

How Christians Might
Remember Well:
Lessons from Moses before and
after September 11
By
Charles R. Pinches

Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 West 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401
2003

**How Christians Might Remember Well:
Lessons from Moses before and after
September 11**

By Charles R. Pinches

Pamphlet 9 in the *Renewing Radical Discipleship*
series of Ekklesia Pamphlets, edited by Dan Bell
and Brent Laytham.

Copyright © 2003 by The Ekklesia Project
Printed by Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 W. 8th Ave. Suite 3
Eugene OR 97401
All Rights Reserved.

To become involved in the Ekklesia Project, or for
more information including other pamphlets,
announcements and news regarding our activities
and work, visit us at www.ekklesiaproject.org.

A JEWISH WEDDING

At the University of Scranton where I teach we are lucky enough to have a Jewish rabbi on our faculty in theology. A few summers ago he did us the favor of getting married. We knew this would be good for him, but had little idea how good it would be for us until the invitations arrived in the mail. Everyone was invited to New York City for the whole affair: hors d'oeuvres and opening celebrations, an Orthodox Jewish service, dinner at one of the most famous and exquisite restaurants in Manhattan, and a party afterwards, including some serious Jewish dancing. Rabbi Marc had foreseen that some of us would feel out of place during this dancing, so he targeted our table of shrinking Christian theologians, grabbing us each by the arm and swinging us into the sea of black hats surging over the dance floor. I shall never forget finding myself suddenly shoulder to shoulder with three Orthodox Jews as the four of us hoisted a chair, Marc perched upon it, to shoulder height and bounced him about in the bobbing black sea. Clapping and shouts of joy in Yiddish, Hebrew or English mingled with the accordion band; the walls shook and the building swayed as we thumped and jumped about the room.

There are a great many more details to tell to complete this story of Jews and Christians celebrating a happy occasion. Yet I will add only one: the wedding and party I have described took place in "Windows on the World," on the 110th floor of World Trade Tower #1.

Without this last thing I would have gone on remembering my friend's wedding fondly for some time, but gradually it would fade with time. With it, though, it is one of those few events in my life that I shall never forget. For a new, powerful event has slashed across my memory of it, entirely reordering its significance. Quite simply, I cannot remember my friend's Jewish wedding without at the same time remembering images of hurtling bodies, consuming

flame, and smoldering, twisted heaps of metal to which “Windows on the World” and the rest of the World Trade Center were reduced on September 11, 2001. In short, my memory of the wedding has been **retrained** by the horrific events of September 11.

What does it mean to train or retrain our memories? One way to understand memory training is the sort I did as a child in Sunday School. I worked hard to arrange all those Elizabethan English words like a line of train cars in my mind so that when my mouth opened they would roll out in perfect order. This is memory work of a certain sort: memorization. Yet as the Jewish wedding at the top of the World Trade Tower illustrates, the memories that run the deepest in us are of a different sort. Training these will involve not so much producing by rote a string of words or images. Neither will it be just a matter of recalling details of past experiences, as some of us do well, others poorly. Rather, it will involve ordering our memories, often remembering some things in the light of other things that are of greater significance. As my memory story suggests, we do not fully control how this ordering goes. Yet this may be where the training comes in. When we are trained well at something it becomes part of us, and conscious choices are not so important. We can often only see the significance of the training when we think of how it might be otherwise—if we imagine a person, for instance, who rather quickly forgets all about the horrific destruction of September 11 and yet keeps keenly in mind the names and taste of all the many exquisite appetizers served at the wedding feast. Something is wrong with such a person’s memory, we will say. It has not been rightly trained.

MOSES TEACHES ISRAEL HOW TO REMEMBER

Yet how do we know what things should form other things in our memories? How do we learn to be a people whose memories are well ordered? I want to suggest that this takes

long practice, and is something we cannot do alone. We need a community of memory.

I felt after my experience at the Jewish wedding that it would not take too long to learn what Jews could teach me about dancing. Rightly or wrongly, I had the quick and ready sense that I was carrying Rabbi Marc on our shoulders just about as well as the orthodox Jews who had enlisted my support in their dance. I did feel, however, that there was a great deal I could learn about what underlay the dancing, namely, joy and celebration, something I'm sure would take longer to learn. Likewise, and perhaps related to joy, I am sure there is a great deal to be learned from Jews about memory. The greatest teacher on these points is Moses, who sets about in Exodus to teach the children of Israel how to remember well. He does this most especially in Exodus chapter 12 as he gives important instructions to the people about Passover.

