

# Table Talk

*News and Views of the  
Student Body of The Lutheran  
Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.*



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## *Community Argues Issues of Aids and Homosexuality*

AIDS and the Common Cup  
by Kerry Aucker

Much confusion exists in the public as well as among parishoners over the various facts that have been published on the transmission of AIDS. Research has shown however that AIDS is transmitted primarily through sexual contact and needle sharing. One has to realize that there are various strains of the AIDS virus as well as different levels. The earliest patients I saw literally bled to death from every orifice of their bodies within hours of their admittance. This is the most severe level of the disease and one which you will not likely encounter in the parish setting.

Most AIDS patients today, however, have what is called ARC or AIDS Related Complex. They may have the symptoms of AIDS but it won't kill them immediately. According to the Center for Disease Control, "the risk of transmission via the common cup or any other shared drinking vessel must be extremely low, if any risk exists at all." The AIDS virus itself is very fragile. Another interesting characteristic important to know is that the AIDS virus affects different people in different ways. Some people are more susceptible to acquiring AIDS than others. People who have acquired AIDS in ways other than sexual contact usually have been hospital workers who have had cuts that were contaminated by blood or through accidental needle punctures.

The Center for Disease Control reports, "Laboratory studies have shown that some bacteria and viruses can contaminate a silver chalice and survive despite alcohol content of the wine and wiping or rotating the cup. Therefore, the potential exists for a parishoner infected with a virus such as that causing the common cold to expose other members of the congregation by contaminating a common cup. However, they are not aware of any specific episodes or outbreaks of any infectious illness that have been associated with the use of a common cup.

In summary, the risks of transmitting AIDS through the use of a common cup in the parish setting appear to be nil. As future pastors, we have to realize that we may be put into a position of defending our liturgical practice and should make a decision that is well-informed. Information on AIDS is continually being updated as new discoveries are being made, even though a cure is not foreseen in the near future.

The Homosexual Church  
By Kurt Peterson

Now that the story of the three gay candidates for ministry at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary has made the rounds, the manure has piled up so fast you need wings to stay above it. The reaction of hand wringing and finger pointing, so well expressed by the continuing soap opera in the "Lutheran," shows how little people within the church know of the church's history and behavior.

To put it boldly and bluntly, the Christian church has a homosexual orientation, and it should hardly come as a surprise to anyone that homosexually oriented men are drawn to it. In the first place, the church should be seen as the lineal descendant of Plato's academy or Aristotle's lyceum. In those institutions men initiated younger men into the spiritual discipline of philosophy. While this initiation included the physical practice of homosexual acts, this practice was only incidental to the whole program. To be a spiritual man it was necessary to turn away from the flesh, or that which is mortal, and as it worked itself out in practice, this meant to turn away from the creature of the flesh, the woman. Moreover, in the philosophical school a new and better "family" emerges. Spiritual fathers beget spiritual sons, thus bypassing the despised female entirely. The whole philosophical enterprise meant a turning away from the body (=woman), the mortality of the human, in order to attain a timeless and heavenly beauty. As our own Robert Jensen notes, "the female is the more ineradicably human."

The church took over the spiritualizing enterprise of the philosophers with its monasticism (the all male community), its celibate clergy (turning away from the woman), its universities (spiritual learning with masters and disciples), etc. In Roman Catholic Christianity (the most homosexual on the continuum) one even finds, predictably enough, a cult of Marian devotion. This devotion to Mary has, of course, nothing to do with Mary as an empirical woman. This is a Mary who is forever virgin, who doesn't even menstruate. She is a totally spiritualized woman, in short a personified projection of the man's own soul.

Even in the churches of the Reformation the homosexual pattern remains. While Protestant churches expect their pastors to marry, the wife has been subordinate to the job, just as Xanthippe was subordinated to Socrates' philosophy and young men. And heaven forbid that a woman should seek ordination and enter the homosexual system. It has only been 450 years after the Reformation that women have been ordained; in this regard the feminist critique of the church has been wholly salutary.

