

APPRECIATIVE AWARENESS: THE FEELING-DIMENSION IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

J. J. MUELLER, S.J.

Gonzaga University, Spokane

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE is the term which describes the encounter between the human person and God. The sensations, feelings, emotions, mind, and spirit are the arenas which mediate the experience to consciousness. Knowledge results which is at the same time both clear and unclear. Reason may come to know clearly the distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity, but the heart recognizes the triune presence. The experience always remains richer than knowledge. Like a lit candle placed in the center of a dark room, the area close to the flame is clear and details are seen. But as one looks to the more remote areas of the room, the light cannot penetrate the darkness, details become obscure, and only large objects are discernible. The obscured objects remain no less real than the illuminated ones.

The challenge confronting theology is the person who seeks to understand faith in the world today and who wants faith to issue into a deeper love of God. Therefore the question is not whether God manifests Himself to me in experience but how I communicate with Him. This article will examine the manner in which the person in the feeling-dimension of religious experience communicates with God. I am primarily concerned, then, with the knowledge of the heart. Bernard E. Meland calls it "appreciative knowledge."

Appreciative knowledge is best described by the analogy to art. In this aesthetic mode the feelings rather than logic lead the individual in the encounter. Thus the person cannot be a viewer but becomes a participant on the feeling-dimension. The analogy does not focus upon the relationship of creating but of appreciating art. The act of appreciating implies an interaction between the person and an "other" which forms a context of relationships. Appreciative knowledge, then, depends upon recognition, a discernment of sorts, that perceives what the feelings convey in relationship with another, whether the other is an El Greco painting, music by Beethoven, or sculpture by Rodin. Hence the art object interacts

EDITOR'S NOTE.—This is the fifth and final article in a series on philosophical theology by the John Courtney Murray Group. The central theme of the series has been the development of an inculturated theology for the U.S. through the retrieval, in a theological context, of classical North American theology. For the earlier articles, see *TS* issues of December 1982, March 1983, September 1983, and December 1983.

with the feelings and communicates through them on the appreciative dimension.

Appreciative knowledge extends beyond the art analogy—which is often limited to fine arts—to include the feeling-dimension as a way of living towards all creation. Thus the appreciative dimension indicates a mode of being in the world. Much of our daily living is saturated by appreciative knowledge: how we feel about the day when we wake up, how we feel about issues whether political, ethical, or personal, and how we feel about ourselves. One recognizes a familiar face, a friendly voice, a loving embrace. Like two people falling in love, appreciative knowledge grows with each passing day, and words like tips of icebergs only hint at the depths involved. This unspoken, nonverbal, yet expressed reality communicates appreciative knowledge on the feeling-dimension with the result that one knows life in another way. By the same process one also knows God.

While systematic theologians generally acknowledge the place of the feeling-dimension in religious experience, few develop how God employs this dimension to communicate Himself to us. Though David Tracy accepts common human experience and language as indispensable for his theological method, his preferences are the ontological truth-claims of experience.¹ Bernard Lonergan's comprehensive method in theology examines the multileveled conversion of the Christian. Lonergan wrote his book with a threefold conversion (intellectual, moral, religious) and only recently added a fourth, which now needs development: affective conversion.² Karl Rahner's incarnational theology invites an examination of the feeling-dimension as a means of God's communication to the individual, but he lacks a theory of affectivity for individual religious experience and also seems unable to situate the individual adequately within a larger social context.³ Developing out of Rahner's theology, yet reacting to limitations, Johannes Metz and the liberation theologians included the cultural context as a primary source for theology and employed socioeconomic and political analyses.⁴ While liberation theo-

¹ D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury, 1975) 52–56.

² B. J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972) 283–84.

³ One example from the extensive Rahner corpus is *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury, 1978) 138–76. He prefers the category "history" to culture, and his main concern is revelation and knowledge, God's freedom and human freedom forming a unity so that salvation history and human history are coextensive. His popular and devotional works contain the feeling-dimension but without any integration with his theological work. W. Dych's presentation of Rahner's themes is helpful: "Theology in a New Key," in *A World of Grace*, ed. L. O'Donovan (New York: Seabury, 1980) 1–17.

⁴ J.-B. Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (New York: Seabury, 1980), elaborates a "new political theology" (ix) for fundamental theology. His use of history as a context for self-analysis capitalizes on memory as the medium by which reason becomes practical as

logians include the feeling-dimension, pain and suffering so override every other feeling that they preclude any other option, with the result that these theologians have so far been unable to provide a well-rounded analysis of religious experience. Edward Schillebeeckx' theology of "mediated immediacy" provides a more positive context than liberation theology for listening to God (e.g., the discovery of penicillin as a moment of God's grace) and also takes the feeling-dimension as integral to theology with suffering as the starting point.⁵ His main concern is the inculturation of Scripture both in the first century and today, not religious experience as a way of knowing God. Complementing the work and direction of these theologians, yet providing an analysis of the feeling-dimension lacking in each of these, Meland provides a systematic theology from the perspective of appreciative knowledge.

Meland is a cultural theologian who contributes an examination of the feeling-dimension of the believer. His theological vision develops from his Anglo-American tradition, especially the philosophical insights of William James and Alfred North Whitehead. In *The Analogical Imagination* David Tracy boldly states: "It might be noted that, in the Anglo-American empirical (not empiricist) tradition, Meland's work represents the major example of the art-religion analogy."⁶ Meland's sensitivity to the dynamics of a technological age coming about in the United States offered him the possibility of an insightful theology far ahead of its time that is today a renewable source of insights for religious experience.

Who is Bernard Meland? What is his appreciative knowledge? What does it offer to the current state of theology? My article will answer these three questions. I will begin with Meland's intellectual journey as one paradigm that perhaps many people share; explore his key theological insight of appreciative consciousness and its turning into a skilled responsive awareness; show how appreciative awareness fits within a theology and is interrelated with faith; examine the wider context of culture as the context for faith; and apply his insights to the pastoral problem of prayer.

MELAND'S INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY

It seems fitting that from Meland's apartment window in Chicago he looks over the Museum of Science and Industry. Meland lived the advent

freedom. For a less formal and more evocative presentation, see Metz, *The Emergent Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1981). As for liberation theologians, many commonly express what E. Dussel articulates: "If we want to train people, we send them to Europe. . . . When they come back, they are completely lost in Latin America. . . . They are Frenchified, Germanized, or otherwise alienated" (*History and the Theology of Liberation* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976] 18).

