

# The ARK

OCTOBER 2011

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THE ARK

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## Interchurch Families: Christian Unity Made Visible in our Households

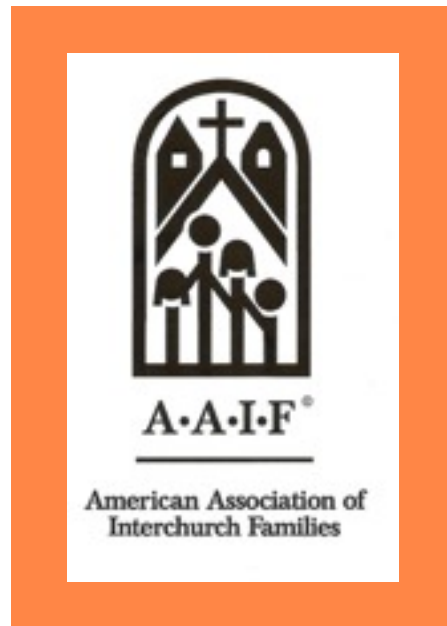


### The ARK, a Publication of the American Association of Interchurch Families

**Continuing the theme began at the last AAIF Biennial Conference: "Christian Unity made Visible in our Households"**

- ❖ Seeking a common ground for ways to communicate across traditional barriers to open communication that leads to understanding.
- ❖ Understanding who we are.
- ❖ What constitutes a better life when compared with a sense of belonging to a place, a community and a family?

- ❖ Introspection
- ❖ Being able to read the Bible with others as we listen to how the Bible verses impact their lived experience of that Light. How do we become more aware of our inter-connectedness?
- ❖ Who am I? What can I know? What can I hope for?
- ❖ The language we use to describe the Divine in our daily lived experience.
- ❖ Finding God in our own stories.
- ❖ Bible study formats to help to build bridges across existing, historical barriers.
- ❖ IFIN - lived experience shared



**"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" - Matthew 25:40**

# 2011

**Make plans now to attend the next  
AAIF Biennial Conference  
to be held July 13 -15, 2012 in Collegeville, MN  
Please see [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org) for on-going updates**



## Contact information for AAIF:

Are you interested in meeting and talking to other interchurch families in your city between AAIF Biennial Conferences?

PLEASE SEE [WWW.AIFUSA.ORG](http://WWW.AIFUSA.ORG) For membership information

Dave and Carol Natella are serving as the Co-Chairs for AAIF ~ for information about how to form a City chapter in your area or how to find the AAIF City Chapter closest to you, please contact the Natellas.



Dues are due Please See [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org) for membership information - The fiscal year runs from June 30 - July 1



Sycamore leaf in the duff, Kentucky in autumn

mjg ©

## Our beginning point, our common ground for discussion

Last month we spoke about Critical Thinking, explaining what it is, why we were focusing on it, what its frame work is, the elements of reasoning involved, and ***the intellectual traits required to make it successful: Humility, Courage, Empathy, Autonomy, Integrity, Perseverance, Confidence in Reasoning and Fair-mindedness - These traits are all compatible with Christianity and with our journey toward Christian Unity.***

The Universal Intellectual Standards needed will be ***clarity, depth, precision, logic, fairness, accuracy, relevance, breath and significance within a Christian context for InterChurch Families, Christians, and humanity in general, as we seek a better future based on reasoned and considered solutions.*** In our case, Christ has asked us to act out of love for creation and for humanity. This is our guiding principle. As Christians, we are called: to examine our actions; to raise vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely; to gather and assess relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively; to come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards; to think open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and to communicate effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

Of course, we all share the Bible in common, but we are not always sure if we should interpret the Bible literally or figuratively. We each tend to think our familiar way is the only way. By the way we read the Bible, sometimes we are divided. We are united though in our desire to find truth and meaning for our lives. I am requesting that we find ways to love each other, to work together that allows for both ways so God's will may prevail rather than our very human ego and the desire to be right or more right in any given situation, no matter how natural this may seem. Let God's love dominate and guide us.

~ M.J. Glauber



mjg ©

Thistle in bloom in autumn in Kentucky

**Finding Community  
and Family in Post  
WWII America  
defined:**

# Hannah Coulter – by Wendell Berry; Book Review By Robert C. Cheeks

Reprinted with permission from the author, Robert C. Cheeks, of this book review, which first appeared in the California Literary Review on April 22, 2007

## WHO WE ARE

The rise of techno-capitalism has signaled the triumph of the “bourgeois family” and the demise of the “traditional” family.

Christian theologian, Stanley Hauerwas, said that economist Adam Smith was well aware that the “weakening of familial ties would increase the necessity of sympathy between strangers and result in cooperative forms of behavior that had not previously been



Various kinds of leaves fall to the forest floor which provide nutrients for the soil so that new growth can occur. Ground cedar and a small tree are green.

realized.” Commenting on Hauerwas’s statement, Professor David Crawford of the John Paul II Institute for the Studies on Marriage and family said, “It is not that families would cease to exist, but they would be transformed into the image of the exchange relations that underlie liberal societies (1).”

Consequently, there are two aspects of the triumph of the “bourgeois family” that have had a profound effect on society: first, is the capricious yearning for the so-called “better life,” which has resulted in a highly trained cadre of consumers, and, second, is an increasing lack of significance attached to the concepts of “place,” and family. These two factors have played an important role in a society that has become acclimated to a rather pernicious spiritual condition that theologian, David Schindler, refers to as “homelessness.”

There was a time, not many decades ago, that most of America’s population labored on family farms. Then, the primary objective of the American farmer was to be debt free, to be independent. I was made aware of this “independence” many years ago when my mother-in-law, Jessie Hobbs, the daughter of a West Virginia farmer, once commented about her childhood, “We didn’t know there was a depression.”

There is a price for this independence but there are also rewards that transcend wealth or profit and have more to do with the satisfaction of leaving the place better than you found it. To reiterate, the idea of “place” is an important factor in the conceptualization of civilization. Techno-capitalism has removed “place” from the sum of parts that make up “modern” man and it has had a deleterious effect on society,

Here is the link for the April 2011 edition of the ARK <http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/aaif/ARKApril2011Volume22Edition4.pdf>  
 weakening both the community and the family.

Kentucky essayist, poet, and novelist Wendell Berry has given his readers a glimpse of people who lived the “old ways.” In six novels and twenty-three short stories Berry has created the Port William membership, a group of neighbors who live along the ridges and “bottoms” south of “the river” in and around Port William, Kentucky, a town that never was yet always existed in our hearts.

It was Burley Coulter, a leading participant in the Port William membership, who told of the time when it all went “wayward,” when the idea of “place” came under attack, “And now look at how many are gone...the mold they were made in done thrown away, and the young ones dead in the wars or killed in damned automobiles, or gone off to college and made too smart ever to come back, or gone off

<http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/aaif/ARKApril2011Volume22Edition4.pdf>

to bright lights and ain’t going to work in the sun ever again if they can help it (2).”

But the Port William membership lives on in the old ones. Surely, they are fewer and fewer in number, but they remember, and they are great storytellers. And, it is the doyenne of the Port William membership, Hannah Coulter, who has told her her story.

Hannah Coulter is a brilliant and inspiring novel that is filled with the truth of an inherent wisdom imprinted on the soul. Berry has captured the intrinsic nature of man and it is defined by God, family, community, and “place.” And, it is the “place,” the land, which acts to nurture and keep the whole of it.

One element of this novel is Berry’s rejection of the spurious notion that there exists an “equality of the sexes.” Hannah Coulter would no more renounce her interdependence on her husband, Nathan, than

she would expect some bureaucracy, and its monthly stipend, to fulfill her responsibilities to her children! Life and living was never just a simple notion of economic determinism. Her life revolved around God, family, community and place, nourished by truth, goodness, and justice.

The uncontrived goodness of the membership is best described in how they cared for the elderly. They were not abandoned in their dotage. They were not sent off to a “home.” They were treated with respect and given dignity.

