

The 1999 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture

An Unexpected Prophet: What the 21st-Century Church Can Learn from Youth Ministry

Introduction

Youth ministry is not just about youth. It's about ministry, period. By its very nature, adolescence embodies, sometimes acutely, fundamental concerns about being human: Who am I? Whom can I trust? What does it mean to be in communion with others? As a result, youth ministry invites transformation for the entire church and not for youth alone. As we look for ways to renew the church in Christ's name, we can't afford to overlook a prophet in our hometown: ministry for, by, and with the young people among us.

The 1999 Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture have significant implications for ministry with youth, but they are no less important for the church at large. Kenda Creasy Dean suggests that youth ministry is the point at which Christians should reclaim a theology of desire—not for the sake of youth ministry, but for the sake of the church. Dean then posits that the postmodern crisis of fidelity calls the contemporary church to reclaim holy friendship as central to the life of faith.

Jürgen Moltmann reflects on Jacob's struggle with God at the Brook Jabbok, on his own journey to faith as a young prisoner-of-war, and on prayer as watchful expectation. He calls Christians to watch for the hidden "yes" in the suffered "no" of God. Moltmann also addresses how one becomes a "true" theologian, exploring the personal side of theology and its existential depths.

Cynthia Rigby unpacks the practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for youth ministry and for the church and demonstrates how this doctrine can help us understand the mystery of our friendships with God and with one another. She then looks at the doctrine of the incarnation from the perspective of young people seeking relevance for today and arrives at timeless truths for all God's people.

Eugene Rivers calls the church to move from a ministry of church maintenance to a ministry of true reconciliation and justice. He challenges us to listen to those beyond our comfort zone that we might serve as faithful witnesses to Christ in the new millennium.

May you find these lectures to be unexpected prophets, calling you to new understandings and new forms of ministry.

Faithfully yours,

Amy Scott Vaughn
Director of Leadership Development
Institute for Youth Ministry

1999 Lectures

Kenda Creasy Dean
Holding On to Our Kisses: The Hormonal Theology of Adolescence
The Sacrament of One Another: Practicing Fidelity through Holy Friendship

Jürgen Moltmann
Praying and Watching
What Is a Theologian?

Cynthia L. Rigby
More Than a Mystery: The Practical Implications of the Trinity in Ministry with Youth
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New Wineskins, New Models, and Visions for a New Century

WHAT IS A THEOLOGIAN?

EVERY BELIEVER IS A THEOLOGIAN

Some people may think that a proper theologian must have studied at a famous divinity school or faculty of theology. Theologians should know Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. They ought to have successfully passed diverse theological exams and must have at least a Ph.D. or a doctorate in theology. But the real top dog in theology has a chair, preferably a chair of systematic theology, because systematic theology is the crown of all the theological disciplines. No one is higher than the professor of theology except God himself. And God is curious to discover what the professor has to say about him, and consequently puts up with him with a degree of divine irony. But to prevent professors of theology from getting too much above themselves, something very unpleasant happened at creation. A legend popular in German academic circles runs as follows.

After God had created human beings, he created from among them the most beautiful, the cleverest, and the most wonderful creature he could think of: the German professor of theology. And the angels came and marveled over him. But on the evening of the same day the Devil came along and created the ugliest, the most stupid, and the most odious creature imaginable—and that was the professor's colleague.

Of course this is profoundly mortifying for the arrogant professor, but when all is said and done, his colleague is only a professor, too. So all the rivalries and conflicts remain in the family, so to speak.

But the students present a much sadder problem. The professors in Germany teach what they can and present themselves precisely as that: professors. What they see in front of them in the lecture rooms are potential doctoral students, helpful assistants, and future professors who are destined one day to carry on their schol-

arly work. But in reality most of the students in their lecture rooms don't want to take up an academic career at all. They want to be pastors for their congregations in the church. They want to know what good all the theological theories will do them later, in their sermons, in their pastoral work, and in the building up of their congregations. But about that a great many professors haven't a notion, because they were never congregational pastors themselves, and—at least in Germany—have an extremely detached relationship with their local churches.

So in the theological faculties a gulf opens up between academic theory on the one hand and pastoral practice on the other—a broad and repellent ditch. And students who then arrive in their congregations proudly equipped with a doctorate in theology have become strange and alien to normal Christians; they have to make a painful leap over that broad ditch between the educated and the uneducated, and have first to learn again that in Christ the difference between “Greeks and barbarians” counts for nothing, but that all are one. After all, the apostles, men and women both, had no Ph.D.s, and—except perhaps for Paul—none of them would have passed our theological exams.