The progression of the narrative in the early books of Exodus is slowed almost to a standstill in Exodus 12. In previous chapters the nine plagues have been building rapidly upon one another; we feel we have reached the top of the crescendo as we are introduced to the startling tenth plague, the killing of the first-born. As chapter 12 opens we breathlessly anticipate the coming of the terrible angel of death. But the angel is delayed by twenty eight verses while Moses passes on some rather tedious instructions about how to cook.

This first verse in the chapter displays a newfound concern about month and day and progression of the year. *“The Lord said to Moses . . . ‘This month shall stand as the head of your calendar; you shall reckon it the first month of the year. Tell the whole community of Israel: on the tenth of this month every one of your families must procure for itself a lamb . . .’”* In the progression of the nine plagues before this one, we have heard nothing much about time, except perhaps an occasional reference to “in the morning” or “after

seven days.” The nine plagues have mixed together in a kind of monotony of calamity that relates temporally to little else but itself. The repetition actually numbs us to time, and confuses our memory. (For example, I find it a challenge to recall the proper progression of the first nine plagues. There was the one about flies . . . but was that before or after the one about frogs?)

Yet we do not forget the tenth plague, as Moses insists. Once he has located us securely in the calendar, he offers instructions about the lamb, how it should be killed, what should be done with its flesh and blood, and so on. Then he says the following:

This day shall be a memorial feast for you, which all your generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord, as a perpetual institution. For seven days you must eat unleavened bread. From the very first day you shall have your houses clear of all leaven . . . On these days you shall not do any sort of work, except to prepare the food that everyone needs. Keep, then, this custom of the unleavened bread. Since it was on this very day that I brought your ranks out of the land of Egypt, you must celebrate this day throughout your generations as a perpetual institution (12:14-17).

The word “perpetual” puts us in mind of perpetual motion machines, which infinitely repeat the same movement. Like the first nine plagues, “perpetual” has a numbing effect; times before, now, and ever afterward indistinguishably meld. Yet here we have a “perpetual *institution*” that recurs on a particular day in a particular month, which means that it is *not* on all the other days in all the other months. As a particular day that is unlike any other day surrounding it, its effect is the reverse of a

perpetual motion machine. It actually divides time—it makes a before and an after.

We get clearer about the perpetual nature of the institution with Moses' final set of instructions, given just as the night of the Passover darkens over Egypt:

You shall observe this as a perpetual ordinance for yourselves and for your descendants. Thus, you must also observe this rite when you have entered the land which the Lord will give you as He promised. When your children ask you, "What does this rite of yours mean?" you shall reply, "This is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt; when He struck down the Egyptians, He spared our houses." Then the people bowed down in worship, and the Israelites went and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron (12:24-28).

With these words the twenty eight verse interlude concludes and the action resumes. Next words: "At midnight the Lord slew every first-born in the land." Yet there is much to comb back through, especially if we hope to learn something from Moses about memory. So that it will be easier to remember, let me put what I think he might be teaching us in characteristic Mosaic form: five commandments, the first tablet of memory. They read:

1. Thou shalt rightly mark thy calendar.
2. At appointed times thou shalt stop working and begin celebrating.
3. Thou shalt assemble and eat together.
4. As thou dost assemble and eat together, thou shalt follow certain sorts of peculiar rules.
5. Thou shalt listen for thy children's questions and answer them.

Let us consider each of these in turn.

1. Thou shalt rightly mark thy calendar.

As we have said, Moses' concern with time and calendar as the tenth plague approaches distinguishes it from the other nine which appear by comparison as a muddle of troubles. The tenth plague steps forth as if the only plague, unique in its *singularity*: one child, the first, from each family. And the angel of death does not pass over many times, only once.

Singularity counts with memory. My father died about three years ago. I have thought of him often since. I have pictured him doing characteristic things, such as tending his rose garden or building a fire. Yet in August, I remember particularly his death. This was the time it came, as the summer waned. I suspect August will forever be marked for me in this way: as the tomatoes ripen and our children voice their dread about returning to school, I shall think of my father's death. He built many a fire, and grew many a rose, but he died only once. It happened in August, and I shall always remember it so.

My father's death was a singular event. However, it is not its singularity alone that causes me to mark it. For instance, last February I made my first and only trip to San Antonio. Lovely though it was, I did not pause this year in February to remember it. My visit to San Antonio and my father's death are both singular events in my life, but my father's death holds a different sort of singularity.