When the Feltner’s became too old to do their work the membership helped them on their farm. The hay and tobacco was always cut, the fences mended, the stock watered and fed. Hannah and Mary Penn and any of a half dozen ladies would help Mrs. Feltner in cooking and cleaning and canning and in whatever chore needed doing. In the end the Feltner’s died in their home, surrounded by their children and their friends. Then, of course, the community participated in a real and ritualized grief, engaging in the act of remembrance, for the Feltner’s were truly loved.

But, Hannah tells her story from an awareness of self and an understanding of community. She always knew whom she was, never complaining about a lack of advantages, never engaging in self-pity. She saw the



A buzzard flying over Green River Lake in early autumn in Kentucky; rain clouds forming



Tulip Poplar Leaf in the duff at Green River Lake in autumn in Kentucky

membership, her family, herself, as gifts. Her excellent mind, her good health, the love that surrounded her were gifts and she accepted, and nourished, and cherished those gifts. There was never any need to blindly consume. Her joy and happiness were at the core of her being. And, this attitude, this way of life, was part of the membership.

But then, it is Hannah who can best tell us of her community, "This membership had an economic purpose and it had and economic result, but the purpose and the result were a lot more than economic...the work was freely given in exchange for work freely given. There was no bookkeeping, no accounting, no settling up. What you owed was considered paid when you had done what was needed doing.

Every account was paid in full by the understanding that when we were needed we would go, and when we had need the other, or enough of them, would come."

Hannah could have made different choices. She could have been bitter when her first husband, Virgil-Mat and Margaret's son-didn't come home from the war. But Virgil had left her with a daughter, Margaret-named after her grandmother- and Hannah continued living on the Feltner farm just north of Port William. Perhaps, Hannah's choices had much to do with little Margaret, perhaps they were the result of her moral acuity but surely they pleased the Almighty.

When Nathan Coulter came back from the war he took to

farming with his family who were part of the membership and that put him in close proximity to Hannah and her in-laws at the Feltner place. Hannah tells us that, "It was a strange courtship we had. My love for Virgil had begun in a kind of innocence, leading only in time to knowledge. But what was coming into being between Nathan and me was not a youthful romance. It was a knowing love. Both of us had suffered the war. He had fought in it, and I had waited it out in fear and sorrow at home. We both were losers by it, he of a brother, I of a husband. Now we were coming together out of fear and loss and grief, and we knew it."

But, Hannah is an honest woman, "My life with Nathan turned out to be a long life, and actual marriage with trouble in it. I am not complaining. Troubles came, as they were bound to do, as the promise we made had warned us they would. I can remember the troubles and speak of them, but not to complain. I am beginning again to speak of my gratitude."

As David Schindler has written, "Man is at home, therefore, when he is rightly related to God, to others, and to the world in and through the family. It is within these relations and in their right ordering that he finds his basic place of residence, or truly comes to rest (3)." The Port William membership, even in their most trying hour, always knew a

spiritual peace, they always knew “home.”

Hannah tells us of salvation and forgiveness. She may speak freely of these things for she is older now, the last of her generation. She walks with a cane and still treks through the woods remembering, always remembering, “Like a lot of old people I have known, I am now living in two places: the place as it was and the place as it is. As it was it is almost always present to me, with the dead moving about in it as they were: Virgil, Old Jack Beechum, Mat and Margaret Feltner, Joe and Nettie Banion, Burley and Jarrat Coulter, Art and Mart Rowanberry, Elton and Mary Penn, Bess and Wheeler Catlett, Nathan. By the ones who have moved away, as many have done, as my children have done, the dead may be easily forgotten. But to those who remain, the place is always forever a reminder. And so, the absent come into presence.”

Hannah’s life has reached the time of ghosts. Her loved ones, now gone, come to her as they always do. It is a time of great peace for this kind, generous, and loving lady and Hannah understands just how much Port William and its environs meant to her long and blessed life, “There is no “better place” than this, not in this world. And it is by the place we’ve got, and our love for it and our keeping of it, that this world is joined to Heaven.”

Wendell Berry is America’s finest novelist. His Hannah Coulter is classic literature.

**Notes:**

1. Doug Bandow and David Schindler, eds., *Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny*, (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Wilmington, DE., 2003); essay: David Crawford, “The ‘Bourgeois Family’ and the Meaning of Freedom and Community.” Pg. 177.
2. Wendell Berry, *That Distant Land, The Collected Stories*, (Shoemaker and Hoard, Washington, D.C., 2004) *The Wild Birds*, pg. 355.
3. Bandow and Schindler, *Wealth*, essay: David Schindler, “Homelessness’ and Market Liberalism: Toward an Economic Culture of Gift and Gratitude. Pg. 353.

**Hannah Coulter by Wendell Berry; Robert C. Cheeks’ review** - You will recognize this book title that I reviewed last month. I wanted you to have another perspective on this book of our shared American experience. *Robert C. Cheeks has given permission for his article to be reprinted here in the ARK.* He refers to a kind of

“homelessness” that we have encountered as a society since moving away from our agrarian roots. This is a spiritual loss. Robert C. Cheeks’ research indicates, “Professor David Crawford of the John Paul II Institute for the Studies on Marriage and family said, “It is not that families would cease to exist, but they would be transformed into the image of the exchange relations that underlie liberal societies (1).”

Robert C. Cheeks concludes that, “Consequently, there are two aspects of the triumph of the “bourgeois family” that have had a profound effect on society: **first, is the capricious yearning for the so-called “better life,” which has resulted in a highly trained cadre of consumers, and, second, is an increasing lack of significance attached to the concepts of “place,” and family.**”

Wendell Berry’s Hannah Coulter calls into question, **“What constitutes a better life when compared with a sense of belonging to a place, a community and a family?”** Hannah Coulter notes that debt is a part of that new “better life” that she had not foreseen coming.

I was struck by Robert C. Cheeks comment, “ There was a time, not many decades ago, that most of America’s population labored on family farms. Then, the primary objective of the American farmer was to be debt free, to be independent. I was made aware of this “independence” many years ago when my mother-in-law, Jessie Hobbs, the daughter of a West Virginia

<http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/acif/ARKJuly2011Volume22Edition7.pdf>

farmer, once commented about her childhood, **“We didn’t know there was a depression.”** ‘

I have also heard this from others who went through the depression who had a garden planted and who were able to make do. If they could stay on their land, they were fine.

How different the thinking is now. We are so removed from God’s creation that we don’t understand it nor are we able to read the simple signs in nature around us anymore. The word, “sustainable” has re-entered recently into our vocabulary as a new concept, but this is really a re-introduction of an old concept.

Hannah Coulter by Wendell Berry sheds light on “the membership” - It is this “membership” in a community and human family that I would like to draw to your attention to be considered.

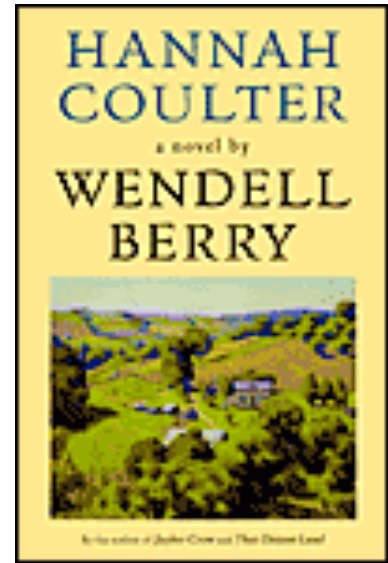
Hannah Coulter understands the blessings that real work bring to her. Her husband Nathan believes that is what brings them to a place as close to Heaven on earth on their farm land that anyone can possibly ever attain. His life experiences have given him this insight, Hannah comes to realize. After his death she does research into what happened in Okinawa, a war experience that her husband could never speak about. He had identified completely with the simply farming community that had been annihilated on Okinawa and who had nothing to do with the conflict; they simply got caught in the crossfire. We are all related one to the other. We all belong one to the other.

It is the ordinariness of their daily lives, lived to the fullest where they are able to find that of God in their lives.