Now there's another piece to all this, a haunting sense that there is something amiss in all this, something not quite right in this turning away from the feminine and spiritualizing the male. This unease is not merely from the obvious and conspicuous failures of the male (Jimmy Lee Swaggart comes immediately to mind) but the whole thing. In our Oedipal religion we feel that "Daddy" might not approve, and so we deny and repress the whole homosexual orientation. But, as Jung notes, "everything that is repressed is projected." And we, as a church, have projected the whole of our repression of the homosexual structure onto gay men who seek ordination. Homosexuals who were attracted to the church by the very homosexual structures in the first place. For the homosexual man, the church is the place par excellence to practice a spiritual homosexuality of spirit-things, and at worse to practice a quite literal Platonic marriage (the kind Paul had advocated). But because of our projections we see the fag-bashing letters, so prominent

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On Guarding the Truth that has been Entrusted to Us  
A Look at Ordination of Homosexuals  
by Rev. Dan Biles

The task of a pastor (bishop) is to "guard the truth that has been entrusted to them" (II Tim. 1:14) by "teaching what befits sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Paramount in doing this is the need to discern true from false teaching and certainly the purpose of a seminary education is training in the art of discernment.

It is, therefore, sad to read the kind of sloppy theology that is contained in the letter from seminarians at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary addressed to Bishop Chilstrom and other Lutheran seminaries on the issue of ordaining practicing gay and lesbian persons. It is even sadder, however, to find by the number of signatures of students affixed to the copy of the letter posted in the administration building that some members of our own seminary community are so undiscerning of such bad theology as well.

My concern is directed against the untenable theology on which the students' arguments are based and which the Gettysburg students failed to discern. The Pacific Seminary students claim, "We know the arguments against homosexuality, we know what the Church says and we know what the scriptures say. More than this however we know what the Gospel calls for." The "however" in the sentence asserts that somehow "what the Gospel calls for" could be different from "what the church says and what the scriptures say." Since when is the content of the Gospel or its implications for the faith and life of the Church derived apart from the Biblical, creedal, and confessional heritage of the Church?

The writers' real basis for their belief becomes clear in their next paragraph: "they are in truth people created as God intended them -- gay and lesbian, just as we were created heterosexual. As such they are equally deserving of the love and affection of lifelong, committed, and blessed relationships." Why didn't they just come out and quote their real source? The words sound much nicer: "We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This makes fine and noble political philosophy but it makes for lousy Christian theology. One ought, when arguing theology, to do so on the basis of the Bible, the creeds, and the Confessions -- not from alien philosophies.

It is simply so that the Christian tradition has condemned the practice of homosexuality and seen it as a perversion of God's created order. How one is born is a sign of God's grace, a "God-given orientation" which, therefore has a right to be practiced. Justification by faith through the cross and resurrection of Jesus is now justification by genetics. God's work in the Son to free us from sin and justify us by grace has now become incorporated into the order of creation. As we are born, so are we justified, and so should we live. Never mind Romans 1; never mind Augsburg Confession II, IV, VI, XIX, and XX. But, to justify one's behavior on the basis of birth is the final act of the rebellious will which seeks to glorify and serve the self, even in the name of grace.

Having dissolved the Second article of the Creed into the First, the authors of the letter proceed to do so with the Third in the very next sentence: "As creatures of God's good order they are also deserving to be part of the good order of the church." Voila! No longer is the Church created by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace (specifically, baptism);

rather it arises out of the created order. No longer is the Gospel of justification by faith, given through the means of grace, the article on which the Church stands or falls (Smalcald Articles, Part II, Article I; AC IV-V); rather, culture and its norms and values determine the life of the Church.

More important, do they know what the Gospel is about, namely, the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life? From their letter one can only assume that they equate denial of ordination with denying someone the Gospel. Where has the Church ever said this? Indeed, from the start the Church has stipulated that, while any Christian might desire to be a "bishop" (I Tim 3:1, i.e., pastor), not every Christian can. Moreover, the Church has made this judgment expressly on the basis of one's manner of life and conduct (I Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9), "that the word of God may not be discredited" (Titus 2:5). And, not only were standards of conduct for pastors promoted, nowhere in the Bible or outside of it do we find the complaint that the denial of ordination on the basis of lifestyle and conduct was construed as "denying the Gospel" to anyone.

