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Anamnesis as dangerous memory: political and liturgical theology in dialogue

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Nonetheless, there is no doubt that many clergy and laity will recognize themselves in the pages of Long's book. Yet they will see themselves not only in the trenches of the battlefield, but also in the irenic moments where, sometimes despite ourselves, we manage to manifest the reconciliation with which Christ has gifted God's worshipping people already. If Long's trenchant questions can provoke this much among us it, it will have done more than its part for peace.

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**Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory:
Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue**

Bruce T. Morrill

Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000

212 pages. \$25.26 Softcover

Within the field of liturgical theology, the category of *anamnesis* or remembrance has been quite crucial. Certainly much of the renewed interest in Eucharistic prayers since the beginning of the liturgical renewal movement has been the result of a greater emphasis on rendering the past of salvation history present in *anamnesis*. Author Bruce Morrill, however, is not content to let *anamnesis* be devoid of ethical content. By drawing together the political theology of Johann Baptist Metz and the liturgical theology of Alexander Schmemmann, Morrill hopes to show that the category of Eucharistic *anamnesis* can be deepened in ways that unite worship and the shape of Christian life in the world.

From the Roman Catholic theologian Metz, Morrill highlights a political theology centered on the dangerous memory of Jesus Christ. Such a memory, an *anamnesis*, is capable of pulling the placid bourgeois church more deeply into the world's suffering through a Christology of imitation. To be sure, this dangerous memory requires the help of disruptive narratives of apocalyptic eschatology and the mysticism of prayer and (sacramental) symbol to sustain it against the middle-class world. Precisely here Morrill finds a place for liturgical

theology to expand on Metz' vision. But how can the memory of Jesus Christ and suffering lead to a deeper sense of *Eucharistic anamnesis*?

For this, Morrill draws on the work of Orthodox liturgical scholar Alexander Schmemmann. Though Schmemmann's politics on the surface appear quite unlike Metz', Schmemmann's understanding of the eschatological transparency of liturgical time, its interruption of "normal" time with the "eighth day" of Sunday worship, and its object of "remembering" the Kingdom of God allows Morrill to flesh out a liturgical-theological vision of Metz' political-theological proposal.

By the end of his book, Morrill proposes some ideas that allow contemporary worship to embody the anticipatory memory (a dangerous memory sponsored by a kind of apocalyptic mysticism) he proposes. Eucharistic prayers, both in the *anamnesis* and intercessions, can attend more closely to eschatological language and capture a kind of apocalyptic urgency (in part drawing on Geoffrey Wainwright's work on eschatology and the Eucharist) by viewing "remembrance" as a kind of promise from Creation to Second Advent. In this way our *anamnesis* helps us to "remember the future" in the Eucharist. In doing so, however, Morrill wants the Eucharistic prayer to retain not only its character as eschatological promise, but also its "apocalyptic sting." It is, says Morrill, this Eucharistic remembrance of judgment that opens up the kind of transformation that Metz envisions: an *imitatio Christi* resulting from the dangerous memory of Jesus Christ in the middle-class church.

The book represents a marvelous attempt to synthesize the thought of two very different theologians around the Eucharistic table. However, there are still some questions to be answered. A closer study of apocalyptic language may just uncover that some of our thinking about "apocalyptic" is insufficiently nuanced. The New Testament, far from being univocal, reveals a diversity of views on how "apocalyptic thinking" meets up with the revelation of God in Christ. If this is the case, perhaps Morrill's own theses about how to combine promise and "apocalyptic sting" in the Eucharistic prayer require further reflection. Furthermore, in Protestant circles, the idea that the dangerous memory of Jesus Christ embodied in the Eucharistic prayer should lead by means of an "apocalyptic sting" to an *imitatio Christi* fails to account for the role of divine grace in the very transformation Morrill calls for.

Nonetheless, readers will benefit from Morrill's dazzling synthesis. If nothing else, it will help readers to envision for themselves how Christ's dangerous memory can become part and parcel of own Eucharistic *anamnesis* and common life as the people of God in the world.

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Life@Work on Leadership

Stephen R. Graves and Thomas G. Addington, Editors

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002

273 pages, \$29.95 Hardcover

There are four aspects of this book that appeal to me. First, this anthology includes carefully selected writings on leadership. The editors have included an excellent compendium of essays chosen from the likes of Max DePree, James M. Kouzas, Barry Z. Posner, Robert K. Greenleaf, John P. Kotter, Ken Blanchard among others. The collection challenges leaders wherever they are in service, inclusive of the church, to integrate their faith into the life of the workaday world.

Second, the essays chosen are organized and presented within focal leadership qualities – sixteen in total – and concerns, each of which serves as a key into exploring and reflecting on effective leadership characteristics. Concerning “Promises” they write, “Every vital organization thrives because it depends more on commitment and enthusiasm than on the letter of the contract.” (5) On the quality of “Charisma” they note, “The first component of charismatic leadership is *envisioning*....The second component is *energizing*.... The third component is *enabling*.” (92-3) They also write on *Servant Leadership*: “What church leaders can do to really *lead* in our times is to use their influence to bring into being a contemporary *theology of institutions* that will underwrite the commitment of church members within our many institutions and support them as they become new regenerative forces: to the end that their particular institution, in which they have some power of influence, will become