I want to thank Robert C. Cheeks for his review and for sharing his insight of Hannah Coulter by Wendell Berry with Ark readers.

The book is extremely well written, and the subject matter strikes a chord that is very true. I highly recommend this book. This is one of those great books that shouldn’t be missed.

~ M.J. Glauber

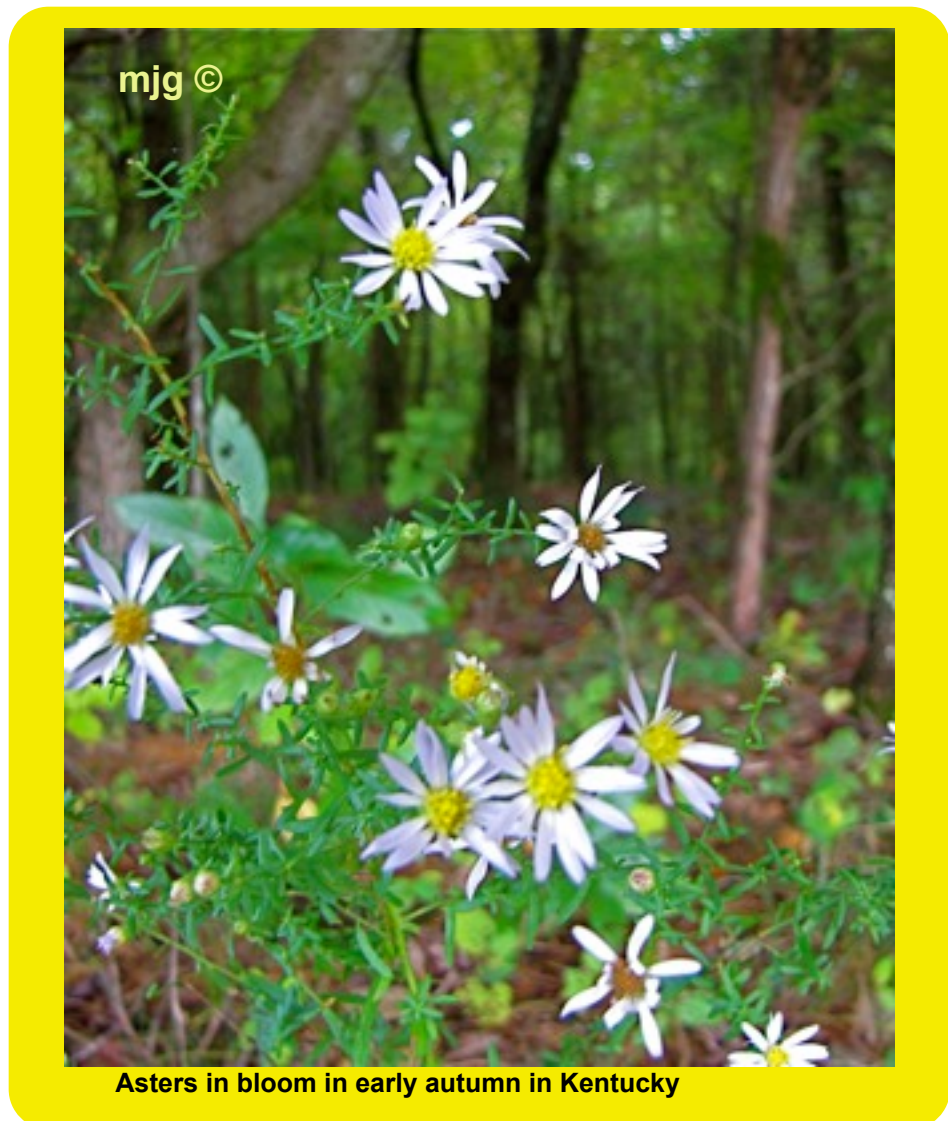


**Hannah Coulter**

by Wendell Berry

hoemaker and Hoard, 190 pp.

CLR Rating: ★★★★★



Asters in bloom in early autumn in Kentucky

# 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58:

## "We will be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Inspired by the life and teachings of Christ, we will be changed. Change often isn't easy, but it may become necessary for our survival. God has given us the chance for making our own decisions; we can learn from our previous experiences and from reading written historical texts. A study of the past shouldn't make us bound to old practices that served to divide us from that of God in the world that we find all around us. We are able to make choices that pull us back to the path that Christ set out for us. We have some control over what happens, but not over everything. What we can control, we should, but keeping in mind the guidelines we have been given that will serve to make us one body of Christian Believers.

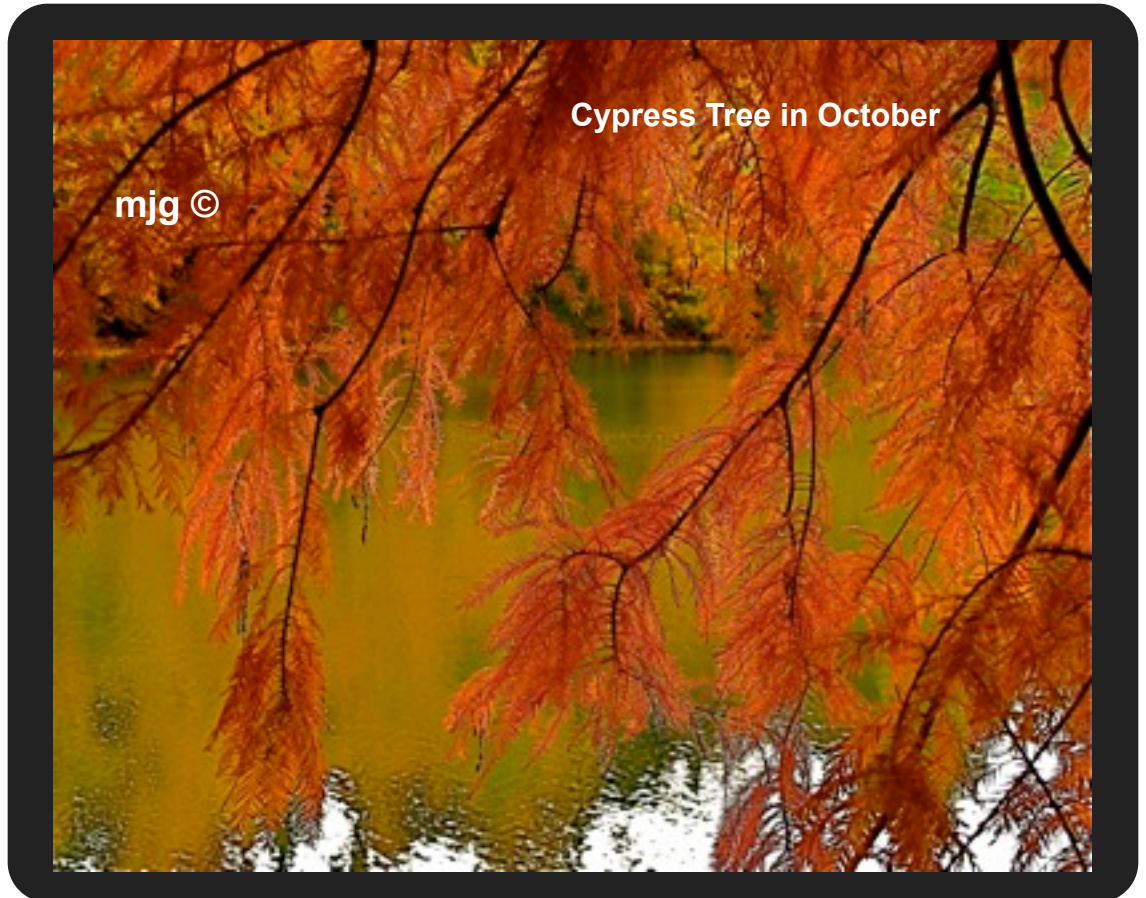
This is a time for introspection and self-examination. Take note of your feelings and your own thoughts. Are they helping you along the path toward Christian Unity? You can adjust what becomes your focus by the way that you think and feel about the world you encounter on a daily basis. How do you encounter that of God in your lived experience?