What must be understood here is that ordination, like baptism, is not a right. It is a gift and a responsibility, given only to those whose conduct the Church (particularly, those already ordained) judge acceptable to receive it. No one is saying that those born with a homosexual orientation should be denied the Gospel by refusing them baptism. That believers who practice homosexual sex should be denied ordination and exercising the office of ministry is quite a different thing indeed and does not constitute denying them the Gospel.

AC VII defines the life of the Church as the Word and Sacrament worship of assembled Christians. Ordination to the office of ministry neither adds nor detracts from this participation one iota. Full participation in the life of the Church is full participation in the means of grace, and vice-versa. Nothing less. Nothing more.

To conclude: Aside from what they are proposing, the theological reasonings behind their proposal is, Biblically, creedally, and confessionally, unbased. It is disturbing that those who are being trained in seminary by the Church to "guard the truth which [will be] entrusted to them" are so ignorant of that truth as it has come to us in the form of our creedal and confessional doctrines. Just as disturbing is the failure of other seminarians to discern these errors. Will they be just as accepting of anything else that comes down the pike after they are ordained? Will they be just as unwilling or unable to discern between theology which is based upon and "in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and these creeds and confessions" and that which is not?

"O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you." But first, take the time -- hopefully before you get out of seminary -- to learn it.

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in the "Lutheran" and the homophobic reaction of many in the official church.

If the church is going to come to grips with homosexuals in its midst, it must first come to grips with its own homosexuality. This may indeed require that we Lutherans move beyond our fatuous ignorance of depth psychology because we must make our homosexual practice conscious. Then may we begin to work on our theology and pastoral practice with regard to homosexuality and homosexuals. "Know the truth," I remember someone saying, "and the truth shall set you free."

Searching for the Green Man  
By Alex Crouch

PROEM

Twin bridges, unlike. The earth-hugging road leapfrogs across the Kentucky River on one, a sky-blue rib cage. The pylons of the other, stamping angrily on the earth, like some horrible intrusion of alien power, support I-75 as it slashes heedlessly through the landscape.

Once across the river the road, woodsmanlike, snakes patiently up and around the abrupt hill slope. Before relaxing at the plateau's height, the road allows the passer-by a glimpse, a clarification, as though the world in a moment hung by brush strokes on a Chinese screen.

The river squirms like a green eel, making its bed, feeling the sun tickle its back. With unhurrying tenacity it worries at the acquiescent cliffs which bound it on the south, whose years and years of sedimentary deposit yield obediently to years and years of fluvial erosion. Meanwhile, on its lazy side, the river allows its bank to fatten and grow fertile, where a house and other signs show the commitment (honored or not) someone has made to husband this fertility.

On the hill sides and ridge tops the winter trees tangle together like a brush's stiff bristles. Like some of its animals the earth has changed its summer coat of velvet -- which had seemed to catch fire in the virile sunlight -- for burlap to reflect the season's feebler light. While all around, beneath this skin, the land bends, twists, reclines like embracing human bodies.

Just the other side of the stone wall that hedges the roadside an alluvial fan of garbage spills down the upper bank from where the stream of indifferent traffic had slowed for what presumably was a scenic view.

LOGIA, OR THESES AND ANTITHESES

For a transitory, enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder--F. S. Fitzgerald

Jamestown, Va., impressed me as the most tragic spot in all America--  
H. Miller

Yahweh is not on the side of established order. The usual god, whose eternity is the persistence of the beginning, has as his very honor among us that in him we are secure against the threats of the future. ... The gods of the ancient civilizations simply were the certainty of return, the guarantee of continuance--R. Jensen

So, inhabitory peoples sometimes say "this piece of land is sacred"--or "all the land is sacred." This is an attitude that draws on awareness of the mystery of life and death; of taking life to live; of giving life back--not only to your own children, but to the life of the land--G. Snyder

You shall destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, upon the high mountains and upon the hills and under every green tree; you shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their groves with fire. ... And you shall destroy all the peoples that the Lord your God will give over to you, your eye shall not pity them--Yahweh

