

THE "FAITH OF ABRAHAM" THEME IN PAUL, JAMES AND HEBREWS: A STUDY IN THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL NATURE OF NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

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The theme of the faith of Abraham is employed by three different NT writers in three quite different ways: by Paul in Galatians 3 and Romans 4, by James in chap. 2, and by the writer to the Hebrews in chap. 11. What I would like to do here is to focus attention on the varied treatments of this theme in the NT, spelling out its circumstantial employment and suggesting some implications that can be drawn for our understanding of the Christian message and for our Christian ministries today. By "circumstantial" I do not mean to suggest "incidental," "inferential" or "unessential," as the word sometimes connotes. Rather, I have in mind "that which relates to and is dependent upon the circumstances for its specific thrust and form." Nor am I employing "circumstantial" as equivalent to the term "situational," which has come to signify something with regard to the content of the message as well as its form. My use of "circumstantial" is meant to be understood solely with reference to the specific thrust and form of the Christian message and ministry.

The theme of the faith of Abraham is appropriate for a study of the circumstantial nature of NT teaching not only because it appears in the writings of three different canonical writers in three quite different ways but also because it is prominent in Jewish literature, thereby allowing us some outside control over what is happening in its NT expressions. As early as Shemaiah and Abtalion, who were the immediate predecessors to Hillel and Shammai in *Pirque 'Abot's* line of rabbinical succession, questions as to the nature of Abraham's faith and the relation of merit to that faith were being discussed among the Pharisees. Abraham, in fact, was often affectionately called "a bag of myrrh" by the rabbis, for "just as myrrh is the most excellent of spices, so Abraham was the chief of all righteous men" (*Cant. Rab.* 1:13). And Louis Finkelstein has shown that the rabbis of late Judaism and the early Tannaitic period commonly treated their own traditions, and the various themes within those traditions, in a manner that both retained the essential givenness of the traditions and also expressed those traditions in a fashion that can be characterized as "pertaining to and dependent upon circumstances"¹—a phenomenon parallel to

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¹L. Finkelstein, "The Transmission of Early Rabbinic Tradition," *HUCA* 16 (1941) 115-135.

much that takes place in the transmission of tradition and the treatment of various themes in the NT.

I. THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM IN PAUL

Paul employs the "faith of Abraham" theme in Gal 3:6-18, picking it up also in v 29, and again in Rom 4:1-25. In the Galatian letter, of course, it is in conjunction with his argument against the Judaizers, and in Romans that polemic against a Jewish understanding of righteousness continues. Therefore it is necessary, in order to understand Paul's treatment, to start with some appreciation of how Judaism viewed the faith of Abraham.

Two emphases with regard to Abraham are constantly made in the literature of Judaism: (1) that Abraham was counted righteous because of his faithfulness under testing; and (2) that Abraham's faith spoken of in Gen 15:6 must be coupled with his acceptance of circumcision as referred to in the covenant of Gen 17:4-14. The tests, or trials, of Abraham are usually considered in the Talmud as being ten in number, though there is no precise agreement in the various passages as to what they were. And they are always presented as being meritorious, both for Abraham and for his posterity. In *Exod. Rab.* 44:4 (on Exod 32:13), for example, there is a long parable attributed to Rabbi Abin in the name of Rabbi Aha that well illustrates the Jewish attitude toward the merit of Abraham's faithfulness. It is a tale about a king whose friend deposited with him ten pearls and afterwards died. After his friend's death the king married the man's only daughter, making her his chief lady and giving her a necklace of ten pearls. But alas, the lady later lost the pearls, and the king in his anger sought to banish her from his presence. Her best friend, however, came to plead her cause before the king; and when he saw how adamant the king was, he reminded him of the ten pearls the father had left with the king and suggested that they be accepted in the place of the lost pearls. The spiritual application of the story is then spelled out by Rabbi Abin:

So, when Israel sinned, God was angry with them and said: "Now, therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (Exod 32:10). But Moses pleaded: "Lord of the Universe! Why art Thou angry with Israel?" "Because they have broken the Decalogue," He replied. "Well, they possess a source from which they can make repayment," he urged. "What is the source?" He asked. Moses replied: "Remember that Thou didst prove Abraham with ten trials, and so let those ten [trials serve as compensation] for these ten [broken commandments]."