Think about the ways that you can prepare yourself for change and to help to prepare others for change.

Change should be a natural and integral part of our lived experience as Christians. Are we working collectively to move all of along this path? Or, are we thinking that our way is the only way? Other paths may work better for some people than a path we may choose for ourselves, but it is equally valid for finding that of God in their lived experience, which would naturally be different than our lived experience.

See that your needs are met in any change that is undertaken. Meeting your needs should preclude that others needs aren't being met equally well. We are all in this together. In building the foundations for the future, what kind of legacy do we want to leave for future generations to be able to thrive and to prosper?

~ M.J. Glauber



# The Language we use to describe the sacred

Two quotes from two cultures: are they trying to say the same thing? Is our language as much a part of our cultural experience and historical heritage as what determines the color of our eyes?

If we have gone through a particularly spiritual moment, have you ever found it difficult to find the exact words to adequately describe how that experience felt to you as you experienced it or why this experience was so significant to you?

As a very young child, I was privileged to be able to enter the homes of our neighbors. In their homes they displayed religious art. They were accustomed to seeing Jesus with a bleeding heart, but I wasn't. I may have been four years old at the time; I had no point of reference

other than I knew that was Jesus with his heart exposed in the portrait of him hanging over the sofa where my neighbors sat in normal conversation being apparently oblivious to the fact that Jesus was behind them in that state. I had no

Like  
the grasses showing tender faces to each other,  
thus should we do,  
for this was the wish of the Grandfathers of the World.

## Black Elk

words even to explain this to my own family. I also noticed that in their bedrooms they had placed gruesome crosses with Jesus being crucified so that this would be

what they would see just before falling asleep at night.

I was very young when my mother took me to my first powwow of the Ogallala Sioux. I was barely able to write. I wanted to send a note to tell my older brother about this very moving experience. My mother and I bought a postcard of a man doing a "Fancy Dance;" in his amazing costume. I simply wrote, "I saw Indians." I misspelled the message though. It actually read, "I saw India." (*Columbus had trouble with this too in one way or another.*) I remember how much effort it took just to get that down on the postcard

"so that they may all be one"  
John 17: 21



Grasses in October on the edge of a farm field in a light breeze

so that I could tell my oldest brother who and what I had seen. Perhaps my mother sent her own detailed explanation in her own postcard at the same time since she would have seen how difficult writing that message was for me, but she would have also seen how much I wanted my brother to know how happy I had been about going to this powwow.

I felt that I had been very privileged to have been able to observe the dancing at the powwow. I realize that the men beating on the drum create a sound like a heartbeat. It is a heartbeat for a community, a gathered community. The singing takes on the quality of chanting. For years as an adult I listened to the Folkways recordings of American Indians' traditional music from the 1930's in my car on my way to work; I believed that they must have been praying. The music had a quality of prayer about it although I could not understand the words.

When I have gone to special exhibits and had a chance to talk to the visiting tribal representative, they have been very careful to give me a nugget of something to cogitate over that they considered to be important. A Cree woman told me that two white buffalo calves had been born the previous year and that this was a very good sign. Another woman from one of the northwest tribes told me that someone from her tribe had

gone up the river of no return and come back. This too had been a very good sign in her opinion. I don't know why these are good signs; I was happy that they had both found good signs that they wanted to share with me. I waited for more of the story, but nothing more came.

I like the quote attributed to Black Elk that we should turn tender faces toward each other like grasses since this was a wish from the Grandfathers. I believe that the Grandfathers would be highly respected or knowledgeable ancestors. This is wisdom speaking. We turn to the Bible in an effort to find wisdom. In fact, Black Elk's quote reminds me of John 17:21 "so that they may all be one"

When I was a child, I was welcomed at a powwow. The powwow left a mark on me that has stayed there forever. I saw beauty because I was welcomed or because I was a child and open to seeing beauty. I will never know.

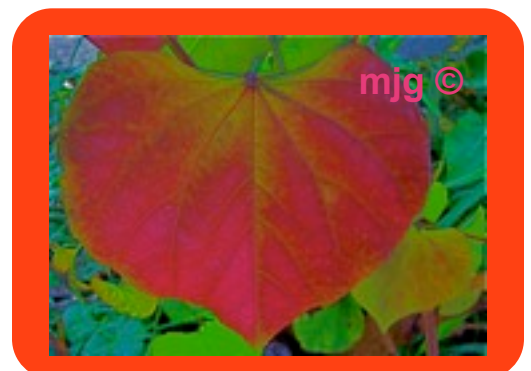
Matthew 18:5 "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me." I keep coming back to this chapter in Matthew 18:5 and I remember how I was welcomed by total strangers, the Ogallala Sioux, when I was a very young child. After my mother died, I found that misspelled postcard I had

sent all those years ago in one of the drawers back at our house. It had been one of those precious moments we had shared, but which had kept on growing in my life in so many ways.

And as I look back on my childhood, I see that God was very much present in so many ways. How we go about expressing the divine may be part of our cultural heritage and we should share that heritage with visitors.

"Becoming one" as suggested in John 17:21 allows for diversity and welcomes our diversity. Being one also means respecting diversity within our shared humanity. We can learn from each other. What one culture may find easy to express another may struggle to express or prefer not to articulate in the same way.

God didn't make flowers all the same, nor trees all the same, nor fruit, nor vegetables, but they all belong equally. We, as humans, all belong to the Creator equally. ~ M.J. Glauber



Here is the link for the August ARK:

**AAIF is affiliated with IFIN: Interchurch Families International Network ~ sharing the same mission and voice**

**Our Mission:**

The American Association of Interchurch Families in conjunction with the IFIN provides:

**A support network and information service for**

- Interchurch families (where the partners belong to different denominations - often Roman Catholic or Orthodox and another Christian communion) for partners and parents, growing children and young adults
- Clergy, ministers, relatives and all others concerned in the welfare of interchurch families (AAIF is linked with groups of interchurch families in many parts of the world)

**A Voice in the churches**

- By keeping the pastoral needs of interchurch families before church leaders and communities, at local, regional, national and international levels.
- By affirming the gifts of interchurch families and their potential as a catalyst for wider church unity.

**~ All these activities are rooted in prayer and worship.**

Mission Statement printed with permission of AIF- GB granted in February 2010

**Common Ground**

**Common Good**

**Different Pathways**

**Equals**

**Christian Unity**

This insight was submitted at one of our Interchurch Families sharing and listening sessions. We all thought that everyone else would enjoy and appreciate it as much as we had. M.J. Glauber

Become a “student” of yourself. Yes, study who you are. Learn everything that you can about yourself. How do you measure your own progress? What are your values?



*“Let us make one point, that we meet each other with a smile, when it is difficult to smile. Smile at each other, make time for each other in your family.”*  
-- Mother Teresa of Calcutta



# Finding God in Our Own Stories:

Where does possibility and hope exist?

How do we cultivate, nurture and grow the potential of a compassionate, loving and caring society?

How do we carry out Christ's wishes for us as interchurch families?

## Exodus 33:18-23

<sup>18</sup> Moses said, 'Show me your glory, I pray.'

<sup>19</sup> And he said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, "The Lord"; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.'

<sup>20</sup> But', he said, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.'

<sup>21</sup> And the Lord continued, 'See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock;

<sup>22</sup> and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with

my hand until I have passed by;

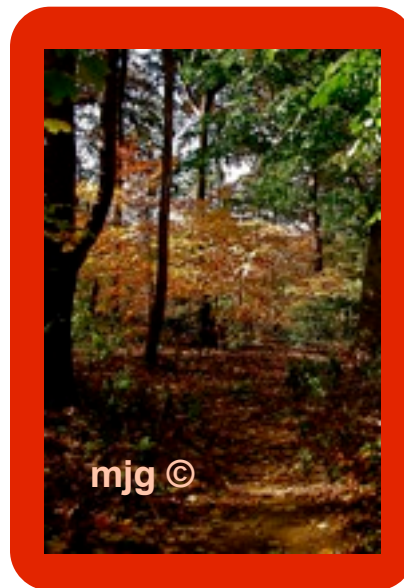
<sup>23</sup> then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.'