We might think this obvious. But is it necessarily so? I can imagine a man for whom one singular event, say, visiting Disney World or winning the lottery, is more memorable than the death of his father. Yearly, on the anniversary date, this man looks back to features of his special event, to the ride on Space Mountain or the numbers printed on the lottery ticket, with a sense of thrill or longing.

This man may be remembering quite well, that is, with exquisite accuracy, down to the exact number on the lottery ticket or the particular wild thrill he had while flying through Space Mountain. Yet according to Moses, this man

has not marked his calendar well. He has written things on it that do not belong, and left off other things that do. As Moses instructs the Israelites, whether they know it or not, *this* time, the time of Passover, must be a time above all times. All that they otherwise do or remember must relate back in some way to it: “*you shall reckon this month as the first month of the year*” (v. 1).

2. At appointed times, thou shalt stop working and begin celebrating.

If the calendar is rightly ordered according to Moses, it is marked permanently with such a phrase as “on this day God delivered the people from slavery” rather than “on this day I first visited Disney World.” Yet once the day arrives, what shall be done on it? In Exodus 12 we hear a great deal about food: preparing it, eating it and so on. Food, in fact, is in various ways the subject of memory commandments two, three, and four. Number two clears the way: if we are to begin celebrating (and feasting) we must stop working. “*On these days you shall not do any sort of work*” (v. 16).

Not working is mentioned in the real commandments, the famous ones Moses later holds aloft on the stone tablets. Number four says: “Thou shalt do no work on the Sabbath day.” The reason given there (Ex. 20:11) is rooted in the creation story where God is said to “rest on the seventh day from all the work He had undertaken” (Gen. 2:3).

Sabbath rest is difficult to understand in the modern world, for we tend to think of rest, especially on the weekend, primarily as a break from work. We go to work for five days, then leave, shutting the work door behind us, to go home to rest and relax—to play, and do as we like. So understood, rest and work are the absence of one another. The biblical understanding, however, suggests a different relation. Work is formed by rest, and rest is formed by work. Rightly understood, memory is the glue that holds them together. Neither here in the second of the memory

commandments, nor in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, does the injunction that we cease work mean we should forget it. After all, God did not forget His work of creation as He rested on the seventh day. As God rested on that day, He was not taking a break; rather, He was looking back, “seeing” or, we might say, remembering the work of the preceding six. This is important not just for understanding the rest but also the work. Indeed, if work is to have meaning and sense, what we do in our rest must relate to it. This is what celebrating does. It turns our attention to something worthy. Work well done is such a thing.

Importantly, to Moses, the content of the work matters. Peoples celebrate different sorts of great works: victory at war, or the birth of a great hero. But Moses wants us to remember and celebrate God’s work of deliverance from slavery in Egypt. For him, what we celebrate and remember will make us a different sort of people; it will indelibly mark our characters.

3. Thou shalt assemble and eat together.

We celebrate what has been done in the past and which we now remember or commemorate—and as we celebrate we almost always eat. Indirectly, then, eating is related to remembering through celebration. But for Christians (and Jews before them) there is a more direct connection. A clue lies in the fact that when we eat, we *partake*.

Terence Fretheim notes in his commentary on Exodus 12 that the “Jewish liturgy for Passover stresses that worshipers in every celebration are actual participants in God’s saving deed: God brought us out of Egypt. The Passover also serves as an important background for the New Testament presentation of the death of Jesus and the understanding of the Lord’s Supper.” Food and drink are held aloft in celebration at Passover or at the Lord’s Supper. As Christians eat the latter, we take part in the common

body of Christ, the church. As such we are joined in the history of that body which becomes present to us in memory.

Eating is the clearest and most material form of this sharing. Its symbolism in the Christian Eucharist is lofty. Yet it is also very ordinary and mundane. Eating, after all, is a very ordinary and bodily need that drives us together, as it appears to have driven the Israelites together for the Passover supper in Egypt. At this meal the Hebrews had many reasons not to save leftovers; the text suggests one of them was perhaps scarcity. Moses instructs: *“If a family is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join the nearest household in procuring one and shall share in the lamb in proportion to the number of persons who partake of it”* (v. 4). Scarcity and shared need do not by themselves create community. In fact, they can break it, for hungry people often fight over food. But by Moses’ command we join together. Once together, we cannot but notice that our needs are shared; like the disciples tensely eyeing Jesus as he joined them at table after the resurrection, watching another person eat gives us assurance that we are alike.