People in the Appalachian Mountains do not have what we call a love for the land--H. Caudill

To the Canaanites ... the god of Israel must have appeared ... as death

incarnate--K. Barth

It is essential to experience all the times and moods of one good place. No one will ever be able to say how essential, how truly part of a genuine life this is--T. Merton

#### DIGRESSION

One day in the early 720s St. Boniface decided to strike a decisive blow for God and his Lord Jesus. At Geismar (near modern Fritzlar) in Hesse he, brother missionaries and their converts, and the still unregenerate pagans assembled around a tree; it had the air of a formal confrontation, not unlike the public disputations which, 800 years later, would reform southern Germany and Switzerland. The oak tree was magnificently large, as was fitting for the oak of Thor, as the pagans had called it for a long time.

St. Boniface swung an axe to clinch his point and at the first gash a gust of wind shook the tree from top to bottom wrenching it to the ground in a chaos of branches, quartering its trunk. Such is the hagiographer's report; perhaps the tree was crippled, lightning-struck, which would have seemed to its worshippers a particular mark of the thunder god's favor. At any rate St. Boniface consulted with his colleagues and decided to use the wood and build a chapel to St. Peter.

To honor a god in heaven he struck at a tree on earth. Too many strip miners are elders in their churches. The earth mourns and withers at this violence; the holy spirit is grieved. For a good spirit cannot dwell with an evil spirit.

#### DOXOLOGY

If St. Irenaeus was right that the living person is the glory of God, how much more true must it be that the living earth is the glory of God? Psalm 19 begins by saying where to locate the glory of God and indicates further the way it's communicated; not in a rational or even verbal way but how eye speaks to eye, the eyes of love. The glory of God is sensual--what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have handled. Thus one sees into the life of things--all full of God's glorious working--in the places one knows and the places no one knows (but there is one who knoweth all things). Only the eyes of love can really comprehend God's needlework, or lead the finger along those stitches. "He prayeth best who loveth best/All things both great and small." The way is to be alive in one living place, to become a part of that life, ultimately in some way to become one with the life, to allow God to stitch oneself into the design, become earth of earth.

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Ordained vs. Non-ordained  
by Sandra Carlson

As I was reading through Scott Douglas' "Top Ten Things I Won't Miss About Gettysburg," I was struck with some of his comments about what it is like to be an M.A.R. student. I could understand what he was talking about since I began my seminary career as an M.A.R. student and switched to M.Div. a while later; so I am in the unique position to see the point-of-view from both sides of the fence. There are some noticeable differences between how I was treated as both and I would like to point them out so that the whole community can be aware of the situation.

One of the first things I noticed when I came to seminary in September was that I was "different." "So, are you going to be a parish pastor?" "No, I'm an M.A.R student." Then there was a pause and an "Oh." That was it. That was the end of the discussion. My classmates would assume I was in their classes, ask me how teaching parish was going, even the professors slipped and would say things like "Since you're all going to be pastors." There were numerous printed materials that assumed everyone at seminary was M.Div.; in short, I felt like "the forgotten student." This all changed when I switched to M.Div later in the school year. "Now you're one of us," someone said.

But the M.A.R. is "one of us" too. Without trained educators and assistants, the church foundation can crumble. The church is not built on the pastor but on the Gospel. The office of Ministry is ordained by God; the Church selects who it wants to fill that office. But I have noticed a tendency in the Church as well as at Seminary that M.Div. or ordained people are somehow superior to other people with church positions. Lutherans specifically maintain that the pastor does not stand above the congregation; we cannot even define what the difference is between ordained and non-ordained since we look to baptism as ordination. If ordination is in baptism, the M.A.R students are just as qualified as the ordained to take part in the church; they deserve just as much appreciation for their efforts. Still there remains an underlying feeling that if you're good enough, you can be ordained but if you don't have what it takes, well, you could always be a lay assistant.

This may all be far from what Scott was feeling when he wrote his list but this is my perception of how the M.A.R student is compared to the M.Div. student. In a church that needs educators, as we repeatedly profess, it seems hypocritical to look down on those training to be deaconesses and lay assistants. Maybe instead of asking an M.A.R. student what s/he is going to do with an M.A.R. degree, we should tell them, "You're M.A.R.? Yes, the church can sure use your gifts."