Carol Ochs in her book, [Our Lives As Torah. Finding God in our own stories](#) writes, "God is not discovered in the future nor in the present. Only in looking back do we begin to recognize God's presence in and through the working of our days. We can prove it to ourselves by comparing actions we performed a moment ago, where we can see no trace of destiny in our choice, with actions we took a month ago, where we now begin to recognize that if our actions had good and agreeable results, it also had a twinge of inevitability. When we reflect on something we did ten or more years ago, we see consequences of that act even more plainly, and it is hard to imagine how things could have been different. The further we go back in our memory, the more we come to recognize meaningful patterns."

Carol Ochs explains, "We are committed to meaningful patterns through our commitment to Creation, not as

a past historical event, but as an on-going process that is renewed daily. We wonder how this awareness of pattern fits in with our own free will and our sense of self, and how we change from an isolated individual to one participating in a great design that is larger than our single efforts can achieve but that brings forth our deepest fulfillment."

Then Carol Ochs tells us the ways we are to examine what a theology should be doing for us. She says, "Although a theology is likely to cover many areas, the three questions it seeks to answer **Who am I? What can I know? What can I hope for?**



She also adds that "In addition to these questions, we want to ask, Why there is evil? Specifically, why do the innocent suffer? What is the nature of death? What can we know about God? Do I have a destiny?"

These questions are never merely theoretical - we are deeply caught up in real situations that we want to resolve."

Here is a story that was related to me by an avid and rather gifted storyteller. It should also be noted that there are actually two story tellers, I will call them: John and Mark for the

retelling of this story, both of them enjoyed hearing stories and finding stories as much as telling stories. However, the story is factual or as factual as any story can be.

The story happened a longtime ago. John was a young man when the story happened. He

were also avid backpackers and hikers in the North Woods, as he referred to the area where he had hiked.

As I remember how the story was related to me, even as skilled and practiced as he and his hiking friends were. Things could go wrong. He advised

father did have a story to tell on that, even after many years. John and a skilled hiking friend had gotten off the path when night with its encompassing darkness fell and before they had reached their “lean-to” where they had planned to make their camp in the Adirondacks.



Mark related to me that the North Woods is dense and it can be impossible to see anything after nightfall. Mark told me that he had asked his father, John, “What did you do then?”

John and his skilled hiking buddy had found a large tree where they propped their backs against it for the night.

was re-telling the story to Mark, his son, many years later. John loved to hike in the northern forests. He had done this often growing up. He was skilled as a backpacker, even using those old style basket backpacks that must have weighed a great deal. In the winter, he used snowshoes to backpack when the snow was deep, and it became extremely deep in the North Woods. He would often hike into the forest with a good friend. He had several trusted friends who

Mark that if Mark ever got lost in that North Woods that Mark should walk down stream because down stream always lead to a community. Mark confided to me that this had always given Mark a sense of great comfort, and that Mark had only felt like he might have used it twice.

Mark told me that he had asked his father if he had ever had ever encountered any frightening or bad experiences in those North Woods. And, his

John told Mark that they tried to sleep in that position, but they found it difficult. John related to me that he had asked his father, “ So what did you do then?” in a rather naive way. His father told him in a very frank and truthful way that the two of them sat there in the total darkness and began “to damn everything.”

Mark and I could see easily how this might be the case and we sympathized with their rather hopeless situation.

In the morning light, although they were tired, John and his equally skilled hiking friend, were able to find their way without difficulty. They simply needed that light.

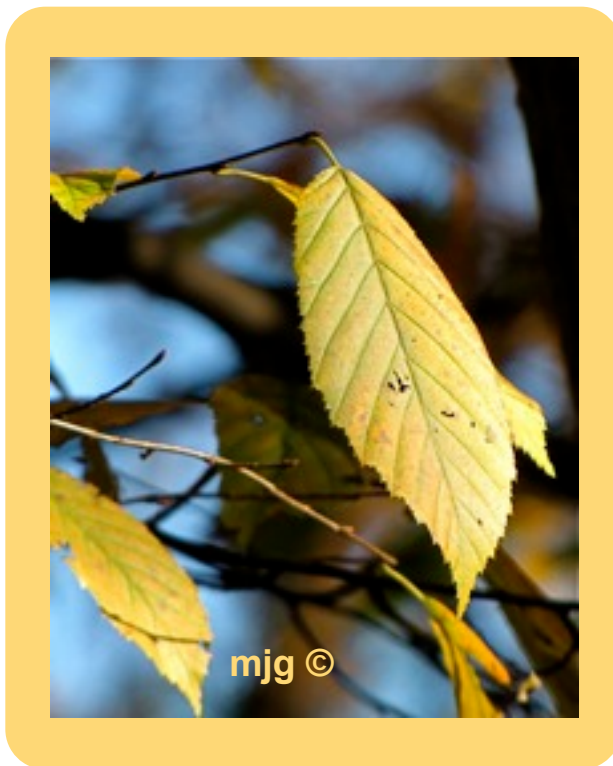
Interjecting here, I note that we often refer to Christ or God as “The Light” or as “The Way.” Whatever had made them start out late or take the wrong path perhaps had been discussed in one form or another under that big old tree where they were propped up for the night.

Mark told me that his father, John had other ideas for how to be found if Mark ever became lost in the North Woods. If it was during the day, Mark should start a smokey fire with wet debris. If it was at night, Mark should start a fire with dry twigs and fallen branches that would create bright flames. Mark told me that when his father, John died that he had found tucked inside the pocket of his father’s hiking shirt a water proof container that held matches. Mark told me that it is those things that carry such strong sentimental meanings with them because of the stories attached to them.

I see within this story a father mentoring and caring for his son in a worldly manner, of course, but I believe that this is

the way we are called to do the work of God in our lives.

I also see that we may not be able to see God’s presence in



the current moment or perhaps be able to predict God’s presence in the future, but that God was definitely present within the dynamics of this situation between friends and then between father and son. God certainly must also be present with the story tellers as well.

Carol Ochs’ book *Our Lives As Torah. Finding God in our own stories* refers us to many Bible verses, explains the meaning of those Bible verses as they pertain to our ordinary lived experience and shares anecdotes that help us to understand that our ordinary, simple and humble lives have purpose and are part of God’s plan. The explanation of the

Bible verses alone make this book a well worthwhile read for interchurch families. The book may also serve to encourage us to begin to start to share our stories and to begin to see our stories in a new light. Carol Ochs’ book breaks down a monumental task into bite size pieces.

We are encouraged in theology to move toward the Light and to avoid the darkness. In this way, it differs from psychotherapy. However, there is a need for psychotherapy, but that is the distinction that Carol Ochs notes for us.

“And God saw that it was good.” This is what we are reinforcing as theologians. Carol Ochs indicates that we are all theologians.

Using the story of Cinderella, Carol Ochs shows us how there can be one story and many points of view about that story. Since this is a “neutral” story and not a biblical story, it serves as a very good example to show how everyone is and can be right when they share their opinion about what happened in the story of Cinderella. (This example is on page 43 in Ochs’ book.) This kind of example allows all of us to be right and to exist side by side, all being right, and in the same place at the same time. It fosters a sense of respect, peace and harmony. This kind of an example is one that helps to direct all of us toward finding the Light we, as Christians, may need to help us to find the Christian Unity that Christ

wished for us. (John 17:21 “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”)

*Carol Ochs Our Lives As Torah, Finding God in our own stories*  
(Jossey-Bass; 2001) ISBN 0-7879-4473-4; 296.7 OCH1;  
*is the director of graduate studies and visiting professor of philosophy at Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City. She holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from Brandeis University and taught philosophy at Simmons College in Boston.*



## 1 Kings 19: 2- 13

(King James Version)

**2** Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

**3** And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to

Judah, and left his servant there.

**4** But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

**5** And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

**6** And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and

drink, and laid him down again.