The parable we have cited comes, of course, from a time later than the NT period, for both Rabbi Abin to whom it is credited and Rabbi Aha from whom it originated were fourth-generation Amoraim. But though the story itself may be later than our period of interest, the conviction it incorporates as to the meritorious character of Abraham's faith under testing was much earlier—as witness, for example, the sentiment of 1 Macc 2:52 (written at least a century before Christ): "Was

not Abraham found faithful under trial, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness?"

Furthermore, Judaism insisted that Abraham's faith as referred to in Gen 15:6 must always be coupled with Abraham's acceptance of circumcision in the covenant of Gen 17:4-14, so that the two matters of believing and keeping the covenant must be constantly brought together when one speaks of the righteousness of Abraham. There is in Judaism the common motif of truth appearing in two forms, an elemental form and a developed form, and that only as one brings the two together can one come to understand truth in its fulness.² Abraham, therefore, can certainly be spoken of as being righteous by faith in Gen 15:6, but that is only the elemental statement of the matter. It is in Gen 17:4-14—with its explicit insistence by God himself that "my covenant shall be in your flesh an everlasting covenant; any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people, he has broken my covenant"—that the full nature of Abraham's righteousness is proclaimed. For Judaism—or at least for a vociferous and growing legalistic element within late Judaism and Tannaitic rabbinic Judaism—trust in God and obedience to the Law went hand in hand in the attainment of righteousness. And though Abraham lived before the actual giving of the Mosaic law, he anticipated the keeping of that fuller expression of God's Torah in his acceptance of circumcision and in his offering of a ram in "the Binding (*'Akedah*) of Isaac." *Lev. Rab.* 2:10 (on Lev 1:12), therefore, argues that "Abraham fulfilled [in anticipation] the whole of the Torah, as it is said, 'Because that Abraham hearkened to My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws' (Gen 26:6), and he offered a ram as a sacrifice."

When Paul speaks of Abraham, however, he lays all of the emphasis on Abraham as being righteous by faith in response to the promise of God, apart from any effort of his own to keep the law. Thus Paul takes pains to point out (1) that the righteousness accredited to Abraham in Gen 15:6 is associated solely with God's promise and the patriarch's faith ("Abraham believed God and he was accounted as being righteous"), whereas the law speaks only of being cursed (Gal 3:6-14; cf. Rom 4:2-15); (2) that the principle of righteousness by faith was expressed by God in Abraham's life long before the Mosaic law was given (430 years before, says Paul), without being supplemented or abrogated by that later law (Gal 3:15-18); (3) that the promise given to Abraham was, indeed, meant for the patriarch and for his posterity, but that the true "seed" of Abraham is Christ *and* all who belong to Christ (Gal 3:16, 29); and (4) that since righteousness in the divine economy is based on God's promise and man's response of faith, the Judaizers' enticement to return to the law as received at Mount Sinai should be treated in the same fashion as God told Abraham to treat his mistress Hagar (who was also from Sinai) and her son: "Cast out the slave

²Cf. D. Daube, "Public Retort and Private Explanation," *The NT and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956) 141-150.

woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son" (Gal 4:21-31).

Paul's use of the "faith of Abraham" theme, therefore, stresses entirely the patriarch's trust and commitment in response to God and not Abraham's faithfulness under trial as a precondition to being considered righteous by God, nor even his faithfulness to God's Torah as an expression of his faith. In fact, faithfulness to the custodial requirements of the Mosaic law in the expression of one's faith, Paul insists, was only begun with Moses and was meant to end with Christ (Gal 3:19-4:7). Later in the Galatian letter, of course, Paul insists that true faith will express itself in loving service to others (Gal 5:6, 13-15), and he exhorts his converts to "do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal 6:10), so we cannot say the apostle was disinterested in a faithful expression of a living faith that results in the good of others. But his emphasis in the employment of the "faith of Abraham" theme in Galatians and Romans is entirely on the Christian as being righteous by faith, apart from any works of the law. And this is the first use of the "faith of Abraham" theme that I would highlight here.

II. THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM IN JAMES

Whereas Paul has argued that "a man is not justified by observing the law but by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:16) and supported that statement by the "faith of Abraham" theme, Jas 2:14-16 insists that "a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (2:24) and bases that affirmation also on the "faith of Abraham" theme. While it may be debated, it seems likely that James' statement presupposes the currency of Paul's teaching, for the express words "by faith alone" (*ek pisteōs monon*), which James explicitly contradicts, are extant nowhere else in the whole of Jewish or early Christian literature except in Paul.

But, of course, the question is, "Does James really contradict Paul?" Or is this a case of differing circumstantial employments of the same theme? Joachim Jeremias has ably pointed out that two matters must be kept in mind in dealing with the distinction here between Paul and James: "that (1) James uses a language differing from that of Paul, and (2) that James' field of battle is different."³

James employs three terms in 2:14-26 in a manner totally different from the way Paul uses them. James' use of "faith" (*pistis*) in 2:19, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder," signifies the intellectual acceptance of monotheism. Later in the letter, of course, *pistis* appears a number of times in a sense complementary to the Pauline usage to mean faith in Christ and the assurance that God hears prayer. But in 2:14-26 the writer equates it with only the bare assertion of monotheism, devoid of the soteriological nuances the word usually carries in the rest of the NT. Likewise, James' reference to "works" (*erga*) differs from Paul's. The works that James is speaking about are those that fulfil "the perfect law of liberty" (1:25)

³J. Jeremias, "Paul and James," *Exp Tim* 66 (September 1955) 370.

or "the royal law" (2:8): "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18). He is not speaking, as was Paul, of the Mosaic prescriptions as a requirement for any supposed attainment of righteousness. Rather, he has in mind acts of Christian love that spring from a true faith—acts of love that have the practical effect of feeding, clothing and housing the needy. He is saying, in effect: "Can a lack of Christian compassion be excused by a bare belief in a higher Being or a simple profession of faith? Not at all!" Further, even his usage of the verb "to be justified" (*dikaiousthai*) differs from Paul's. James uses it more phenomenally to mean the recognition of existing goodness and of acts of kindness, whereas Paul employs it more forensically to mean that which God gives to the ungodly. Or, to put it in a slightly different way, Paul employs the verb "to justify" with respect to God's acceptance of man, whereas James employs the same verb to mean the recognition of what is good, helpful and kind.

Behind this variation of terminology, however, stands the more significant fact that for Paul and James the "field of battle is different"—or, as Jeremias alternately phrases it, "the zone of conflict" that each is occupying varies decidedly.⁴ Paul is speaking against a confidence in meritorious works, against the effort to save oneself, against the self-righteousness of pious men who have too good an opinion of themselves. James, on the other hand, is arguing against a dead orthodoxy, against a self-satisfied attitude that would presume upon divine grace, against an intellectual profession that carries with it no ethical compulsion. In a real sense, as Jeremias aptly notes, both Paul and James sound very much like the Jesus of the Matthean Sermon on the Mount—with Paul sounding more like the beginning of that sermon in its emphasis on the nature of righteousness and James more like the conclusion with its stress on doing the will of the Father in heaven.⁵ Paul, the evangelist, was unable to conceive of "saving faith" being devoid of an ethical compulsion, as his shocked *mē genoito* of Rom 6:1 and 6:15 graphically illustrates. But James, the pastor, evidently having encountered some who knew the Pauline message formally but not vitally, saw the need to rouse his congregation to the realization that mere intellectual assent without a living faith expressing itself in acts of helpfulness and kindness is absolutely valueless. "So," as Jeremias rightly concludes, "James ch. 2 has its full right to stand by the side of Paul." Or, perhaps "instead of saying James has his full right to stand by the side of Paul (as if they were on the same level representing only alternatives), we ought to say, James has his full right to stand after Paul. His message can be understood only after Paul has been understood."⁶

III. THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM IN HEBREWS

When we think of the "faith of Abraham" theme in the NT, it is

⁴Ibid., pp. 370-371.