⁵ E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ* (New York: Seabury, 1980) 724-31.

⁶ D. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 219, n. 8.

of new science and industry while developing a profound sensitivity to the feeling-dimension of the experience of the modern world. It was the dialectic of science and art, rational and irrational, thinking and feeling, from which his contribution emerged.

Meland's intellectual journey begins from the early-twentieth-century upheaval and the creative group that formed the "Chicago School."⁷ The first 25 years of this century at Chicago were dominated by Dewey's influence, where function took precedence over metaphysical reality. Empirical disciplines, encouraged by science, held the upper hand. Theologically, doctrine was considered as derived from a specific need. Not until the 1920's did this instrumentation achieve a depth and awareness consolidated by Gerald Birney Smith and Henry Nelson Wieman. Both were aided by the process cosmology of Alfred North Whitehead and William James's radical empiricism.

G. B. Smith was Meland's mentor and was a catalyst at a timely stage of Meland's intellectual development. It was Smith who suggested that religious response was nearer to the arts than science. Smith's untimely death in 1929, only one week after approving Meland's Ph.D. thesis, left Meland with a direction but not the road to travel.

Henry Nelson Wieman was brought to the Chicago campus in 1926 to explain the new insights of Alfred North Whitehead. That lecture ignited a small fire that burned for decades.⁸ Wieman was subsequently hired by the university and helped forge its direction. When Meland returned to the University of Chicago in 1946 to teach, he became a close colleague of Wieman.

Wieman, who deserves more attention than he has received for his distinctive approach to process/relational theology, pursued an empirical path along the model of scientific objectivity. His personal penchant for clarity led him to ask whether or not he should move entirely to a scientific model of truth. While in conversation with Meland, Wieman decided on the scientific model. At that moment Meland realized that another option was called for along the lines of an artistic model.

Trained as he had been in the empirical methodology of the early Chicago School, yet nurtured by his own aesthetic developments throughout the 1930's and 1940's,⁹ Meland realized that conceptual clarity was

⁷ Meland is considered one of the finest historians of the Chicago School; see his "Introduction: The Empirical Tradition in Theology at Chicago," in *The Future of Empirical Theology*, ed. B. Meland (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969) 1-62. For a fine presentation of his early development, see L. Axel, "The Root and Form of Meland's Elementalism," *Journal of Religion* 60 (1980) 472-90.

⁸ For an account of the impact of this lecture for the Univ. of Chicago faculty, see Meland, *The Realities of Faith* (New York: Oxford University, 1962) 109-11.

⁹ One important development was Meland's study in Europe in the 1930's under Rudolph

not necessarily clearer truth. Truth often defied rational clarity and belonged to the "wisdom of the body." His road became clear. Experience remained the richer concept which needed examination on the feeling-dimension. Meland's intellectual and aesthetic development coalesced at this time to form his concept of the appreciative consciousness, which unified his vision and gave birth to his major theological achievement, the trilogy: *Faith and Culture* (1953), *The Realities of Faith: The Revolution in Cultural Forms* (1962), *Fallible Forms and Symbols: Discourses on Method for a Theology of Culture* (1976). In this trilogy he expressed his systematic theology and etched the lines of this theological vision bolstered by the appreciative consciousness.

Meland has an image that summarizes his theological vision and expresses rather well the dimension that he probes. Reflecting upon his own theological vision, he remembered the poet-churchman John Donne's statement "No man is an island." Meland mused: "Might he not better have said 'Every man is an island' but islands are not what they appeared to be: isolated bodies of land, for if one presses beneath the surface of the water one will come upon a land base that unites these individual bodies of land."¹⁰ Meland is a theologian who quests for the sense of the wholeness in life. While some see only parts, he penetrates to the interconnected whole. Persons, events, experiences, and meaning are not isolated islands standing alone in the ocean. Press beneath the surface of one's superficial perceptions and one finds a connectedness which discloses a united, intertwined, and web-like structure of reality. Meland challenges the person not only to think but also to feel the texture of this reality. Thus thinking and feeling go together. *How they go together is the work of the appreciative awareness.*

Finally, Meland has made some clear choices that should be expected to appear in the treatment of a topic: he is optimistic rather than pessimistic, positive rather than negative, intuitive rather than logical, poetic rather than scientific. His work does leave open possible developments in other directions.

THE APPRECIATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

While Meland was publishing the first volume of his trilogy in 1953, he simultaneously published a book on higher education with a significant chapter entitled "The Appreciative Consciousness."¹¹ Although he pre-

Otto. He was also exposed to the Christian art and architecture of Europe, which nourished his aesthetic sensitivity.

¹⁰ Meland, *Realities of Faith* 231.

¹¹ Meland, *Higher Education and the Human Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1953).

sents cryptic explanations of the appreciative consciousness throughout his theological writings, he never repeats the in-depth explanation contained in this seminal article.¹² The result is that appreciative consciousness can be overlooked.¹³

Meland defines the appreciative consciousness in both a comparative and a descriptive way. The comparative definition is in polite opposition to both the rational and the moral consciousness. Beginning with Greek thought, the Western mind emphasized the role of reason-as-analysis. Reason's purpose is conceptual clarification. This process distills experience into concepts. Its concepts are not the realities known. There is no one-to-one correspondence between a clarified concept and the reality conveyed. The moral consciousness, on the other hand, is an organizing principle which gathers together, sifts, and structures the individual's knowledge through moral obligation, which in turn commands action. Action can be correlated with thought as a legitimate theological category of experience. Kant is one who explained this mode and gave it modern support.

Beginning with William James and Henri Bergson and culminating in Whitehead, a third mode of consciousness received solid philosophical underpinning: the appreciative consciousness. Meland describes this mode as "a regulative principle in thought which as an orientation of the mind makes for a maximum degree of receptivity to the datum under consideration on the principle that what is given may be more than one thinks."¹⁴ Thus there is another mode of consciousness along with the rational and the moral consciousness which operates on a feeling, perceptive, and appreciative level in experience. With this mode, categories at hand fail to exhaust the meaning of the datum, and what is being attended to in experience cannot be reduced to some structure already known and defined. This mode of consciousness entails an "intellectual humility" to what one knows and clarifies, a "wonder" toward reality, "reverence," or simply "open awareness." Whatever one prefers to call it, such an attitude is essential to the orientation of the mind.