**7** And the angel of the LORD came again the second time,

and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

**8** And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

**9** And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

**10** And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away

**11** And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

**12** And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

**13** And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering



in of the cave. And,  
 behold, there came a  
 voice unto him, and said,  
 What doest thou here,  
 Elijah?

\* \* \*

Joanne and Larry Spears  
 of Bismarck, North  
 Dakota have created a  
 Bible study format based  
 on Quaker principles.  
 They have made the  
 following note about  
 Biblical translations that  
 we should consider:

### A Note on Translations

“A translation cannot reproduce in English all the meaning of the original text. On finer points and on some surprisingly major points, significant differences exist between one translation and another. The English words chosen to translate the Hebrew or Greek are important reflections of the translator's perspective. By using several different translations of the Bible, it will quickly become apparent that translators are human.”

“Bible study in which different translations are read sensitizes the members to how the choice of English words affects the meaning of the text. The translator's words point to the meaning of the original text, which in turn is an effort to point to truth as the author understood it.



This is a liberating insight to many, and it may transform a reader's antagonism toward the text and enable the reader to approach the text in order to understand the underlying truth.”

[http://www.read-the-bible.org/  
 FriendlyBibleStudy.htm](http://www.read-the-bible.org/FriendlyBibleStudy.htm)

Joanne and Larry Spears introduce us to: Tests for Sound Bible Study Methods:

We should apply Quaker (the word: Christian could be substituted here) insights, understanding and standards to any Bible study method. Any Bible study method should support four important aspects of our tradition:

“First, a Bible study method should recognize personal experience as a central part of our spiritual lives.”

“Second, a Bible study method should recognize the equality of all believers in the study process. It should remove the centrality of an authority figure as leader, thereby affirming that the Spirit works through everyone out of the open silence of even the few seekers gathered together.”

“Third, a Bible study method should recognize the availability of continuing revelation of God in our spiritual lives.”

“Fourth, a Bible study method should affirm the connection of the Biblical witness to our lives in our present world.”

“These elements should be central tests to apply to any Friendly Bible study.”

I recognize in these four tests for Sound Bible Study Methods a strong Quaker or Society of Friends tenet. I also recognize that for many interchurch families that this kind of thinking does not fit in with the creeds that are recited. On the other hand, this thinking does fit in with the contemplative aspect that does exist within our shared history as Christians so I decided to include it.

Other benefits to this format is that it is very easy to use and it provides a structure for effective communication. Joanne and Larry Spears note that “The method suggested here has been arrived at through years of experiment. It is a tool that enables people to initiate and take part in productive exploration of the Bible and their lives.”

“It takes effort and practice to see the benefit of any Bible study method. But it is our experience that people invariably find that the sharing which grows out of this study method results in new understanding and deeper insight than may come from the use of many other methods.”

Joanne and Larry Spears suggest that Bible Study groups, “Gather together at least three, but not more than six, interested people with any religious or spiritual background. No prior study of the Bible is needed by anyone. Members need not have ever picked up the Bible before to participate fully in this Bible study.”

The Spears explain that, “A person with extensive biblical

background can be helpful to the Bible study process, but should not be seen as an authority figure. A group reflecting a diversity of viewpoints provides a stimulating variety of both spiritual experience and understanding.” The part where diversity helps the discussions is why I am bringing this format in focus for interchurch families and ecumenists to review perhaps yet again for consideration.

Joanne and Larry Spears suggest, “Choose just a few verses at the beginning of the book, to be followed each week by the next few verses. It is very important not to skip around among favorite passages. As the Bible study continues through the weeks, discussion will develop as themes emerge which link each session to the discussion in previous sessions.”

The Spears explain that “One paragraph, or one stanza of a Psalm, will usually be three to six verses. It is dangerous to spiritual understanding to try to cover too much material. The goal of Bible study should be deeper understanding of our spiritual life tradition.” I have used this format of Bible study and found what they are saying to be correct.

Joanne and Larry Spears also explain that “This method reflects the view



that there is greater insight available through focusing full attention on small amounts of study material than on large amounts of material. Remember that each verse or section is an extract from a larger work. Each section does not necessarily give the true flavor of the whole content or reflect the major underlying themes. References can always be made to the complete book as each section is studied.”

The Spears explain that “Being sensitive to group indications that a particular text is not consistent with their personal experience may indicate passages which need to be set in a larger context. It is essential to take a small number of verses for each Bible study session.” Over a few weeks of study, this will all fall into place naturally I found.

Joanne and Larry Spears explain that “At first glance, there doesn't seem to be very much to discuss in just a few verses. We are culturally conditioned to cover as much material as possible to complete an assigned task. Resist this temptation. Bible study group members often feel frustrated when each member talks about different parts of a long passage. A common focus on a small section provides a focus for deeper insights.” My personal experience of having used this Bible Study format shows this statement to be accurate.

The Spears indicate that “Bible study is like the group of blind

people describing an elephant, each from a separate viewpoint of experience. This Bible study method contributes the viewpoints of each person to our understanding of a common reality. Stress the value of hearing each person's views and seeing the passage through each person's eyes. Each view is important to the study.” In using this format of Bible study, I found that it tends to foster each person's desire to understand what the Bible means and the process of discernment tends to lend itself to others saying that they think what has been said by a previous contributor in the room is interesting and something they had not previously considered before within that text so they are glad to have heard or had the opportunity to hear about it as someone may see it from another perspective. Sometimes, one person's thought about a passage not only opens some insight about that passage, but it may allow another person to then see even further into that same passage since the gateway had just been opened for them to do that by the first contributor.

The five questions addressed

in each Bible study are: (These are the questions that Joanne and Larry Spears created after much experiential use and interaction using these questions)

**1. What is the author's main point in this passage? (MAIN POINT)**

The Spears note that “This question helps each member focus on what the author says. It often helps to state the question again in another form: **"What is the author saying about God?"** Each person must address the text directly in a relationship formed between reader and author. This is not the time to share the ideas of a commentator, minister, priest, or other authority figure. The search here is for the main point the author was making in this passage and the author's understanding of God working in our world. It is easy to respond with what we would like for the author to have said. It is easy to express our own ideas on the subject. However,



the target of the question is what the author actually said. To help those who may be unsure and timid about Bible study, remind the group again that a variety of responses can help the group see the whole of the passage more clearly. After one or two sessions, this will be easily understood and liberating to most participants."

## **2. What new light do I find in this particular reading of this passage of the text? (NEW LIGHT)**

This question provides opportunity for the working of the Spirit in our silence. This question reminds us of the continuing revelation in our lives from both unfamiliar and familiar passages. The focus here is on each member's new insight, observation, or understanding during this particular reading of this passage on this particular occasion.

Each reading can bring some new or renewed insight. That insight may be small or great. This answer may grow with more and more points as the group works through the passage with other questions. The new light may be something that is seen now, but had never been seen before. It may be a new understanding of a word or phrase. It may be a new way of seeing a particular problem that this passage triggers in a member's mind. It may be the last in the sequence of questions answered in the silence. It may grow with more

and more points as the group works through the passage with other questions.

## **3. Is this passage true to my experience? (TRUTH)**

The focus here is on comparing the message of the Bible passage with each person's experience in life. Our spiritual journeys are "experimental" as we search toward fuller understanding. Our personal experience and our community experience are sources of authority which we bring to the study to understand and supplement the Biblical text. For those who come from other religious traditions, this question may come as a shock. Few of us have lived in other traditions in which we have been allowed to question the "truth" of the Bible. Yet we are accustomed to answering this question, if not with the Bible, with other written materials. This question is often a freedom experience and consistently will open up new insights for everyone in the group. Recognition that our present understanding of the passage is not consistent with our experience may require reassessment of the meaning of our experience, deeper study of the meaning of the Bible passage, or recognition that our individual spiritual journeys, as with those of the Biblical authors, are searches in the dark in which full clarity is not given at every moment.