⁵Ibid., p. 371.

⁶Ibid.

natural to think first of all of its appearances in Paul and in James. But it is also present in Heb 11:8-19 as the most prominent feature in that long recital of the ancient heroes of faith. And while the writer to the Hebrews employs it in some ways that are quite traditional, in other ways he is unique in his treatment—which uniqueness, I would suggest, stems largely from the situation of his addressees and the circumstances he therefore faced.

The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews are spoken of as having “experienced the heavenly gift, and shared in the Holy Spirit, and experienced the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age” (6:4-5). Yet they also seem to have been contemplating some type of return to Judaism, while still maintaining in some manner their basic commitment to Jesus. The explicit details of their situation are somewhat obscure and continue to be hotly debated among scholars (though I personally believe that in the Dead Sea scrolls we have material that approximates the type of Judaism they had probably known formerly and now were thinking of returning to). But however we evaluate the exact situation of the addressees it seems obvious that their Christian faith had become stagnated, that they had lost their earlier forward orientation, and that they needed the exhortation epitomized in 13:13-14: “Let us, then, go to him [Jesus] outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.”

It is to such a situation and to such an audience that our writer speaks, drawing lessons from the faith of Abraham that he believes will be pertinent for his readers. Indeed, he speaks at first of Abraham’s faith as a response of trust to the God who had promised. “By faith,” he writes, “Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his possession, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” As Gen 15:6 indicates and as Paul has elaborated, Abraham was a man of faith who believed God—not just with regard to a promised possession of land, as Heb 11:8 tells us, but also with respect to the promise of many descendants, as 6:13-15 says. And indeed, as our author tells us in closing this section, Abraham was found to be faithful when God tested him in asking him to sacrifice his son (11:17-19, perhaps alluding to the so-called “Binding of Isaac” theme of late Judaism and early Rabbinicism). But between the declaration of Abraham’s faith and the proclamation of his faithfulness, the writer to the Hebrews spells out at least two further lessons from the faith of Abraham that he believes to be of great importance for his readers in their situation.

One of the lessons the writer draws from the theme of the faith of Abraham is that to have a faith like Abraham’s necessarily involves also having a forward orientation of life. Abraham as a man of faith was, as 11:10 points out, “looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” The figure of “the city of God”—or, as here expressed, of “the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God”—is a frequent and significant image in the Biblical tradition. “Glorious things of thee are spoken, O city of God,” wrote the psalmist in Ps 87:3, and that strain appears elsewhere in the Psalms

and in Isaiah. Paul speaks of Christians as belonging to "the Jerusalem that is above" (Gal 4:26), and the seer of the Apocalypse recounts the risen Lord's promise that he will write, upon those who overcome, "the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven" (Rev 3:12), visualizing the culmination of redemptive history as "the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (21:2). The image of "the city of God" in the Biblical materials (as well as in its later employments by Ambrose, Ticonius, and most explicitly by Augustine) is to be understood in conjunction with the expression "the kingdom of God" (that is, God's reign and rule in individual lives, in the Church, and in society), and stands for the visible expression of the kingdom or reign of God in its totality. Thus Abraham, who had received a token of what was promised in the birth of Isaac (Heb 6:15; 11:11-12), was looking forward to the full realization of God's promises in the future. And therefore the writer reminds his readers in 11:13-16 that men and women of the past who possessed the faith of Abraham (and of Sarah?) "were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." The message to his recipients is clear. But in picking up this motif of the forward-looking nature of Abraham's faith, the writer later tells them that since they have "come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (12:22), they were therefore not to be confined or enticed by the strictures of Judaism, "for here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (13:14). That is, since faith involves eagerly looking forward to the full realization of God's kingdom in the future apart from any strictures of the Jewish religion or of Jewish nationalism, they should not be looking back, whatever their reverses and whatever their difficult circumstances, but they should be looking forward and moving forward with God.