I suspect this recognition of likeness has something to do with the way in which conversation issues from food. It often begins with the food itself, its smell or flavor. But soon stories are told, memories shared, and what is past becomes present once again at the table.

4. As thou dost eat and assemble, thou shalt follow certain sorts of peculiar rules.

This connection between eating and remembering and reciting stories is hardly unique to Jews and Christians. Odysseus, for instance, tells a major portion of the *Odyssey* to the Phaeacians after dinner. But Odysseus was not eating Passover with the Phaeacians, and he was not recalling the story of God’s deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt. The difference in the Jewish memory is marked not

only by the distinctive company kept and the stories told, but by the food eaten and the rules about its eating. Rules such as: “*you shall eat [the lamb’s] roasted flesh with unleavened bread and bitter herbs*” (v. 8). At the very least, this introduces a great deal of precision into the menu.

In our house you can always tell when it has been my turn to cook by the state of the kitchen afterwards. This is largely because I cannot be bothered to follow a recipe. With a few notable exceptions (remembered in family lore), my efforts generally result in something quite edible, even tasty. However, I never cook the same thing twice; my sloppy style prohibits it. Food preparation for the Jews cannot be such a sloppy affair. They are people who are required to be quite precise about what is eaten, and this relates as well to being precise about what they remember.

With our pot-luck style, we Christians prefer spontaneity in our meals. However, we may need to learn from Jews on this point, if not about food, at least about memory. If we are to be a people who carries and is carried by a story that is genuinely different, if our main narrative does not involve, say, Odysseus’s clever escape from Poseidon’s cave but rather God’s redemption of the world in the death and resurrection of Christ, then the distinctiveness of this memory must work its way into our daily practices. The distinctive memory will be marked by the peculiarity as well as the precision of the practices. Eating is one such practice. In the Passover meal, the distinctive story Jews remember and tell is folded into the very food they eat. The precise pattern of the food accents the precise pattern of the story that is remembered. Following it sets the rememberers apart.

5. Thou shalt listen for thy children’s questions and answer them.

The peculiarity of the food at Passover has something to do with the fifth commandment of memory derived from

Exodus 12—when the children ask the questions. “*When your children ask you, ‘What does this rite of yours mean?’ You shall answer . . .*” (v. 26). In the sequence of the text, these words come directly after the instructions about sprinkling blood on the doorposts. Now, while doing things around the house with animal blood was much more common in Moses’ day than in our own, surely even then this ritual was somewhat odd. The oddity is important; it captures attention, and occasions questions, particularly from children. Likewise, with food, I suspect bitter herbs will draw forth more questions than will mashed potatoes. “Yeech,” says a child, “This tastes horrible! Give me one good reason why I should eat it.”

One does not usually need to give a reason to someone, child or adult, as to why we eat things like mashed potatoes. Merely sitting down at table with our children will not bring forth their queries—our common human need and desire for food makes the point of eating obvious. Similarly, we do not need to explain to our children why we engage in such practices as building houses or making money. Rather, at the dinner table or elsewhere, to occasion genuine questions from our children, we need to be doing something sort of odd, something that does not contain its own explanation.

Jesus seems concerned about something like this in the Sermon on the Mount. “*I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . . if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt. 5:46-47). Like blood on the doorposts or bitter herbs on the plate, practices such as praying for our enemies will bring forth our children’s questions. The answers, as Moses sees, can be found only in a distinctive memory.

MOSES, CHRISTIANS AND OUR MODERN LIVES

Where might this discussion of Moses and memory take Christians today? I'm not sure there is one general answer. Churches and their situations vary, and it may be that each one will need to ask specifically how it can remember better. I suspect, though, that most of us Christians will have to admit that we do not remember as well as Jews. Moses' commands about memory have been somehow easier for us to forget.

Some may say that this is because we believe one even greater than Moses has come, and He freed us from the constraints of diet and memory such as those followed by Jews. However, the case would be hard to make. For Christ, like Moses, commanded us to remember.

After he had given thanks he broke the bread and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." and "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes (I Corinthians 11:24-26).