## **4. What are the implications of this passage for my life? (IMPLICATIONS)**

The answer to this question may provide implications for living at any of several levels of spiritual life. The center of the question is, "What difference, if any, does the passage make for my life?" There is a reaching from the text back to our lives in this question. It brings the role of ethics and daily living practices to our attention. This holding together of faith and action is central to our tradition.

## **5. What problems do I have with this passage? (PROBLEMS)**

Here we identify problems of language in the text, of interpretation, of meaning, or of applying the text to our lives. These problems may generate interest in seeking answers from other sources during the days before the next Bible study. Problems can be identified without being solved. This question reminds us that study of a passage is a continuing process. Like life, understanding is never complete at any one time. It is a continuing dialogue between the biblical text and life.

Report prepared by  
Mary Jane Glauber

# “Our Little Church”

## 1) Laure Dubourdieu-Arjakovsky

I am a French Roman Catholic and I am married to Antoine Arjakovsky, a French member of the Orthodox Church (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople). We began our journey together as Christ asked of his apostles: You will go out along the highways two by two ... I believe that every Christian couple responds to this call.

In the case of an interchurch couple, following this vocation may lead to a fundamental dynamic tension within their response to Christ through:

- the discovery of the other Christian tradition,
- the mutual enrichment of the two persons in the one couple, and
- a life-giving openness and a thirst to get to know other traditions.

And then there is the gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Through living with Antoine and attending the liturgical offices which have nourished his faith since his childhood I have discovered the rich depths within the Orthodox Church and I have perceived the different characteristics of that Church when encountered

through the ecclesiological perspectives of my own tradition.

Through my love for Antoine, I have inevitably been invited to love the traditional Church to which he belongs, and through that tradition my own faith has been deeply enriched. This then leads to a greater love for and openness to other traditions and other religions.

Here are some concrete examples:

The question of the Holy Spirit or more specifically the Filioque. It seems to me that when Roman Catholics recite the Creed and affirm that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, a certain process may develop subconsciously: the Christian feels himself inspired by a great strength—'if he wants to he can'. This gives a considerable breadth to his actions and his mission, he feels indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Yet this can also lead unfortunately to great arrogance ...

The Christian from the East however, perpetuates the Nicean Creed: 'The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father'. He is deeply conscious of his weakness and of his sin. He constantly prays: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner', the Jesus prayer. He is spontaneously humble, for he has been fully conscious of his poverty since his earliest childhood. His humility is his treasure, yet sometimes sadly

this treasure may turn into a certain fatalism.

Let me give you an example: as a young married couple we had started regularly to pray together, using prayers from Antoine's Orthodox prayer book. We would repeatedly recite: 'Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us ...'

These days I can't help remembering with a smile that I would feel quite rebellious inside, and think 'What's all this about, everything's fine, of course we are all sinners, but going on and on with this mea culpa ...!'

The theologians of today have found a solution. They have agreed to speak in a more personal way and affirm that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and rests on the Son, a marvellous synthesis which highlights a sense of humility and at the same time brings out a sense of the strength which the Holy Spirit gives to us. Orthodox Christians sing about this in this prayer:

Holy Spirit,  
Comforter, Spirit of  
Truth  
Who art everywhere  
present and fill all  
things  
Treasury of good  
things and Giver of  
life  
Come and dwell in  
us, and cleanse us of  
all impurity  
And save our souls  
O Good One.

And here we see the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage:

Concerning eucharistic communion, even if we have not always been able physically to receive from the same cup, given the official position of the Church, which does vary in fact depending on times and places ... we have, to our surprise, always spontaneously experienced a real spiritual communion through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

This grace of the Holy Spirit which we receive through the sacrament of marriage and which is renewed throughout our lives by our faith, through the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession, helps us to overcome barriers built by men and by ourselves.

My cousin who is a Benedictine monk at the Notre-Dame de la Sainte Espérance monastery in Mesnil Saint Loup in France has always told me that it is in discovering the Church of the East that he has rooted his own faith. I fully share this experience.

## **2) Antoine Arjakovsky**

Father Daniel, a monk at the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Chevetogne, told me with a smile: 'I would not be the Christian that I am if I had not discovered the Byzantine Slavic liturgy.

And nevertheless this was already potentially present in me. It's as if you find yourself in the desert, scratching the ground, and in an unexpected

place you find a spring which was already there and was only asking to gush forth.'

I made the same discovery when I married Laure. It's true that I was right from the start quite ready to love my wife's Catholic spirituality because of the religious upbringing I had received and my French nationality. But this love was only a possibility, nothing more. I didn't have any interest in Western mysticism, I didn't understand the reverence accorded to the pope, I often felt cold in Latin churches, and I found it particularly cavalier to dare to affirm that the origin of the Holy Spirit was in Christ.

But love teaches us a different way. First of all we become conscious that our faith is what brings us most intimately together. Faith in God, of course. We discovered each other very swiftly by talking about certain crucial phrases which had forged our identities. But I would add, faith pure and simple. The capacity to jump in, to give way, to trust, to listen most attentively. Laure listened so well to what I was saying that she was able to guide me through the meanderings of my search just by listening.

And then love transforms not only our lives but also our space and time. I found through Laure's eyes that the whole of my past was an introduction to our first meeting with each other, and that the whole of my future would be a consequence of that meeting, to the extent that we took very

seriously this 'coincidence' that my name day was the same date as her birthday. The first time we went to Kiev together, Laure shivered when she approached the monastery of Laure St Anthony of the Caves. She was the first to realise that there was a reason for our two names to be associated with each other in this land of Ukraine. We have been living here now for eight years...

So, in love, we make a single body, to the point where there are moments when we no longer know where my dream ends and where the dream of the other begins, which of us is revealed in our son's or daughter's smile, how the other has been able to guess at what was still a secret for me.

In this state of transformative union we heard voices tell us that we could not share the Eucharist together! Our first reaction was a practical one. 'That isn't all that serious because we know otherwise, existentially, that Christ does unite us, so we can be satisfied in a spiritual communion.' Christ, it is true, is present when two or three are gathered in his name. But life has also taught us to be witnesses to Christ. And we wondered why our churches could not recognise the fact of the unity of the Church through the unity of interchurch couples? And then we love the Church so much that we want our children to continue to see her as they have always seen her, infinitely beautiful, shining and joyous.

Recently I wrote an article on the question of eucharistic hospitality between Catholics and Orthodox. This isn't the place to develop my ideas on the question. I sincerely believe that the gift of love that we receive must be shown, passed on to our institutional churches. So that the world might believe ...

The most interesting thing for me here is to share with other interchurch families my thoughts on what I believe to be the real question, not that of eucharistic hospitality but rather what one might call 'the creative journey in the light of the transfiguration'.

We are indeed called to the same task, that of the prophetic transformation through our own viewpoints, in order to make the sum of them available to as many others as possible. And of course that is by no means an easy task.

The devil, the enemy, this brutal will in us which would so much like to grasp at personal autonomy without God, has poured out so much energy in dividing the East from the West, that love between a man from the eastern tradition and a woman from the west can only humiliate him, a creature whose arrogance is his whole identity.

So he concentrates his force on interchurch couples, as he does on anybody who lives in faith. As far as we are concerned his strategy is to seek to make us believe that

our differences are a static reality, then that they are a burden, moreover one we cannot ever overcome, and finally that we must inevitably make a choice between one camp or another.

It is indeed true that there are fundamental differences between our traditions, or rather between our personal experience of our traditions. For example, the oriental tradition which I grew up in emphasizes a great deal our fallen nature, and on Grace as a free gift from God which is able to restore us to what we should be by means of the church and orthodoxy.

Western Catholic tradition, in the way that Laure lives it, is much more optimistic on the question of human nature, on the efficacy of our prayer, on the authority of the successor of Peter, and on the need to exercise a fidelity to him. In everyday life this can be a source of conflict. Do our children have to work relentlessly so as not to be handicapped by this unjust world, or must we have faith in the Providence of God and not worry about tomorrow? Here is one possible discussion among so many others.