¹² For a brief overview of Meland's works, see C. Williamson, "Bernard E. Meland: What Kind of Theologian?" *Journal of Religion* 60 (1980) 369-90. Williamson mentions an interesting story: at a fall 1978 meeting of the American Theological Society (Midwest division), the participants were each convinced that none of the others rightly interpreted Meland. My own research indicates that the appreciative consciousness is the skeleton key to Meland scholarship which unlocks the various interpretations.

¹³ I believe the lack of attention to this development is an important oversight in Meland scholarship. Reintroducing the explanation of the appreciative consciousness as foundational to this theology would clarify many elements. I have tried to do this in my *Faith and Appreciative Awareness* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981).

¹⁴ *Higher Education* 63; also Mueller, *Faith* 13-23, for a more complete explanation.

Meland wrote this article in 1953. Since then, particularly in the 1970's, the mode of appreciative consciousness, though not referred to as such, has become increasingly recognized as integral to human experience. Feeling, valuations, aesthetics, and the "irrational" dimensions of the psyche receive greater acceptance today in the way we live and how we think of ourselves.

The widespread use of appreciative consciousness can be illustrated through recent discoveries in medicine. From work on epileptic conditions, the "split-brain" analysis emerged. Basically, the human brain is divided into two halves which are connected at the center of the cerebral cavity by a tissue. When the two halves are separated surgically (to aid an epileptic for example), the response is remarkable. Generally speaking, the left side of our brain perceives the world in a logical and rational way. The left creates concepts of causality. The right side is "irrational" and perceives whole patterns. When each hemisphere is tested, it is the left brain which remembers how to speak and use words which the right brain cannot. However, the right brain remembers the lyrics of songs. The left side tends to ask questions of our sensory input; the right tends to accept it.¹⁵ In Meland the rational consciousness approximates the left side, the appreciative consciousness the right side. Meland spotted, and I think correctly, that the cultural stress on reason had forsaken another important element in human knowing and then attempted to correct it. Meland's fundamental insight maintains that the "irrational" dimension is a form of knowing. He joins William James in affirming that to make use of this form of knowing one need not empty oneself into subjectivism, emotivism, or pietism, as if one were an island untouched by challenge, science, or common agreement.

At this point Meland's vocabulary seems more reminiscent of James's than Whitehead's.¹⁶ James's colorful and evocative vocabulary speaks of "perception," "stream of consciousness," "the doctrine of the fringe of consciousness," the "more" of reality, and "feeling of tendency." James's "fringe of consciousness" is particularly expressive of the appreciative mode, for it calls attention to areas that are not clearly focused, separated

¹⁵ For a fascinating popular presentation of rational consciousness in physics and its gradual move toward a more appreciative consciousness, see G. Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics* (New York: Morrow, 1979). For a technical explanation, see B. Kolb and I. Whishaw, *Fundamentals of Human Neuropsychology* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1980).

¹⁶ Meland has been seen by some as more "Jamesian" than "Whiteheadian"; cf. D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* 202. This interpretation, perhaps based on language similarities, is not substantively correct, for Meland insists on the American tradition of philosophers from James through Whitehead as part of the same process tradition. Cf. Meland's review of C. Eisendrath's *The Unifying Moment in Process Studies* no. 3 (1973) 285-90.

out, or distilled, yet form parts of the thicker, richer wholeness. Rational consciousness provides the reflective focus of the mind toward reality, rendering its aspects reflectively discriminated. James understood the mind in the large sense as the center of the entire person, including sensations and feelings. Reality conveyed a feeling tone, or a "more" than what can be comprehended, a dimension "thicker" than what can be distilled. Meland designates this dimension as "depth."

We build our lives upon appreciative knowledge. When I say that I played a hunch, felt right about someone, felt something was wrong, or had an intuition, I have opened myself to the "more" of reality and correctly perceived a flow of events. An expression like "When you're hot, you're hot" describes an athlete, a musician, a speaker, or a comedian moving correctly with the flow of events in such a way that the person is interwoven with an event larger than himself or herself. Athletes are aware of this creative state and struggle to achieve it. The author and athlete Arthur Ashe calls it "the zone" which athletes strive for. Bjorn Borg describes it as a feeling, completely conscious, of being able to do anything with a tennis racket, and so he attempts shots that no one has done and he knows he will succeed. Tony Dorsett, the Dallas Cowboy running back, says he can feel tacklers coming at him from the blind side and he cuts in another direction. The result is that two would-be tacklers smash into each other. People who depend upon appreciative knowledge feel the flow of events from the inside. Creativity often results and they do things seemingly beyond themselves. The effect is a relational unity and the player becomes the play, the dancer becomes the dance, the musician becomes the music.

Meland offers examples of appreciative consciousness. One is the appreciation of the values in another culture, e.g., the peasants in Mexico when seen by a United States tourist. Culturally, the peasants do not seem to measure up to the technological standards of a U.S. culture. The "ugly American" syndrome sets in and the tourist becomes cynical about the peasants' backwardness, lack of sophistication in tools and life style, and lack of industriousness. Their reality of the situation is that different values are at work that cannot be univocally judged by one culture's mind-set. Islands may not be what they appear. Simplicity, down-to-earthness, a slower pace of life are foreign to the American tourist but no less valid. Unless a tourist "feels into" the new situation with other values and appreciates reality experienced in different ways, the "enlightened" rational reply may be a debunking cynicism.

In another example, a small town's life could be told by a sociologist or a historian. Each would present important truths about the town. But the best chronicler might be the novelist who can give a feeling for the

people's triumphs, struggles, and setbacks to allow an appreciation of their values and to convey their world from the inside. In both examples the appreciative consciousness penetrates an important and needed truth of reality.

