָּרוֹכֶת* “inside to the *paroketh*” (Leviticus 16:2,12,15; Numbers 18:17)

Moreover, if the *paroketh* was a curtain, some interesting problems arise for the reader of the Pentateuch: When the glory of the Lord appeared to the Israelites, fire came out from before the Lord (who dwelt above the cherubim on the Ark;

¹¹A resolution passed at its latest meeting in Chicago, Illinois, August 15-18, 2002. “Minutes,” 99. Over the past few years, the LCMS Board for Mission Services (BFMS) has deliberated on a mission document of its own, the so-called “Theological Preface.”

Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89) to light the sacrifice on the altar, the *paroketh* should have been set ablaze if it were a curtain between the ark and the altar (Leviticus 9:23-24). Once again, when fire came from the Lord and killed Nadab and Abihu who were at the incense altar in the Holy Place, it should have also burned up the *paroketh* (and perhaps burned down the entire tabernacle as a consequence) if it had been a curtain. When the assembly of Israel gathered at the entrance to the tabernacle they could see the glory of the Lord (for example, Numbers 16:19), which they could not do if the *paroketh* was a curtain. So how did the learned professors make the mistake of referring to the *paroketh* as a curtain that separated the Holy and Most Holy Places rather than as a canopy over the ark that demarcated the Most Holy Place? They simply made the same mistake I have made on occasion: they relied on the English translations and common tradition instead of reading the actual inspired text in its original language. Both the translations and tradition are influenced by the later temple in Jesus day, which did have a curtain (Luke 23:45). It is interesting to note that the temple built by Solomon had neither a canopy nor a curtain to demarcate the Most Holy Place, but a wall with doors in it (1 Kings 6:31-32).

However, my point is not about architecture of tabernacles and temples. Instead, it is about the importance for all pastors of maintaining proficiency in Hebrew and Greek so that they are not dependent upon translations, which, at times, can be misleading. Translations not only bring the truth of God's word to us, but also, unfortunately, can be a veil between the gospel and God's people due to translators' errors or unwarranted assumptions. For the sake of the gospel we pastors must maintain our grasp of the languages, and we must never rely on a translation or translations, lest we allow some translator's error to become a veil that obscures the light of Christ, shining so brilliantly in the pages of the Scriptures. As shepherds of God's people we need to feed the sheep with the gospel as it is in the Scriptures themselves, not simply as it is presented in some translation of Scripture. Therefore, I remind myself constantly to read the biblical text in original languages before I teach, even when I think I know what it says from the English translations with which I am so familiar. For the sake of the gospel and the benefit of God's church we all need to be committed to looking behind the veil.

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Book Reviews

The Character of God in the Book of Genesis: A Narrative Appraisal. By W. Lee Humphreys. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 284 pages.

How one reads any text necessarily affects how one reads any persons described therein. Genre guides interpretation. How Humphreys reads the Genesis narrative—as fact or fiction, or a splash here and a dash there of both—largely determines how he reads its central character: God. Our author reads Genesis as a closed literary world, that is, none of the events or characters necessarily exist as Genesis describes them. They are verbal constructions. The characters named Adam, Abraham, Joseph, and God in this story may or may not be more than mere words. Moreover, Humphreys reads Genesis not as one text inextricably bound—literally, literarily, and theologically—to a larger canon, but as a book without a sequel.

Who God is, what He does, what He says, are, therefore, interpreted as one might interpret the main character in, say, a Dickens novel. What Humphreys argues is that God begins where He wants to be—in control, predictable, methodical, and powerful. Similarly, at the end (chapters 37-50), He is on the road to recovery, struggling to recreate Himself in His old image. It is the in-between parts of the story where God is learning the ropes, “in process of becoming.” The problem is that over and over again, from disobedient Adam to irascible Jacob, humans frustrate God’s plans when He tries to engage them on their own turf. They try to build a tower that will trespass His homeland, old sterile women giggle at Him, His pet patriarchs lie about their wives or get drunk or nearly best Him at wrestling. Finally, after His bout with Jacob, God learns His lesson, swallows hard, and retreats to heaven to lick His wounds. Thereafter, He tries to recapture something like His Genesis-1 approach—majestically aloof but still in control behind the scenes. In all this, the Divine character develops, becomes complicated, multi-faceted, multi-faced. In short, the post-Genesis-1 God tries to slip back into His original suit, but it never quite fits the same anymore.

There is, of course, nothing unusual or unorthodox about a narrative appraisal of a biblical text. Indeed, reading Genesis not as a narrative but as the fourth volume of Pieper’s dogmatics is going to produce some less than satisfactory results. Problems invade, breed, and multiply, however, when one’s definition of narrative assumes that narrative equals fiction. It does not. One may have all the literary fun his heart desires with a fictional narrative by a Dostoevsky or a Grisham. But an historical narrative (an inspired and inerrant one at that!) about real people and a real God cannot be read rightly in the fashion of Humphreys. In addition, to interpret the Genesis of the canon as a book divorced from the rest of the Old Testament and New Testament witness is like trying to paint a lady’s portrait when all you can see is her left foot. The odds are not good that the lady will see herself in the artist’s finished work.