It is precisely the Wisdom of God which has allowed us to combine the two. From the beginning of the world She has played before God. At the end of time She is the face of the Kingdom, the name of the meeting between the two bodies, the two Jerusalems.

She is an active presence in history which alone allows us to understand the passionate words of Paul: 'Love believes everything, hopes everything, love never dies.' God reveals himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in his tri-hypostatic Wisdom. In God we are not alone confronted by our divisions and our wounds. We can from a certain position see the beauty of a creation which resolves all differences.

At this level of spiritual intensity, we find that all these differences have nothing to do with the East or the West, with the filioque or with autocephaly, etc. We also discover that there is plenty of humility in the Catholic tradition and a real effectiveness in the Orthodox spirit. We can open our eyes to the presence of the fallen angels and to their struggle, already lost. We can sense the warmth of the sun and the fragrance of sweet oranges ...

Translated by John Bolger and reprinted in the ARK with his permission

Please see OiC 45/1 at this link:

[www.oneinchrist.org.uk](http://www.oneinchrist.org.uk)

for further information about the work of "One in Christ."



# STATEMENT OF INTENT for “One in Christ”

*ONE IN CHRIST  
seeks to further  
the movement  
towards full  
communion  
among Christians.*

It intends

1. To provide information about the developing relations between the Christian communions and promote discussion of the theological and historical questions which affect those relations
2. To report and reflect upon initiatives and events which attempt to translate our agreements in faith into common life and mission (adapted from the IARCCUM Agreed Statement)
3. To provide an opportunity for Christians from different traditions to respond together to current issues of common concern such as globalisation, secularism and inter-faith

relations

4. To contribute to a deepening understanding and practice of ‘spiritual ecumenism’. ‘The walls of separation do not rise to heaven’, and in so far as divided Christians are increasingly drawn by the Holy Spirit into the relationship of love between the Father and the Son, they are also drawn closer to one another.

ONE IN CHRIST is a Catholic review, published by the Olivetan Benedictines of Turvey and Rostrevor. The Editorial Board is responsible for editorial policy and direction, and is assisted by an Advisory board, whose members include Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants. Articles of both an academic and a more pastoral nature will be considered. All contributions are assessed by members of the editorial boards.

*‘That they all may be one –  
that the world may  
believe.’*

<http://www.oneinchrist.org.uk/>

## **Editorial**

<http://www.oneinchrist.org.uk/9.html>

VOLUME 45 NUMBER 1

(**CONTENTS and Overview :**)

It is axiomatic that Christians—  
individuals and churches—

should pay special attention to what the poor and the weak have to say: but in inter-church conversations this can be problematic, as the first and last of our articles reflect (Jeruma-Grinberga, Creemers). In the Spirit of kenosis, a church will enable her less prosperous sisters to be heard, and learn from them.

It is hard to imagine a happier juxtaposition than the dialogue between Olivier Clément and Thomas Merton (Hugh-Donovan) on the one hand, and an exposition of the riches of the Icon of the Nativity (Fotiou) on the other—mirrored in the microcosm of an East-West marriage (Arjakovsky).

A characteristically Jesuit initiative of liturgy as mission—mission as liturgy—giving voice to the people of God in a particular place and time (Palmisano), may be contrasted with the weakening of that one voice in one place, resulting from imminent Catholic liturgical changes (McGinnell).

As in any conversation with a history, our various dialogues feature key terms whose usage requires special care. Our contributors draw attention, among others, to ‘relativism’ (Carter), ‘denomination’ (Sherlock), and ‘province’ (Avis).

As we look forward to reflecting further on the progress of ARCIC III, recently inaugurated (Longley), a reflection on the nature of the Anglican Communion (Avis) is most timely.

# The Laity and Christian Unity

From "Ecumenical Corner" by Father Ernest Falardeau, S.S.S.

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For some time now, I have wanted to visit (again) some of our neighboring churches, and all I needed was something to get me started. Reverend Jennifer Linman, the Interim Pastor at Epiphany Episcopal Church, York Avenue at 74th Street, called last month, and that got me started.

As I had done with my first round of the nearby parishes when I arrived in New York eight years ago, I suggested dropping by at her

convenience, and we visited on Wednesday, August 10, at Epiphany. Among the subjects we talked about was the importance of involving the laity in the movement for Christian Unity.

## Indifference and Identity

One of the "dangers" which has been repeatedly indicated for churches in the twenty-first century ( and indeed for centuries before it) is indifference. The secularization of postmodern culture makes that warning even more apt. Indeed, as the ecumenical movement got off to a flying

start in the 1960's and 1970's, many churches began to ask: if we all become one and the same, what will happen to our identity? Are we Catholics becoming Protestant? Are we Protestants becoming more Catholic? If Anglicans and Lutherans enter into full communion, what will become of their identity?

And so, in the late 1980's and 1990's, there was a pushing back on the movement forward as people considered the implications of ecumenism. This question continues to be seriously discussed, and indeed the North American Academy of Ecumenists will discuss it at its annual meeting,



"The Cloisters" at Fort Tryon Park on the upper west side of Manhattan  
~ preserving our shared heritage

September 23-25,  
in Allentown,  
Pennsylvania.

## Differences and Unity

Another aspect of the movement for Christian Unity is the need to appreciate, respect and recognize our differences while maximizing our commonality, i.e. the many ways in which we

Christians are one. I have been writing a series of articles on the Orthodox

churches for our Provincial Newsletter (*Bread Broken and Shared*) beginning with the Oriental Orthodox and more recently discussing the Eastern Orthodox. I was struck by the common tradition which is shared by the East and the West. Christians recite the same creed. (Nicaea-Constantinopolitan); we use the same Bible, celebrate the Eucharist, and are guided by a shared tradition. There are many differences in the way in which we do all of these things, but at the heart of it is a common faith in God, his love, his gift of his Son Jesus Christ, a growing understanding of the church, and an appreciation for the sacraments, especially baptism and the Eucharist.

By and large, clergy have made remarkable progress through dialogue since Vatican II, and they see themselves in a collaborative rather than competitive enterprise. Some of the laity



“The Cloisters” at Fort Tryon Park on the upper west side of Manhattan -  
preserving our shared heritage

have noticed this change and are happy about it. However, the laity is also needed in the ecumenical movement. The reason is simple: they are the church.

For ecumenism to be real - at least visible - it must be local. A similar view is expressed about politics. Vatican II has made us far more aware that the body of Christ is made up of the people around us and the communion that is lived in the parish church. Ecumenical dialogue has discovered that many ecclesial communions ( e.g., Anglicans, Lutherans) that emphasize the theology of the parish community, have gifts to exchange with us who have a strong ecclesiology of the universal church. We can all learn from one another.



Many thanks to everyone who made this edition of the ARK possible.

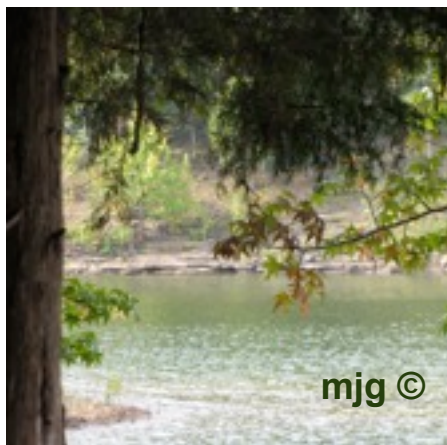
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Green River Lake in autumn in Kentucky

We return thanks to our mother, the earth, which sustains us. We return thanks to the rivers and streams, which supply us with water. We return thanks to all herbs, which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases. We return thanks to the moon and stars,

which have given to us their light when the sun was gone. We return thanks to the sun, that has looked upon the earth with a beneficent eye. Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit, in Whom is embodied all goodness, and Who directs all things for the good of Her children. ~ Iroquois Prayer of Thanksgiving

Looking forward to the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference → July 13-15, 2012 in Collegeville, MN - Please 'save the date,' further details to follow at [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org)

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MARY JANE GLAUBER, VOLUNTEER ARK EDITOR  
M J GLAUBER [AT] GMAIL [DOT] COM  
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