APPRECIATIVE AWARENESS

When a person visits an art gallery and stands in front of a painting, he or she engages in a relationship with the painting whereby the painting communicates on the feeling level. No words are spoken but a communication occurs. The person may feel delighted, disgusted, attracted, or repelled. It is not enough to experience the feelings. One also determines whether this painting of itself has a message. If it does, do I correctly interpret the meaning? People who have honed their skills through the history of art, knowledge of color, line, texture, composition, etc., develop their critical ability to correctly interpret the painting. We say that these people have an appreciation for painting. If I do not have an appreciation for painting, or at least only a small appreciation, I might talk with my expert friend about how to understand line, color, etc. The language we use discloses what the painting means in the hope that I can then look at this painting with new appreciation. My analysis hones my skill to correctly interpret the painting. The art historian Jane Dillenberger puts this extremely well:

In making an analysis of painting or sculpture, we are compelled to verbalize that for which there is no verbal counterpart. Language must be probing and pointing rather than definitive. Most important of all, the language must focus on the work of art itself, rather than on ideas about the work of art. It must compel the reader to become a viewer.¹⁷

The appreciative awareness is a term I use to indicate the turning of the appreciative consciousness or knowledge into a skill. Meland does not distinguish the two so radically, but I think that for clarity's sake it is important to retain the difference.

Meland knows the danger of subjectivism as well as of objectivism. The appreciative dimension is more prone to subjectivism. Therefore, in a significant epistemological move, he suggests the skill of appreciative awareness as a corrective measure situated in the gap between subjectivism and objectivism. This three-step methodological move allows the "reader to become a viewer."

1) If the starting point of the appreciative consciousness is the mystery

¹⁷ Jane Dillenberger, *Secular Art with Sacred Themes* (New York: Abingdon, 1969) 12. For Meland's own acceptance and assessment of Dillenberger's quotation as correctly summarizing his own approach, cf. Mueller, *Faith* x-xi.

of what is given in existence, e.g., a sunset or another person, then the first act by the individual is of opened awareness. The rich fullness of the event is allowed to disclose or declare itself without preconceived premises. Nor does one encounter the event with instrumental or functional purposes. Receptiveness to the other becomes the initial conscious awareness. The attitude characteristic of this first step is wonder.

Moving out of the art analogy to a more comprehensive example, when I am introduced to someone at a social gathering, I do not see this person as "just another hand to be shaken." If I do, I have preconceived premises and I am not allowing the other person to disclose himself or herself. Receptiveness characterized by wonder is the initial presupposition to allow the other to communicate with me.

Without this first step, there would be no Einsteinian theory of relativity, no Rubik cube, no prayer of praise, no ritual response. Novel and creative advance would vanish. Even our perception of God would be confined to the defined areas of life, and then our perception would not be God but an idol less than God.

2) The second step is identification. Once the person opens toward the other, a reciprocal relationship occurs. The person and the event are caught up together and two channels form. One channel funnels the data into conscious experience which takes the form of symbolic representations. "Symbolization" is the procedure of creating meaning and of interrelating meanings through communicable symbols.¹⁸ For example, once a person has been introduced to another, the process of interrelating to the other through normal social amenities like "Where are you from?", "What do you do?", etc., is a conscious attempt to symbolize the willingness to know another. Each question is cued by the preceding answer, which leads to a process of getting to know another.

The other channel shares the feeling-context, not simply the cognitive interaction. This feeling-context signifies more than what James and Bergson talked about as inner knowledge by acquaintance, for it extends beyond the subjective act of feeling and penetrates the event in such a way that the individual and reality, the subjective and objective, the "I" and the "it" find their common ground.¹⁹ It thereby avoids the subjectivistic tendencies by giving attention to the context itself as informing the individual. In talking with another person, I begin to feel the direction the conversation is going, whether I like this person initially, and whether he or she likes me. By the tone in the voice, the gesture of the hand, the movement of the eyes, more is communicated to me that I can distill out. My feeling is that a moment of trust on both sides has been established

¹⁸ Meland, *Faith and Culture* (New York: Oxford University, 1953) 140.

¹⁹ Meland, *Higher Education* 65.

and confirmed which allows for a developing openness toward the other.

The context itself discloses a connectedness which is referred to in other areas as gestalt, web, and historical situation. Without attention to the felt texture of the context, the person simply feels his or her own feelings and projects them onto others. The characteristic attitude of this second step is empathy, which is the ability to share another's feelings.

3) The third step of appreciative awareness is discrimination. Though analytical, it does not extricate the datum from its context, for to do so would be to overreach rational boundaries for the sake of false certainty and clarity. The assumption which directs the appreciative awareness is that an event is never properly known apart from its context. Appreciative awareness offers the kind of knowledge obtained by studying an elephant in its natural habitat in Africa rather than in a zoo. When two people meet, for instance, they are conditioned by their historical environment: at a festival, not a funeral; in 1983, not 1783, etc.

Discrimination analyzes the datum and differentiates its particular features, allowing the rational consciousness to operate in its own realm. Dissection is important to bring out the various components in a given area of knowledge (e.g., line, color, shape, in painting), but the components must be reassembled so that the integrity of the whole is not lost. Hence one must return to appreciate the painting again. Here Meland encourages critical reasoning and thereby avoids the tendency to subjectivism.²⁰ Perceptiveness, as James emphasized, becomes important because it attunes the person on all levels like an antenna to the dimension of depth. The rational mode helps direct the appreciative skill. Critical abilities of judgment and decision are not canceled out; rather they are brought into correct and critical relation with the individual and the event in one context. At a gathering of people, I might walk away for a few moments and realize that I have met 75 people and I didn't like the last person because I am tired—"my feelings cannot feel." It is not the other person but my own limits which get in the way. Discrimination of my feelings tells me that I am not this way normally.

This third step separates Meland from subjectivists because reason has a place and a critical activity. He therefore stands fast in the liberal theological tradition in North America where critical thinking is not opposed to faith. Using the insights from sociology, psychology, physics, etc., and the contribution they make to theology, he finds an integral

²⁰ Meland has remained with an empirical investigation of the appreciative consciousness. Those who develop the rational consciousness such as Lonergan, and the truth claims of ontology such as Tracy, became important dialogue partners to complete Meland's use of rational consciousness. Also, the moral consciousness does not receive much treatment from Meland. Liberation theologians, with their emphasis upon praxis as the starting point of theology, would enhance the moral dimension and extend Meland's work.

place for the appreciative consciousness correlated with the rational consciousness.

The method just described should not be exclusively identified with the aesthetic and poetic temperament. The use of the feeling-dimension through the skill of the appreciative awareness is open to nonpoetic temperaments: what aesthetics is to appreciative consciousness, logic is to rational consciousness. Neither logic nor aesthetics totally defines the awareness, but each does suggest and intimate the characteristics of its appropriate consciousness.