Jesus gives this command to his disciples at the Passover feast; it clearly recalls Exodus 12. But of course for us Christians, Jesus becomes the paschal lamb. This means we will read and remember the story of Passover somewhat differently from Jews. However, the deep connection means the Jewish Passover remembrance will echo in our Christian remembrance of Christ, which we do explicitly at communion or Eucharist. If we are to become better rememberers, we must ask about our worship practices, particularly about communion. How are we faithfully responding to Christ's command to remember Him in our worship life? Or, turned toward questions of character formation, are our practices in worship forming us,

particularly our children, to be a people whose memory rests on Christ's sacrifice?

Whether by worship or by other practices, all Christians must ask themselves if the memory of Christ's sacrifice is playing powerfully in our minds and lives. September 11 and its effects on my memories of my friend's wedding at the top of the World Trade Center provides a new way to illustrate this point. First, analogically, how might the memory of the life, death and resurrection of Christ reshape our lives and memories in the way the wedding celebration has been reshaped for me by September 11? Second, more directly and critically, how might we Christians place the memory of even events so powerful as September 11 in relation to the command we were given by Christ to remember Him? Following Michael Wyschogrod, Stanley Hauerwas has cautioned Jews not to remember the Holocaust in such a way that it displaces the memory of the Passover and the subsequent giving of the Law at Sinai. A similar caution may currently be due American Christians with respect to September 11. It must not displace our memory of Christ's Passover from death to life.

Worship concerns our corporate life as Christians, as did Moses' various commands about Passover given to the Israelites in Egypt. This is a point easily obscured in modern life in the West where we like to imagine that faith in God is a private matter. This is especially important when we consider how memory shapes not just me, but us, as a people. Some memories are our own, and they matter to us individually, such as the memory of my father's death in August, which likely will remain with me until I die. Yet, when I do, it will also die with me. Its force may be deep for me, but it is also narrow and contained. By contrast, public or shared memories have genuine power through time; only they can form and carry a people.

Here again, as modern western Christians we typically believe that character formation is a private matter. We

imagine a person's character is made in the intimate setting of hearth and home, on the basis of one-on-one personal affection and caring. No doubt such things matter. But as Moses sees, within hearth and home, when our children ask us what is the meaning of the strange rites we invite them to join in, we cannot answer merely in terms of some privately held good such as, for instance, that this is the day your grandfather died. Rather, we must point their attention beyond family to God who, on this day, brought us out of Egypt or, on this day, gave up his life to redeem us.

In the first of the 5 commandments of memory, that we "rightly mark our calendars," the interaction between family and the larger story is sharpened. As a parent living among other parents in modern America, I have the strong impression that our affection for our children is killing both them and us. There is no better place to see this than on our calendars. They are filled with activities specifically for our children: parties, sports, lessons, performances, recitals, etc. This is, of course, a familiar complaint among American parents, as we all vow to cut back on something next year. But such half-hearted resolutions fail to address the underlying problem, which is, simply, that we parents have come to believe that our children are the most important things in our lives. But this is actually idolatry. Moreover, despite what the experts say, our children actually do not want to be the most important things in our lives, and the fact that they are is killing them. Deep down, they would much rather be in a position to ask us about why we do what we do ("what does this rite of yours mean?"), and to join in.

Proper love for our children must point beyond them, beyond family, to God. Calendars can help do this. Jewish calendars typically do; Christian calendars might. The church year provides the evident framework. If we mark it rightly on our calendars, Easter, or Lent, directs our memories to the story we and our children must keep and retell, before we tell the particular stories of our children's

achievements. And, again, this is as our children wish. For they know better than we do that their achievements cannot sustain a world.

Calendars can display this pattern in other ways than by the church year. Some churches have established yearly traditions that are awaited with the anticipation of a great feast day. In my own congregation, this year the youth mission trip in June has been repeatedly set before us, for funds need to be raised for it. A garage sale in one month or a hire-a-youth day the next, have focused our corporate attention on what our youth will be doing in June. This has changed the rhythm of our year; it points more clearly than last year's calendar did to the continuing story of God's redemptive activity in Christ.

The second memory commandment concerns work and celebration. Here again the privatization of our imaginations is a hindrance. The practices that form and sustain a people to remember well are public and shared, but if we conceive of our work as something we do only for ourselves or our family, stopping work to engage in these practices will have little meaning. As I believe Moses' instructions imply, celebration rightly turns our attention to work done well, the model for which is God's work in the six days of creation. We remember what has been well done or accomplished. So long as they are not thought self-sustaining, things we have done well are rightly celebrated.