A Farewell to Seminary  
By Scott M. Douglas

There I sat in chapel, awaiting the self-advertised Solemn Choral Vespers for Palm Sunday. Going there on a whim, I was dressed in the usual Sunday lounging attire. Getting there early, I was greeted by the usual disapproving darting glances of the well-clothed. I quickly suppressed my desire to shoot back a stare that would say "why is my welcome dependent upon my dress?" for fear of being as judgmental as my fellow worshipers.

Instead, I focussed on the veiled crucifix ahead of me. For over thirty days the Jensonian words "God is whoever raised Jesus from the dead; given who this Jesus is, that's good news" had been replaying themselves in my mind. Who is this Jesus, I wanted to know. Take away the veil so I can see why this is such good news!

I needn't have waited another week or relied on such iconographic evidence. That night it all became clear.

As the "service" progressed I realized my earlier concern for fellow worshipers was unfounded for we were fellow concertgoers more than anything else. Good Lord, I thought, Neil Postman is right. We're sitting here amusing ourselves to death. In an attempt to get my mind off its analytical track, I glanced at what I now felt to be not my worship guide by my concert program. At the bottom I read: "Offering plates are at the doors. Your contributions help defray such costs as music, candles, and choir albs." Oh, I thought, so these are the church's main concerns. My diversionary attempt had failed -- everywhere I turned I was receiving evidence that the good news derived from "who this Jesus is" is that he's white, middle class, well-dressed, and a lover of good shows. In other words, he's just like us.

Oh but you've been reading too much James Cone, I tried to convince myself. Right then began Schuetz's "The Passion According to St. John." Here the story of nails being driven through God's hands was told in some of the most beautiful music I'd ever heard. My mind raced, recalling college discussions of form shaping content. We should be screaming the scandal of this story, I protested. But that would have been an affront to the placid, middle class crowd around me, and it would have been an affront to the placid, middle class Jesus God apparently raised to sanction 20th century American life. I eagerly awaited the end of the concert.

As the last of the liturgical masturbators recessed past me I assured myself that I was taking things too seriously these days. These are all just crazy, meaningless coincidences, I told myself. Not everything has to be analyzed to death. But then I rose to leave, and there he was again, this time staring down from the painting in the back of the chapel. Now I saw exactly who the source of the good news is: a fair-haired conqueror around whom all gather in praise and adoration. Why, even a curious mouse peeks out to see what all the fuss is about.

Would that it were so. The true Christ would be battling off that rodent as it gnawed at his feet. Our Christ can just call an exterminator if mice get to be a problem. The real Jesus hasn't even time for such petty concerns as disease-ridden rodents. In the form of Matthew's "least of these" he spends all day trying to keep his head above the crap we and our self-projected christological ally throw on him.

Sometimes it's so much easier not to think about stuff.



# And Now... Scott Goes Wild

THE YEAR OF THE LIST CONTINUES  
by Scott M. Douglas

Since the U.N. has apparently declared this to be the Year of the List, I'll continue to contribute to the cause by submitting an alphabetized list of the significant nouns found on my bedsheet-turned-graffitti-board as of April 7, 1988:

apartheid, Augustine, baloney, Glenn Beard, Menachem Begin,

Bendersville, Big Murph jeans, P.K. Botha, Brown University, George Stanford Brown, buffoonery, John Calvin, Camp Saffran, Sandy Carlson, carnal lust, chicanery, Bill Cosby, Jan Davis, Scott Douglas, Chris Eberle, foul language, gaming, Gettysburg, giddiness, gluttony, Grape Nuts, Wayne Gretzky, Vicki Grimsley, Guernica, Jesse Helms, The Honky Tonk Man, John Hus' Executioners, idle boasting, Jesus, Kennie's, macaroni 'n' cheese loaf, Melissa Mahoney, Marine Corps Marathon, Larry McCullough, Edwin Meese, Michigan, mollusks, Namibia, Nebraska, ne'er-do-wellness, Ninevah, Dave Oravec, poor clothes coordination, poor stewardship, Ronald Reagan, Religion III, Republicans, Pat Robertson, "The Rookies," Mark Rossman, Martin Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, Frank Sinatra, sin du jour, slothfulness, Special K, tomfoolery, John Tucker, Liz Tuma, vanity, William and Mary (grad school only), Norma Wood, Yale, Alan Young, and Adrian Zmed.