A further characteristic which separates Meland from epistemologists and aesthetes is the spiritual force of faith, which opens the person to God's manifestation of Himself. Meland uses appreciative awareness to probe and penetrate the meaning of reality from a faith context. From religious experience grounded in appreciative consciousness, skilled by appreciative awareness, and focused by faith, Meland generates his systematic theology.

APPRECIATIVE AWARENESS AND FAITH

The nourishing relationship between faith and the appreciative awareness becomes clearer when faith is examined. Without reference to the religious dimension, faith implies a basic trust. For example, two people who love one another marry each other in committed trust. With the inclusion of the religious dimension, faith becomes a trust in God. Although God manifests Himself through mediated reality, He underlies it and extends Himself beyond the total grasp of reasoning mind (e.g., Why do I love my spouse?). The mind, heart, feelings, and spirit possess a knowledge of their own, and together they manifest the immensity of God, but even they cannot envelop Him—God envelops us. Through faith in God, marriage then becomes matrimony. God comes to us as “a goodness not our own” that we experience on the feeling-dimension.²¹ However, God is no less present even when the mind cannot pierce the cloud of unknowing or consciously advert to His presence.

Meland's basic analogue for faith is energy. Rather than focusing upon the moment of first conversion, his theology explores the continued involvement that faith entails. Faith expresses a relationship of encounter that bestows a redemptive energy whereby the person centers his or her life in God. Thus faith bestows a power of its own which might better be described as an empowerment. Meland expresses this empowering

²¹ Meland prefers the designation of the experience of God as “a goodness not our own” throughout his work. For reasons that I present later in this article, this designation is too modest for the richness of religious experience. In addition, I believe a developmental model of religious conversion such as Lonergan's in *Method* or Tracy's in *Blessed Rage for Order* would enhance Meland's theology.

faith as "social, psychical, and redemptive energy within individual human beings, within corporate action among groups, within the culture, expressing this grace and judgment of relationships in terms of the resources that heal and redeem our ways."²² For example, a married man lives with and in the love relationship of his wife and becomes empowered by the relationship as a source of energy for his living. Love becomes the living context which comes as both freely given (graciousness) and a commitment (judgment) to live by.

Meland prefers to de-emphasize faith as belief in a set of facts or doctrines in order to emphasize its vital, living, dynamic, and empowering quality. Faith energizes the way I treat people, where I go, and what I do. At the same time, Meland emphasizes God's freely giving of Himself in the structures of human living (e.g., a human encounter, a sunset, a walk, religious ritual) which are historically and culturally conditioned. Meland calls this context the "structure of experience." Like the air we breathe, God comes in many ways through the structured events of the past which push forward toward the future but are always experienced as present.²³

While appreciative awareness and faith work together, care must be taken not to collapse one into the other and thereby secularize faith to a human skill or supernaturalize awareness to a type of gnosticism. Of the several possible avenues of approach, let me develop one which best fits the line of approach of this article.²⁴

The difference between appreciative awareness and faith is the final orientation of each, or the difference between knowledge and love. Appreciative awareness moves toward knowledge as exemplified in the third step (discrimination). Thus the potential exists for self-improvement in the appreciative mode. For example, I might see my art-historian friend for a history of the painting. Or I might call upon the novelist to convey a "feeling into" the social situation of the small town that the analyst could not do.

Faith, however, orients the person to love. God initiates an encounter with the individual which is experienced as grace and judgment. If the person believes, then the whole person becomes committed in the act of faith. Although reason plays an important part, the conversion is not merely intellectual. While God is the goal of faith, He is not grasped immediately and visibly in the same way that another individual is who walks into my room and closes the door. God is mediated to me through

²² Meland, *Fallible Forms and Symbols* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 27.

²³ For a fuller treatment, see Mueller, *Faith* 35-54.

²⁴ In Mueller, *ibid.* 111-24, three ways of distinguishing faith and appreciative awareness are developed: by their intentionality, by method, and by the dimension of spirit they convey.

my self, others, events. Affectively, God is experienced "as a goodness not our own" which remains other than myself. The rich self-communication of God as goodness manifests Him at the same time as graciousness and judgment (freely offered for acceptance or rejection) and is experientially realized also as a forgiveness in the sense that sins are no longer the point of life but God is. It is not enough to know one is a sinner; one must also live toward God. Faith opens us to God. The encounter with God that is expressed empirically by goodness requires a response in kind, i.e., our goodness. Goodness is not an intellectual understanding but a totally involving relationship. Two centers of freedom meet and become involved when the individual accepts the initiating goodness offered by God. Although Meland prefers the general expression of goodness, I prefer the more specific expression of love from which goodness flows. Hence God is experienced more specifically as "a love not our own" where God's self-communication is not only good but essentially an act also of love. The response on my part calls for the return in kind which is love. Thus faith is the return of my love to God who has first loved me. This relationship empowers me to live my life toward ever-greater involvement with God in love.

The movement toward love is not simply described as two people entering into an I-thou relationship like two friends or lovers. The movement by God toward the person is a relation that is total, faithful to the end, and requires a similar response by the individual. The special characteristic of this relationship is expressed by the word "covenant." The social aspect of the covenant relation includes others who become my neighbors as brother and sister, hence a "we" relationship as well. Most fundamentally, I am and remain an individual-in-community. The knowledge which results from love is real knowledge of the appreciative kind, born and bred in love, which testifies to a depth so that "islands are not what they appear to be."

Thus faith ultimately brings the appreciative consciousness to the service of love. The faith relationship with God uses the appreciative skills to find Him present manifesting Himself in daily events. Ordinary love becomes extraordinary, and symbols become sacraments. At the same time, love requires the service of the appreciative consciousness to bring nurture and sensitivity to the love relationship on the feeling-dimension as exhibited in prayer, worship, ritual, and symbol. The appreciative consciousness, constantly honed by reflection, generates in everyday life a greater harmonious love with God. Thus appreciative awareness and faith do not lose their proper identities. By working together, they open the feeling-dimension of religious experience to God's communing love.