Such an orientation, of course, involves a set of priorities that puts the full realization of "the kingdom of God" and the arrival of "the city of God" above any particular nationalistic commitment or ecclesiastical expression (though, certainly, these need not be understood as essentially in opposition to one another just because they became so in the situation confronting the addressees of the letter to the Hebrews). Such a reordering of priorities is implied throughout the Hebrews epistle and can be seen involved in the discussion of Abraham's faith as well.

More direct, however, is the lesson the writer draws with regard to the pilgrim nature of Abraham's lifestyle. Though Palestine became for Abraham "the promised land," he lived in that land "like a stranger in a foreign country" and "lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who

were heirs with him of the same promise" (11:9). He lived in his own inheritance as a pilgrim, with the stigma of a stranger and foreigner, for "he was looking for a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10) and was "longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (11:16). That, says the writer to the Hebrews, is what it means to claim the faith of Abraham as one's own: a realization of the fulfilment of God's promises in part here and now, but also a forward orientation of faith and outlook that results in a pilgrim type of lifestyle expressive of our present incompleteness and of the certainty of our future hope. And, comments our author as he closes the discussion here, "God is not ashamed to be called the God (of such people), for he has prepared for them a city" (11:16b).

IV. WHAT THEN SHALL WE SAY ABOUT THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM?

With such differing employments of the "faith of Abraham" theme in Paul, James and Hebrews, "what then shall we say about the faith of Abraham?" (to paraphrase slightly Paul's question of Rom 4:1). Finkelstein's 1941 study of the transmission of early rabbinic tradition has shown that the rabbis were quite prepared to employ their traditions and the various themes within those traditions in a manner that both retained the essential givenness of the traditions and also expressed those traditions and those themes in a circumstantial manner.⁷ His first illustration, for example, is of a tradition that appears eight times within the Tannaic materials: three times employed by one rabbi, twice by another, and three times more by three separate rabbis. In each case, as he has argued, there is a circumstantial styling and application of the tradition while at the same time a retention of the essential significance of the tradition (the phenomenon of "pegged words," as Finkelstein calls it). And C. F. D. Moule has proposed, without denying the presence of theological development within the records or diversity within the early Church, that at bottom the NT "debates from a single platform, but from different corners of it";⁸ that is, that

each several explanation of the faith or defense of it is likely to run along rather particular lines, according to circumstances. In other words, it may be assumed that, although this activity, taken as a whole, has added considerably to the range of the Christian vocabulary, each separate manifestation of it is likely to be specialized and aimed at solving only one or two particular problems or meeting certain specific objections; and it is here that an explanation may reasonably be sought for some of the curious selectiveness of the NT.⁹

⁷L. Finkelstein, "Transmission."

⁸C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the NT* (London: Black; New York: Harper, 1966) 167.

⁹C. F. D. Moule, "The Influence of Circumstances on the Use of Christological Terms," *JTS* 10 (1959) 255; see also Moule, "The Influence of Circumstances on the Use of Eschatological Terms," *JTS* 15 (1964) 1-15.

It is such an insight that has guided most of Moule's exegetical and theological writings and which, I believe, we do well to incorporate into our understanding also.

It is not a question of who is right and who is wrong in the use of the "faith of Abraham" theme in the NT. Commentators of tunnel vision and truncated perception have tried to get us to side with Paul against James, or James against Paul, or even Paul against all the rest of the NT—with much the same kind of pitting one against the other as has often been done in OT studies with regard to prophetism, apocalypticism, the priestly writings, wisdom literature, and the Psalms. Narrow minds have always been uncomfortable with concepts that overflow their predetermined categories and with implications too explosive to direct along an even course. Inevitably, however, while such action enables us to bring the NT teaching within our control, more lamentably it obscures the fulness of the gospel and blunts its impact.

