

truth of the kingdom (the *didache*), if we don't master the idiom of paracesis, the chances of growing to the "measure of the full stature of Christ" are dim.

Deometry

This is a lot to take seriously in our calling: the torrent of church metaphors, the cascade of God-activated verbs, the lavish dimensions involved in every direction — "breadth and length and height and depth" (Eph. 3:18). It leaves our heads swimming, dizzy with the profligacies of grace. And now Paul is edging us into actually living here, taking up permanent residence in this country, getting jobs, learning the language, raising families, making ourselves at home in this, our new homeland, growing up and growing old here.

This is all well and good. But we are in danger of being overwhelmed, paralyzed into inaction by all that is before us. Where do we start?

Good Jew that he is, thoroughly schooled in the Hebrew Scriptures, Paul begins with a single word, "one," lifted out of Israel's creed: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deut. 6:4 NIV). One. He repeats the word seven times: one, one, one, one, one, one, one. ONE. One is emphatic.

Yes, there is a lot going on. And yes, there is a lot to do. But it is not a lot of isolated things, and it is not a lot of different tasks, random, disconnected people, a junkyard of parts out of which we try to piece together something livable. Living a calling develops into a "unity of the Spirit . . . until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity" (Eph. 4:3, 13). The underlying and all-encompassing oneness that is church flows from the underlying and all-encompassing oneness that is God. The oneness reverberates in the underlying and all-encompassing oneness that is the Christian calling, the Christian life.

The repetitions in this context are not, I think, a nagging insistence on monotheism as a dogma to be believed; this is gentle pastoral

reassurance that we are involved in a life of basic simplicity. But it is not oversimplified simplicity. The simplicity of our participation in the unity of the Trinity is profound and hard earned. Not a life of competing priorities, but a life in which "all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called . . ." (Rom. 8:28). Not a life teeming with anxieties on how best to please God, but simply "to will one thing" (Kierkegaard). Not a Martha life of worry and distraction over many things, but a Mary life in which "there is need of only one thing" (Luke 10:41-42).

This basic and inherent oneness is at hand wherever we look and in whatever we touch. Paul gives us a running start of recognition by identifying seven dimensions of the unity: "one body . . . one Spirit . . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

Seven is more than bare enumeration. Practiced readers of Scripture detect a symbolic sense here: the completeness of the seven days of creation, the seven "thunders" of the voice of the Lord in Psalm 29, the seven "sevens" that structure the comprehensive finality of the book of Revelation. And so here: the seven items do not indicate that each item is a unity unto itself but that each measures the basic unity of God and church, the Christian calling in its many dimensions.

Henry Adams in his brilliant study of the marvels — theological, spiritual, architectural — of two medieval churches, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres, takes his readers on pilgrimage through these elaborate places of worship and the men and women who lived and prayed in them. He coined the word *deometry* to name his subject: taking the measure of God as the unity that produces diversity.⁶ This is essentially what Paul is doing, but with this difference: Henry Adams is writing a historical and aesthetic study of the church in the twelfth century; Paul is writing to a church (or churches) in the first century who are actually experiencing the calling that was simultaneously unity and diversity, the one and the all. For Paul, deometry is not a sub-

6. Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), p. 338.

ject out of the past to study. It involves observing the practice of what he and his readers are engaged in as they are being built together into church.

There is more to be observed. Each part of the creed is grouped in two triads of similar length: body-Spirit-hope followed by Lord-faith-baptism. The second triad contains three genders of "one" in a grammatically precise sequence of masculine, feminine, and neuter (*heis, mia, hen*). The seventh item, "God and Father of us all," is finished off with a concluding triad of prepositions — "above all and through all and in all."⁷

The symmetries and repetitions develop a kind of liturgical rhythm that has the effect of harmonizing "all" into "one." The many dimensions to this called life, this Christ life, this church life of All, take the measure of the One. The more we live this creed, the more life coheres. The more we enter the unity, the more we find ourselves "put together."

As we "lead a life worthy of the calling," we gradually assimilate the creedal rhythm set down by the tympanic variations on the one: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. The crescendo flourish of prepositions at the end — "above all and through all and in all" — brings every conceivable "all" into the unity.

* * *

Some years ago, Jan and I spent a year in Pittsburgh. We were in a new place where the streets and the people and the work were all unfamiliar. We had left the routines and rituals of thirty years behind us. We felt the strangeness, missed the familiar, and deliberately set out to make ourselves at home in this new calling, to fit in. One of the things we did was to take a walk each day at noon to a park a mile or so away, strolling around a large pond, observing the birds and plant life, and

7. Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 34A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 429 and 467.

reflecting on the meaning of this abrupt change in our lives and how it might play out in the years ahead.

One day as we were walking to our meditation pond, a man on a bicycle passed us, then suddenly braked and waited for us to catch up with him. Without introduction or preface he asked, "How long have you been married?" We were startled by the out-of-the-blue abruptness, but managed a puzzled but courteous "Thirty-three years."

"I knew it," he said. "Do you realize that you walk in perfect step with one another? I mean absolutely synchronized perfect. My wife and I have been married five years and we haven't got it down yet. We are always just micro-seconds off." That was it. He was back on his bicycle and on his way.

We resumed our walk, pleased with ourselves that across thirty-three years of marriage we had mastered this miracle of walking together in perfect rhythm. We had no idea that we had achieved something in our marriage that could stop a bicyclist in his tracks. This required comment and further conversation. But the moment we became self-conscious about it, we couldn't do it. We felt clumsy, uncoordinated. The harder we tried to recover our marital rhythm, the worse it got. Eventually we quit trying and went back to just walking. We did observe, though, that "walking in perfect step" doesn't come from setting that as a marital goal and disciplining ourselves to an hour of practice each day.

Later it occurred to us that living a coherent, mature life in Christ cannot be accomplished self-consciously — there are too many details involved across too many conditions. Maybe this was something of what Jesus was getting at when he said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Luke 17:20 KJV).

Baron von Hugel

America in the twenty-first century does not offer propitious conditions for growing up. Maturity is not the hallmark of our culture. Our culture is conspicuous for its obsession with "getting and spending." Instead of becoming more, we either get more or do more. So it is not