APPRECIATIVE AWARENESS AND CULTURE

One of the components which make up an event within which the faith experience of God is mediated is culture. The person relates to the context of culture also through the appreciative consciousness guided by faith. For Meland, culture is a key concept: "Culture connotes the total complex of human growth that has occurred within any clearly defined orbit of human association, expressing its prevailing sentiment, style, and way of life."²⁵ In a slightly different definition oriented toward the human person, he says: "Culture, in short, is the corporate, qualitative manifestation of the human psyche expressed through a community at any given level of civilization."²⁶ Civilization is the current stage of a culture (e.g., technological civilization instead of agrarian) and culture carries the values of many civilizations. The carriers of culture are humanly made and therefore fallible forms and symbols (e.g., institutions, political structures, art, furniture, tools, clothing, etc.). The believer always lives in a given cultural context and relates to God through the medium of religious experience, which finds expression both in thought (*logos*) and symbol (*mythos*). Cathedrals, religious art, customs, rituals, and devotions are a few of the fallible forms and symbols which act as mediums for the encounter with God. Profound religious conversions and continual nourishment take place through these inculturated forms. The appreciative consciousness allows one to encounter God speaking through various times and places.

Meland has deliberately attacked the misleadingly clear boundary lines between the world as profane and the Church as sacred, between where God cannot and can be. Such humanly drawn lines restrict God's presence in life, as if God is only present inside the Church. In the context of God's creation as good, Meland's holistic approach searches for God's presence wherever God wishes to manifest Himself. The emphasis is upon the human person's openness to listen to God under God's conditions whatever they be. If faith is not constantly attuned to the changes occurring anew, it loses much of its vitality both in awareness of cultural relationships and responses to them (e.g., changes in role identities of men and women, political decisions of national and internal policies, the use of authority and power, use of material goods and comforts, etc.). Culture can misleadingly be looked upon as an enemy from the perspective of secularism that states God cannot dwell there. Meland is not willing to accept such a dire conclusion because it both reduces God to human proportion and ultimately leaves the human person and community forsaken. God does not forsake us but continues to draw us with our culture to Himself through the creative passage.

²⁵ *Fallible Forms* 155.

²⁶ *Realities of Faith* 308.

APPRECIATIVE AWARENESS AND CREATIVE PASSAGE

Each event, called the structure of experience, is open to creative and loving possibilities which involve myself and God. Depth describes this feeling-dimension which underpins our lives and opens us to the beckoning lure of God experienced as goodness, beauty, and love. Since God is involved in the structure of experience in a creative way, Meland prefers to identify God's interacting presence through the term "creative passage." He describes it as "the basic characterization of existences as it applies to all life, to all people, to all cultures."²⁷ The creative passage is his most comprehensive designation of all reality.

As Meland understands it, the dimension of depth in the creative passage goes beyond surface perceptions. He categorizes three general ways which he refers to as "witnesses of faith" by which we gather up depth in Western history: cultus, culture, and the individual.²⁸ While Meland will only speak within his own Western history, his categories certainly transcend it. The cultus refers to the tradition of those who believe and the symbols carried from the past in both its thought and feeling (e.g., the Christian religion, the Jewish religion). Culture refers to the events of belief which have continued into the present, especially as these are located in religious art, cathedrals, furnishings, government, and social behavior. The individual refers to the personal testimonies from the past and present (e.g., saints, friends, family) and, above all, includes my own personal story. When these three witness to the Christian revelation, they give rise to "a complex of symbols and signs, expressed or anticipated, which contribute to a sense of orientation and familiarity in one's mode of existence."²⁹ By means of the appreciative awareness, each cluster of relationships witnesses to God's love through faith.

In the actual experience of God, since God is mediated through the creative passage by His own initiation but dependent upon human receptivity, the appreciative awareness functions much as a lens in aiding faith to perceive what is there. Faith becomes focused through the appreciative awareness.

Here again it is important to determine the difference between faith and appreciative awareness, because experience needs to be tested to discover whether it is truly from God. This is the problem of discernment, which extends beyond this article. In general, it can be said that whatever knowledge we have about God and the way He communicates is extremely important. While God can be neither totally isolated by one human

²⁷ *Fallible Forms* xiii. A helpful glossary of Meland's terms is in Mueller, *Faith* 135-38.

²⁸ For a fuller treatment in Meland, see Mueller, *Faith* 55-83.

²⁹ *Fallible Forms* 173.

tradition nor contained within it, the Christian tradition offers an unparalleled revelation in Jesus the Christ. This tradition is a legacy which includes everything touched by the Christian experience: cultus, culture, and individual. The constant and privileged norm of identification within the Christian experience is Jesus the Christ, who is the visible presence of the invisible God. For Meland, since Jesus is the aperture for the representation of Christian tradition, he is the key for the identification of God in the creative passage for each generation. Thus revelation of God in Jesus complements the empirical search for God in religious experience.

Faith in God cannot stand still; it must develop. As knowledge grows from mutual love, faith depends to some extent upon the growth which the appreciative awareness provides. For example, as an individual-in-community, I experience a need to express my personal and corporate faith on the feeling-dimension in ritual, symbol, and prayer. Without the appreciative consciousness, faith loses much of its vitality both in awareness and in response; a truncated rational response or moral action masquerades as religious experience and declares: "Islands are what they appear to be."

APPRECIATIVE PRAYER

Meland's theological framework is now in place. Once the foundation of appreciative consciousness is laid and the blueprint of appreciative awareness drawn, the main pillars of faith, culture, and creative passage are set. To finish the construction, one must move from talk about theology to doing theology; one must move from spectator to participant. While I find his seminal insights capable of enriching many pastoral concerns, let me take the current problematic of prayer as one example where I think his theology can be helpful.

While not everyone formally theologizes, nearly everyone does pray at some time (e.g., a moment of praise, thanksgiving, tragedy, sorrow). Prayer is an integral part of religious experience in Christian and non-Christian traditions. Whether done in private or in common, it is a deeply human experience. For the Christian, it is a necessary dimension of faith. Both saints and sinners, the converted and unconverted, the found and the lost pray. The perennial problem is praying itself, which might be expressed in the question "How do I pray?" The "how" question is action-oriented and springs appropriately from the moral consciousness. However, one must also know what one is doing, and consequently the "what" question springs somewhat more from the rational consciousness. Both questions interpenetrate each other, because prayer both springs from experience and returns to it to form further experience itself. Nevertheless, the question of what one is doing when one prays is most properly

the work of the appreciative consciousness.