The theme of the faith of Abraham in the NT, in fact, has a number of facets to it, and each possesses its own validity as well as serves to enhance the whole: Faith is a wholehearted response to God in Christ, apart from a person's own attempts to gain merit, as Paul has stressed in countering the Judaizers; it is that which results in acts of positive helpfulness and kindness with respect to the physical needs of others, as James has emphasized in combating a perversion of Christian doctrine; and it is that which eagerly looks forward to the full realization of God's promises in the future, arranging its priorities and setting its lifestyle accordingly here and now, as the writer to the Hebrews has highlighted in confronting the situation he was addressing. Like the beauty of a diamond which is only fully appreciated when the gem is rotated slowly in the light, so the faith of Abraham is only known in its fulness as we study it in its varying circumstantial dimensions and as we allow those dimensions to transform our own thinking, outlook, lifestyle and action.

V. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING TODAY

What does all this have to do with our understanding of the Christian message and Christian ministry today? A great deal, I would propose. The Christian religion has suffered all too often from those who, having grasped one facet of truth or having been successful in one aspect of ministry, have tried to conform everyone and everything to their own vision. Theologically, it is possible to be so enamored with the realized factor in our relationship with God as to minimize the incompleteness of that relationship and ignore the forward orientation of Christian faith—or, conversely, to become so wrapped up with the future hope, either turning it into some type of gnostic speculation or reserving all fulfilment for the future, as to fail to appreciate the presence of God here and now and the transformation of life that can take place because of his contemporary presence. It is possible to view justification and righteousness in such strictly individual and forensic terms as to rule out

in practice their corporate and experiential dimensions—or, conversely, to become so consumed by their social implications as to depreciate individual conversion. It is possible to become so enthralled by the grandeur of God's kingdom and man's place in it that we try to reproduce it ourselves here on earth, little realizing that society is not self-regenerating—or, conversely, to become so overawed by the disparity we see between God's desired rule and the contemporary state of society that we retreat into a quietistic isolationism, not realizing that we have been called to be a light in and a conscience to our world. It is possible to be so taken up with our election by God as to forget our necessary pilgrim lifestyle—or, conversely, so aware of ourselves as strangers and foreigners in an alien land that we forfeit the note of the gospel proclamation. And what we understand with respect to the nature of the Christian message is what we reflect in our Christian ministries.

What we need to learn from the varying circumstantial employments of the "faith of Abraham" theme in the NT, I would suggest, is (1) something as to the full-orbed nature of the gospel and (2) something as to our own ministry in reflecting that fullness. Some will be immediately drawn to Paul's treatment of faith in Galatians 3 and Romans 4, others to James' in chap. 2, and others to the exposition of Hebrews 11. While we might have our favorite passage and appreciate one treatment more than another, we cannot allow ourselves to become lopsided by ignoring any. Some will find themselves more at home in expressing Paul's emphasis in their Christian ministry, others in expressing James', and others that of the writer to the Hebrews. And indeed, few will feel themselves either competent or successful in expressing in their ministries all the varying facets of Christian faith. But while we might have more concern and more expertise in one or another of the aspects of Christian ministry, we cannot allow ourselves the deception of thinking that that is all there is to Christian ministry. To use a rather homey illustration, the Christian ministry can be compared in this regard to a violin, for to make beautiful music one needs all the four strings of evangelism, pastoral care, social service and education (assuming that our illustration must conform to the normal violin, and not to some more ideal instrument of twelve or more strings). One may play one string very well, but he cannot avoid some active involvement with the other three—and certainly cannot depreciate the other three—if his ministry is to be truly Christian in character. Or, to employ words much more fitting and apostolic than mine: "God gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the full measure of perfection found in Christ" (Eph 4:11-13). It is such a unity amidst diversity and diversity within unity that the Christian is called upon to appreciate and to exemplify, so that God's people will be involved in works of service and so that the Body of Christ will be built up.