



## Whirred and Whirled

**I**t seemed like a good idea at the time: *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry*. And, for a while there, it sort of worked: thirty-three years of wrestling with what we thought were significant themes by commissioning talented authors to develop meaningful essays. It seemed like a good idea.

Now, though, it has become clear that pretty much nobody cares about such things these days. So, after long deliberation, the Editorial Board has decided to change our title to “Whirred and Whirled: Fluff for Whatever.” We’ve chosen to go with the flow. (The vote was 15 to 2, the two traditionalist diehards being one who still reads the Confessions only in German and Latin and one who thought the Da Vinci Code was the combination of the lock that protects the *Mona Lisa*.)

I thought I might just parody contemporary culture for this “Humor” issue editorial, but I found that I could not. What’s left to parody when religion parades as politics (or politics as religion—it’s Tweedle-Dum and Tweedle-Dumber), when “reality TV” passes for culture, and when people actually believe campaign commercials and infomercials (pretty much the same thing, except the former have enough money to get on the good channels in time slots other than the middle of the night). Any of this is as hard to parody as the wine snob’s description of the latest vintage (“earthy, with just a touch of boysenberry”) or the food critic’s ecstatic eruptions over the sardine and artichoke crêpes at the newest “in” restaurant.

So, I’ll just announce where we have decided to go with our fluff for the future. In the meantime, we have come to realize that if we print half of our fluff in italics—that is, *slanted to the right*—and the other half *left* justified rather than fully justified, we can surely be picked up by both Fox News and MSNBC, and then we will be able to support this enterprise forever on the royalties. It’s win/win all around.

That determined, we have come up with four strong themes for the 2013 issues, and we have already commissioned or designed most of the articles.

### WINTER: PLU-PERFECT

This title requires a little explanation, but we are confident that people will embrace it quickly. “PLU-Perfect”—that is, “People Like Us: Perfect!” It’s all

around us. Political caucuses, synods and congregations, gated communities, radio and TV talk shows, you name it—“People Like Us” are perfect. Others are not. We want PLU-perfect churches, PLU-perfect political parties, and ideally, of course, a PLU-perfect world. Some argue against total PLU-perfectionism, recognizing properly that without “others” (the less than perfect) there would be no foil, no enemy, no bad guys to prove we are the good guys. But we don’t need too many of them.

The beauty of this is its ability to be exclusive and inclusive at the same time. We all (inclusive) want the world to be made up of people just like us (exclusive)—it’s perfect. Several articles are pending for this issue:

“Be Perfect” (Matt 5:48): Even Jesus Agrees!

Prophets or Cheerleaders? What Do Congregations Really Want?

Recovering the Liturgical Confession of Sins: Theirs!

Learning “Perfect Hatred” (Ps 139:22): A Biblically Based Parish Education Program

Hosting “Tyre Cosmetics” Parties in Christian Homes: How to Be “Perfect in Beauty” (Ezek 27:3)

Cursing the Other: Rediscovering the Imprecatory Psalms for Parish Ministry

#### SPRING: CUCUMBERS

We take the “world” in our title seriously, having shown that with an issue on “Water” in 2011 and “Bread” in 2012. The next topic for this “natural world” series is obvious: cucumbers. The articles are taking shape:

Fruit or Vegetable? What Determines Meaning, Elitist Scientific Exegesis or Common-Sense Reader’s Response? A Hermeneutical Case Study

Giant Cucumbers: State Fair Oddity or an End to World Hunger?

“I’m in a pickle!” A Cucumber’s Spiritual Lament (a rare first-person account)

“A lapful of wild gourds” (2 Kings 4:39): Were They Really Cucumbers? A Text-Critical Investigation

The Cucumber and the Bee: An Exploration of Odd Sexual Attraction

Cucumbers at the Church Potluck: Recipes to Relish

*Face to Face*: Burpless or Traditional? Has Genetic Manipulation Gone Too Far at Last?

#### SUMMER: BATS IN THE BIBLE

This will continue our tradition of producing a solid biblical issue each year,

one that provides church leaders with insights necessary for parish ministry. Several articles are already commissioned:

The Bat Is a “Bird” (Deut 14:18)? Can Literalism Be Defended?

Why Are Bats “Unclean” (Lev 11:19)? An Early Case of Speciesism?

Crapping on Idols’ Heads: The Mission of Bats in Epistle of Jeremiah 1:22:  
Is It Ours as Well?

From Sparrows at the Altar to Bats in the Belfry: A Fascinating Look at the  
“Wirkungsgeschichte” of Ps 84:3

Archaeologists Uncover the Club of God’s Fury (Isa 10:5): They Remain  
Puzzled over the Inscription (“Louis[b?]ille S[n?]ugger”)

*Texts in Context*: Preaching to the Graphic-Novel Generation: Exploring the  
Dark Caves of the Bible with the Bats and the Moles (Isa 2:20)

#### FALL: THE NUMBERS RACKET

Sometimes it is thought that the world of theology and the world of numbers have little in common. This issue will put that notion to rest at last. These articles have been proposed:

666 and All That: The Positive Uses of Numerology in Parish Ministry

Jesus Did Not Know the Hour (Mark 13:32), but Don’t Let that Stop You:  
How to Gain a Rabid Following

Happy-Talk Mission Statements Make Bigger Congregations

Beyond Threescore and Ten (Ps 90:10): How Your Parishioners Can Do  
Better than the Bible with Proper Diet, Spiritual Exercise, and Raising  
the Salaries of the Pastoral Staff

*Face to Face*: Days of Creation: “Yes, There Were Exactly 7, and They Were  
Exactly 24 Hours Long” versus “No, There Weren’t, and They Weren’t”

*Texts in Context*: On Preaching to the Crowds (Matt 5–7): How Faithfully  
Proclaiming the Sermon on the Mount Will Solve Your Seating Issues  
and Parking Problems

All of this and more is coming in 2013. Join us! (Subscriptions available at  
[www.luthersem.edu/w&w](http://www.luthersem.edu/w&w).)

F.J.G.