Many definitions of prayer are possible. A commonly-accepted one in the Catholic tradition is "lifting one's mind and heart to God." Prayer is always relational and implies that the person engages God. The felt forms of this engagement are many: praise, petition, thanksgiving, contrition, awe.

New forms of prayer are being discovered today. Strongly influenced by the Eastern religions, Christian prayer can incorporate Zen, yoga, or meditative tones. As snow becomes rain, these Eastern forms transmute themselves into Christian forms under faith. The question is, why are these forms so popular? Eastern forms tend characteristically toward the nonrational. They keep the mind's rational function silent. For example, a koan in Zen meditation (e.g., what is the sound of one hand clapping?) is a puzzle designed to frustrate the mind's penchant to work. The fact that the Eastern forms are so actively sought indicates that the Eastern forms provide something lacking in the Western forms. It might suggest that the Western forms are rationalistic. Without straining the differences, we may suggest that Western forms appear active, rational, and doer-oriented; the Eastern forms seem more passive, nonrational, and being-oriented. This dilemma does not imply the bankruptcy of Western prayer forms. The dilemma is not resolved either by substituting Eastern for Western forms or by a synthesis of the two in a syncretism where the loss of both identities occurs. The work of William Johnston on Zen and Anthony de Mello on *Sadhana* uses Christian tradition in dialogue with Eastern and Hindu forms of prayer similar to what should be done in Western tradition.³⁰ The flight to the East suggests that a thorough understanding of the Western tradition does not exist. A nonrational approach exists in the Western tradition which needs retrieval. However, simply resuscitating old bones of our spiritual tradition will not be helpful. New flesh from a twentieth-century understanding of consciousness and human person must be added. Thus the bones of retrieval become en fleshed as revision. Appreciative prayer is one attempt at this revision.³¹

Rooted in Meland's understanding of the human person and the relationship between thinking and feeling, appreciative prayer expresses the lifting of one's feeling to God. In the Western tradition mental prayer

³⁰ W. Johnston, *The Inner Eye of Love* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978) 13-32; A. de Mello, *Sadhana* (Anand, India: Anand, 1978) 3-5.

³¹ The Western tradition of prayer contains the feeling-dimension which needs representation in the sense of Tracy's revisionist model. The mystics are one group receiving study today, but other areas such as devotions in the wider cultural context should not be ignored. If one takes seriously that the *lex orandi* is the *lex credendi*, shifting prayer forms suggest a change in consciousness and theological concerns.

suggests lifting one's mind to God and the feelings trail along. In appreciative prayer the opposite dynamic is at work: one lifts one's feelings to God and the mind trails along.

The use of reason in mental prayer is called discursive prayer. Like a cursor, which is a flashing box on a computer screen that roams around on command to tell us where we are, discursive prayer roams around thinking about the subject matter. Often discursive prayer is taught as introductory prayer and considered as a less mature form of prayer. Mature forms of prayer are quiet forms which stop the hyperactivity of the mind. The prayer of quiet or simplicity rests in the presence of God without a surplusage of thinking. The final phase of mental prayer is contemplative prayer, where God does the communicating. Whereas some people hold contemplation as special to a few monks, ascetics, or mystics, others, like Thomas Merton, suggest that it is possible for all believers.³² Appreciative prayer agrees with Merton's making contemplation available for all and goes further to provide an option for how prayer is taught and thereby a restatement of the relationship of prayer forms to one another.³³

Whereas discursive prayer begins with the intellect, appreciative prayer begins in the affectivity of the feelings. Instead of activating the mind as in mental prayer in order to eventually deactivate it, like racing a motor before shutting it off, appreciative prayer resembles contemplative prayer's quiet of the mind in order to pay attention to the feelings. For example, one does not read the Scriptures to think about what Jesus did (discursively); one reads the passage and lets the feelings about Jesus and the people emerge. Acts of praise, thanks, contrition, and love follow along. One gives vent to the feelings touched by the Scriptures. Since I bring myself as I am to the prayer, unresolved problems, tiredness, excitement, or concerns enter into my reading. One acknowledges the feelings and listens to any interior movements from the Lord. Perhaps one feels ashamed, confused, frustrated, depressed, or angry. Above all, the person attends to the presence of God, who interacts upon me through the feelings. The feeling-dimension of my prayer is real communication of the interrelationship between my self and God.

Reason is not discarded in appreciative prayer. Appreciative conscious-

³²T. Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (London: Burns and Oates, 1949) 15.

³³I have a more thorough treatment of "mental" prayer as a historical phenomenon and its relationship to a richer Western tradition of prayer forms, including appreciative prayer compared to Ignatius of Loyola's concern for feelings in prayer, in "Appreciative Prayer and the Mental Prayer Tradition," *Contemplative Review* 15, no. 4 (winter 1982) 1-15. Similarities of appreciative prayer and the concern for feelings in John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Meister Eckhart, and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* would also be beneficial for a revisionist theology of prayer.

ness begins in open awareness toward my self, world, God, and then moves progressively through the feelings to the identification of the self and God in relationship. Then it discriminates the mutual feeling tone of the intercommunication, e.g., joy, peace, anger, thanks. Constant testing through the discernment of spirits is necessary to determine whether my feelings are accurately related to God. The rational consciousness correlates the feeling and meaning of that feeling.

Appreciative prayer is not at odds with discursive prayer but represents another approach to prayer. For busy people in the Western tradition, quiet attention to feelings toward husband, wife, children, job, events, the Church, and my self are extremely important and a source of Christian nourishment. Hence the feelings that I bring are not a distraction but something important to my total presence before the Lord. Appreciative prayer allows the feelings which undergird my busyness to ebb and flow before the Lord. As I pray, acts of praise, thanksgiving, adoration, and love are encouraged responses which call me to a conversion of my feelings related to God, others, and self.

Teaching people to pray need not begin with an emphasis upon the mind. Teaching people to begin by quieting down the mind resembles the mode of contemplative prayer and is the approach of appreciative prayer. Appreciative prayer is not infused but is acquired through gradual skilling analogous to aesthetic skill. The feeling-dimension of religious experience is worked on and listened to and used for a better life.