POP CULTURE  
by Lans E. Alexis

Alex said I should write a farewell column -- to treat you all to what might be my last time to address the community. I can't think of anything more pretentious than that -- but I'm into pretentions. Isn't that what pop culture is all about?

I think everyone ought to listen to Talking Heads music. Absorb all that you can of what these wizards of pop music have to sing and say. All other pop music is so much effluvia. If you don't like this idea, tough. Pop culture also means an indiffident disdain for all things inferior. Who is number one doesn't matter. Who makes the most money doesn't matter. What's in the groove, or the digitals, is what counts. Believe it, or die.

That includes "Naked", Talking Heads latest wonderwork. I have yet to feel all of its subtleties, but it is infectuous and lively -- not for the culturally ignorant. Rhythm come forward, as someone has been known to sing.  
Pax.

# *What's this? More Lists?!*

## Top Ten Things I'll Miss About Gettysburg by Scott M. Douglas

- 10) Convincing people I go to seminary
- 9) Awaiting the new issue of "Stanza"
- 8) Weekly free beer at the college
- 7) "LidMan" at the 7-11
- 6) Cranking The Dead Milkmen at 3 a.m. in the library.
- 5) Gratuitous sex
- 4) Writing things like the above to see if the Dean is paying attention
- 3) Paul Milholland Diner stories (form critically legends)
- 2) Wondering if there's a medical explanation for the red blotches on Gustafson's face
- 1) Wondering if there's anything I'll actually miss about Gettysburg

## Top Ten Things I Won't Miss About Gettysburg

- 10) Critical dialogue
- 9) Emphysema Attacks in the coffeeshop
- 8) Trying not to hit that old lady who rides the 3-wheel bicycle
- 7) Hearing "I think you have to ask yourself . . ."
- 6) Answering "Well, what are you going to do with an M.A.R. degree?"
- 5) Not getting elected to the Pet Committee
- 4) Being told I'll succeed in a course if I can relate the material to a Sunday School Class
- 3) Suppressing the desire to kill tourists who spend hours looking for the cannonball embedded in Schmucker House
- 2) C.P.E. stories
- 1) Trying to devise stupid "Top Ten" lists for Table Talk

## Top Ten Things to Listen for at Graduation by Scott M. Douglas

- 10) "What? He's not here? The only reason my parents came was because I told them they could see Jenson!"
- 9) "No, he's not asleep. Gustafson always looks like that."
- 8) "'Free Bird!' Zeppelin!"
- 7) "'Hypostasis' in its pretrinitarian and prechristological uses did not have this sense, but in the often tortured ways in which the theological tradition has used 'hypostasis,' just this sense for the peculiar identity of person-realities struggled for expression already in the Cappadocians."
- 6) "Please! I just ate. Don't tell me Krodel has nothing on underneath his robe."
- 5) "What is Holy Communion?"
- 4) "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I'm free at last."
- 3) "Where's the keg?"
- 2) "If Stuempfle starts talking about that damned tornado, I'm leaving."
- 1) "Now what?"

# The Last Poetry Page

Lunatick Odes  
by Alex Crouch

- I. The young slip of a moon  
cocks her creamy head  
above the bushy horizon  
tousled by an autumn wind
  
- II. Waxing always waning:  
Mona, your emptiness  
remains full, in your  
mensual errands,  
getting yourself with your own fruition.  
Your bee-like turnings  
signify times and seasons.  
Regulatrix of earthly oeconomy,  
at night your brilliance  
ripples in the moist air.
  
- III. The moon is dropping his  
umbrous hand,  
uncovers his face --  
always this whiteness  
of hysteric sorrow  
(persona tragoediae).

Unsystematic Theology  
by Alex Crouch

Learn  
to pierce the old futility  
of sin:  
fluff your wings and sing