



## Finding Our Way

The *Didache* opens with the words: “There are two ways, one of life and one of death; and between the two ways there is a great difference. Now, this is the way of life: ‘First, you must love God who made you, and second, your neighbor as yourself.’ And whatever you want people to refrain from doing to you, you must not do to them” (1.1-2).

The imagery of a “way” of life for the Christian is deeply imbedded in the Christian tradition. In fact, according to the Book of Acts, “the Way” was the earliest designation of those who followed Christ after his resurrection (9:2). The term “Christian” came later (11:26). The earlier term suggests an all-embracing “way” of thinking, speaking, and acting which follows in consequence of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

In planning this issue of the journal, the discussion focused on the prospect of including essays which would seek to discern “the way of the Christian” in public today—both in public view, and in engagement with the larger public sphere. Such a project has infinite possibilities. The way finally taken in this issue is to have essays which deal with peacemaking, the Sermon on the Mount, faith and works, the unique contributions of black Christians in giving shape to our public life, considerations of ethics among clergy, and the larger question of the basis for ethical thinking and acting.

The issue contains an article that calls for special comment, and that is the one by *Richard Hordern*. It was our good fortune to make an agreement in the spring of 1984 with University Lutheran Church of Hope, Minneapolis, to have first option to publish the winning essay in its essay contest on “Lutheran Pacifism?,” the results of which were announced in December of 1985. There were 43 contestants from various countries, and an ecumenical panel of 18 persons chosen for their understanding of “the Lutheran traditions and the historic ‘Peace Church’ traditions” made the final selection of the winning essay. Hordern does a superb and discerning analysis of the traditional Lutheran categories (two kingdoms, the law/gospel dialectic, etc.), showing that these are subject to different interpretations, and he finally—and at first thought

perhaps surprisingly—settles on justification by grace through faith as the place where the Lutheran witness toward peacemaking can be rooted. Justified and responsive to the needs of our neighbors, he says, “we are to remain totally free of any ideological bondage so that God’s power of justice and peace may work through our lives.” And there is still much more in the article to think about.

Other essays in this issue are devoted to the other themes already mentioned. *Peter Paris* provides a clear and focused perspective on the constructive role that the Black Christian Tradition has forged in the history of American blacks and in society at large. He speaks of two major institutional types of black Christianity and shows how they complement one another.

*James Burtness* provides reflections on a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, centering particularly on the question whether the Christian life is hidden or visible in the world, and in what ways either would be the case. *Egil Grislis* takes a fresh look at the meaning of good works in the Lutheran and Anabaptist traditions. Particularly in the writings of Martin Luther and Menno Simmons he finds a lot more in common than is usually expected. Both insist that “where true faith prevails, good works are certainly to follow.” In light of the growing concern over what should be expected in the way of morality among clergy, *Stanley Hauerwas* contends that no attempt to develop an ethic for clergy can be adequate unless it attends to questions of character (professional considerations are not sufficient) in relation to the office for which they have been set apart. He also speaks of the virtues which exemplify this character. Finally, while most contemporary ethical thinking has been either “theoretical” or “praxiological,” *Vitor Westhelle* suggests that the category of labor (*poiesis*) could be a fruitful place to begin dealing with major ethical concerns, particularly ecological and sociopolitical issues.

Our Resources section contains two essays. The first, by *Robert Albers*, provides a survey of recent books on pastoral care. Albers shows that there is a noticeable and intentional return in major works on pastoral care to classic Christian sources and traditions, so that the field is being more obviously integrated with other disciplines in theology. The second essay in this section, by *Wendell Frerichs*, is our regular Texts in Context feature. It is devoted to texts from the Book of Revelation assigned in the lectionary for the Sundays after Easter.

A.J.H.