Prayer cannot be viewed in isolation from the rest of life. Prayer seems to be a natural outpouring of the human person, and it would seem a truism that people pray because they are human. The function of prayer within the wider sphere of human experience is crucial to prayer itself and to the human person who prays. At least three tensions exist for human experience that pours into prayer: the rational and appreciative modes, the individual and community, knowledge and love. These tensions should be examined both from the perspective of discursive and appreciative prayer and within Western tradition. While appreciative prayer forms only will be examined, I believe they more adequately incorporate the natural tensions within prayer than other forms.

First, a healthy tension exists between the rational and the appreciative consciousness. For Western culture, elevating the rational mode to exclude the appreciative is the greater danger. Prayer becomes lifeless, without feeling, and without love expressed. Likewise, elevating the appreciative mode to exclude the rational mode can also be a danger. God grants insight through the rational mode too. Correlating the two is the key, so that they complement one another. At one time discursive prayer will be appealing, at another time appreciative prayer. The person determines which is best suited for the occasion.

While a person is praying, the appreciative mode is in ascension and leads the encounter. If the rational mode enters in the form of an analysis, attention to the other (God) is blocked, with the result that I would be restricting God's communication. The person must first pay attention to the mutually engaging relationship which not only listens but prompts one to praise, remain silent, become affectionate, or seek reconciliation. Attention to the encounter, and thereby to the encountered one, which moves the person to expressed acts of love, is the hallmark of appreciative prayer.

Prayer is fundamentally relational. It is related not only to God but to my whole life context, which includes the choices made, the options preferred, the hopes, failures, and values held. Thus, like waves against the beach, appreciative prayer ebbs in from the cultural relationships that comprise my life and flows out again from my faith: I pray in good times with praise and thanksgiving and in bad times with petition and acceptance. On a particular day one mood may be prevalent and I cannot ignore it. For example, I may be angry, lonely, tired, or sick when I pray. I do not pretend that my context and my feeling toward it are not influencing my praying; for without attention to the wholeness of the encounter, which is best grasped by the appreciative mode, prayer becomes disconnected from living, or worse, it becomes an escape from God's call to conversion.

A second tension exists between the individual and the community. Individualized prayer runs the risk of self-centering the person, with the result that prayer does not expand to include others and thereby constricts the self. In our Western culture the emphasis upon freedom and the individual accentuates the drive toward individualism. Hence people find communal prayer distracting and difficult to participate in. For example, to those whose prayer is individualized, Eucharistic liturgies which ask for participation can become a threat and not really be prayer. The question is not one of substituting one pole, the community, for the other, individual, such that private prayer is old-fashioned, but of allowing the two to interpenetrate each other.

The principle of appreciative prayer is individual-in-community: if one prays in private, one should bring his or her relationality to others; if one prays in common, the wholeness of the group accentuates the individual's part. For example, when I pray alone, I allow my feelings toward people and events to ebb-flow into my prayer as I bring myself before the Lord. I encourage the prayerfulness of these feelings by acts of praise and thanksgiving for these relationships and ask that they may become salvific for me and others. In the same way, when I pray in common, I do not assert my individual prayer but unite myself with the community. I allow commonly recited prayers, the Amen, singing, actions,

to express my own affective praise and thanksgiving, hopes and petitions. In this way I become an active part of the whole by feeling into the situation and letting it be my prayer. The form may not be individualized, but my participation seals the action as mine. Appreciative prayer does not make a bad sermon good nor does it pretend it is worse than it is: appreciative prayer permits the limitations of the sermon to touch me where it can and I listen with ear and feelings to what might be gained. Each communal prayer demands greater or lesser participation and response. Through attention to the feeling-dimension, appreciative prayer finds private and communal prayer two inextricable poles of the same activity mutually informing each other.

A third healthy tension in prayer is between knowledge and love. The interrelationship of the two is the key. In our examination of the natural relationship between faith and appreciative awareness, we determined that faith directs the self toward love, and appreciative awareness yields knowledge of the heart. In appreciative prayer the faith dimension directs the appreciative awareness toward love of God; in turn, appreciative awareness extracts a knowledge born of love which allows a richer, deeper love. As reflective analysis, the rational consciousness should enter only after prayer is finished in order to discriminate what I did, how I felt, the way I reacted, and thereby hone my appreciative skill in prayer. Otherwise one is doing discursive prayer.

Faith orchestrates and directs these three tensions toward deeper love. God's grace comes to me as an empowerment which continually centers my life in His. This energy of grace is psychic, social, and redemptive and is experienced as forgiveness and a love beyond my possession. In appreciative prayer one turns completely toward God in open awareness in order to allow the intercommunication of love. Thus the conversation is not forced, but one speaks or listens depending upon which is beckoned forth. One watches and listens to the mutuality of the relationship with the eyes and ears of the heart. The response is signaled by the pressure, the pain, the pining, the wooing, and the desire for deeper love, which becomes expressed affectively throughout the prayer as one is inclined. This appreciative prayer seeking God might best be characterized as suffering love: both in the sense of desiring deeper and more complete loving union and in the sense of falling short of total love in this limited world.

Appreciative prayer is only one example of the pastoral application of Meland's central theological insights. Worship, ritual, symbols, sacraments, and devotions are other areas of immediate application. My own pastoral experience leads me to conclude that in moral decision-making the feeling-dimension is a more basic context than rational analysis. At

the same time, I certainly hold the importance of intellectual conversion and its power upon feelings. Yet the feeling-dimension orients reason and reinforces moral choices. Even when reason dictates the principles to be followed, the feeling-dimension exhibits the extent and depth of the commitment. One cannot profess Christ with the lips; one must live it in one's heart. The work of theology should include articulations of the feeling-dimension in belief as a way of knowing. Meland has made an important and timely contribution from the American perspective for integrating our life today.

Let me offer one final consideration. The feeling-dimension of religious experience suggests that Christian living itself might also be understood as an art. The Christian is sent to others to help them find God's presence. Life reflects our process of growth as it is fitted to temperament, circumstances, choices, obstacles, successes, and aspirations. I am not referring merely to biological life, but life united to God which understands a world moving in creative passage that seeks deeper love of Him. For humanity's sake, we will not allow islands to be mistaken for isolated bodies of land and thereby cheapen our response to God as individuals-in-community. Life is too precious. Christian faith searches to transform life for the benefit of all, so that the love of God, love of neighbor, and love of creation become one interconnected act of love.