In my own church we have been in search of a head pastor for almost a year. To prepare for this we had to compose a "parish profile," designed both to attract prospective pastors and assess the state of our own common life. Writing the profile moved us to celebrate the work that so many had done in years past to lead our congregation to its present place. This helped relate our own present work both to what these other Christians had done in the past to build our common life and to what God had done through them to make us the church. If we follow the command to

cease our work—not just to take a break, but rather to celebrate God’s work among us—we will better remember who we are in the context of this past work, and pursue our own in its light.

The third commandment of memory involves assembling and eating. Besides what it implies about Eucharist, I am absolutely serious when I say it should be taken to require church pot-lucks. The symbolism is almost as deep: each of us brings his gift humbly to the table (perhaps in an ugly brown casserole dish), we partake together, and later praise one another on the basis of how well we have been nourished. Beyond pot-lucks, recall also that Moses commands families to join in one another’s homes to eat the Passover lamb, as directed by each family’s needs.

A liability of living in a very rich country is that many of us are not directly acquainted with someone who lacks food. Of course, we should look carefully for those in such need. However, one widespread problem in all our communities is a lack of company, of companionship. People are eating alone. Christian families can do a great deal here simply by asking others to dinner. When they come, memory will be much involved. First, at dinner, stories will be shared. But further, subsequent generations will later recall eating in a house with an open table. Such a memory will have a great deal to do with the continuation of hospitality and communion in succeeding generations.

The fourth commandment of memory flows together with the fifth. We are directed in the fourth to do odd sorts of things at our dinner tables, and elsewhere; and just this oddity is what brings forth our children’s questions that we are to answer according to the fifth. In both commandments we are directed to consider why we do the things commanded in the first three: why we mark our calendars in the way we do, why we work and celebrate as we do, and why we assemble and eat together as we do.

It is sometimes said in America “our children are our most important resource.” We also sometimes speak of them as our “hope for the future.” These phrases are so common even among us Christians that we fail to note that they are blasphemous. Both signal that we are in danger of losing our memories, and perhaps also the God who commands us to remember. The former suggests that our current projects, the business we have in and with the world, not only sustains the meaning of our own lives, but is significant enough to be given our children’s lives as an offering. The second suggests that we expect them to rescue our own lives from the void we have lived them in, to give them meaning when we could not.

Ironically enough, the failure of one generation to remember those that went before is hardest on those who come after. For they have no one to follow. They are required, in effect, to invent their own meanings, to start over anew. But Christians should be among those who recognize that it is God in whom our hope rests, for it is God alone who makes things over anew. As human creatures it is our calling—sometimes to our delight and other times to our sorrow—to carry what we have been given and, in God’s time, pass it to our children. What we have gathered in our memories and enacted in our lives is sufficient, we believe, for our children also to enact and remember, especially as they are empowered by the Spirit who renews our faith as well as preserves it.

This is why we are ready to field their questions about why we do what we do, say what we say, or eat what we eat. Indeed, it gives us the confidence even to admit when we don’t know or to acknowledge where we have been unfaithful. This confidence is not in our children, but in the God who will be with them showing them the way when we could not. We can have this confidence because when we remember it is not our own deeds we fix upon, or even those of our forefathers and foremothers, but Christ, the lamb who

was slain. What we remember is his sacrifice—a sacrifice that redeemed human history and made us citizens of a kingdom that is able to bear that history toward its completeness at the end of time. The history we are to bear is real, and includes September 11, 2001, the day so many of the staff—who once waited table at “Windows on the World” while Jews and Christians danced in celebration—had their bodies broken and crushed to pieces or vaporized by soaring heat. We must remember such days, but we cannot do so well if we at the same time forget the night that the angel of death passed over the houses with blood on the doorposts or the night Jesus offered bread for his disciples, saying, “*This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.*”

Charles R. Pinches is professor of theology and director of graduate studies in theology at the University of Scranton in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Theology and Action: After Theory in Christian Ethics* (Eerdmans, 2002).

Suggestions for Further Reading

- Brueggemann, Walter. *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).
- Dawn, Marva. *Is it a Lost Cause: Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).
- Hauerwas, Stanley. "Remembering as a Moral Task" in *Against the Nations* (New York: Winston Press, 1985). Also in *The Hauerwas Reader* edited by John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
- Keck, David. *Forgetting Whose We Are: Alzheimer's Disease and the Love of God* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).
- Williams, Rowan. *Writing in the Dust: After September 11* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002).