I have vivid memories of my first congregation. I had studied theology in Gottingen, received my doctorate, and came to a little country church near Bremen. Sixty small farms, 500 souls, and 3,000 cows. So there I stood in the pulpit with all my learning, feeling pretty much a fool. Fortunately, I had spent more than three years in the hard “school of life” and had lived with farmers and workers in prisoner-of-war camps in Scotland and England. It was from those experiences that I then preached, not from the lecture notes I had taken in Gottingen. Perhaps I wasn't a great teacher for my congregation in Wasserhorst, but I did learn something there: I learned and came to understand the “theology of the people.” Every Christian, man or woman, young or old, who believes and thinks at all about that belief is a theologian. In those farming families I learned to value the general theology of all believers. I came to understand what Luther meant when he said: We are all theologians.

Omnes sumus Theologi, that is to say, every Christian.

Omnes dicimur Theologi ut omnes Christiani.

(WA 41, 11)

Ever since then I have known that if academic theologians do not go to the people, picking up and learning the general theology of the people and working for the people, they lose their basis. Their theology becomes abstract and sterile and no longer has much to say to the students who are studying in the theological faculties so that they can minister to the congregations at the grass roots. But on the other hand, this means that theology isn't just a task for the theological faculties. It is a task for

the whole people of God; the whole Christian community on earth seeks understanding.

Academic theology is nothing other than methodical, scholarly, and scientific penetration and illumination of what Christians in congregations are thinking themselves, if they believe and want to live with Christ. Good theology—I am thinking of Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Schleiermacher, and Karl Barth—is basically simple, because it is clear. It is only unclear theology that is complicated and difficult. The fundamental ideas of every great theological system require no more than a single page. It is true that Karl Barth needed more than 8,000 pages for his *Church Dogmatics*, and even then they were still unfinished. But even friendly critics have rightly objected that “truth can’t be as long as that.” Barth knew that and wrote brief introductions and summaries of his theology, too. The many pages of the *Church Dogmatics* are theological doxologies of “the infinitely bounteous God,” as Barth like to call God and, as we know, the theological praise of God knows no end.

I said that everyone who believes and thinks about that belief is a theologian. There is a common theology of all believers that is a basis for the scholarly theology of the theological faculties. But does that mean that Christian theology can only be “the doctrine of faith,” to take the name Scheiermacher gave his theology? Does it mean that only people who are “believers” or are “born again” can study and understand theology? Faith is of the essence for theology, and the experience of being “born again to a living hope” is a wonderful experience. But for all that, theology isn’t just there for believers, because God is not just a God for believers. God is the Creator of heaven and earth. God is not particularist, like belief in God. God is universal, like the sun and the rain. (Matthew 5:45) A theology just for believers would be the religious ideology of the Christian religious community, a sectarian in-group mentality, an esoteric, arcane teaching capable of being understood only by the group of the initiated. But that would be in contradiction to the God of public revelation, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Father of Jesus Christ. German pietism cherished for a while the ideal of a *theologia regeneritorum*, a theology of the regenerate, the reborn. But that theology didn’t lead to the public proclamation of the Gospel and to missionary universalism.

ATHEISTS, TOO, CAN BE THEOLOGIANS

In disputing the attempt to limit theology to Christians, let me ask: isn’t every nonbeliever who has some reason for his or her atheism a theologian, too? Atheists who have something against God, and consequently deny his existence, usually know very well what they are rejecting or have lost—sometimes even better than believers who more or less let God be God. Before I began to study theology, there

was a time when I was full of enthusiasm for Friedrich Nietzsche, who deeply influenced modern atheism, nihilism, and today's postmodernism. But when I read his book *The Antichrist*, I knew that it was Christianity with its morality of compassion that was right, not Nietzsche with his immorality of the superman. The very thing he condemned was for me the best of all. There is a protest atheism that denies the existence of God because of the suffering of the innocent that cries out to high heaven. I just read an interview with Polly Thoynebee in *Third Way* (August 1998) where she complained: "How dare [God] create the suffering? I won't have it." And she protested: "Christians are sadly mistaken." This atheism or antitheism is profoundly theological, for the theodicy question—If there is a God, why all this suffering?—is the fundamental question of every theologian, too, from Job down to the Christ dying on the cross with the cry "My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Dostoyevsky splendidly depicted theology's two sides, the believing side and the doubting side, in the brothers Karamazov, Aliosha and Ivan. Both of them wrestle with God in the face of senseless suffering in the world. But Aliosha believes, and Ivan protests. One submits, the other rebels.

The story Ivan tells is horrible enough. A Russian landowner sets his hounds on a little boy and allows them to tear him to pieces. The boy's mother is forced to look on. "What kind of harmony is that in which there are hells like this?" Ivan cries out, and declares: "Is there anyone in the whole world who could forgive and who is permitted to forgive? I don't like the harmony. I don't like it because of my love for the world. I would rather keep the unreconciled suffering.... It isn't that I don't acknowledge God, but I am respectfully giving him back my ticket to a world like this. Understand me, I accept God, but I don't accept the world God has made. I cannot resolve to accept it."

And his brother Aliosha answers softly: "That is rebellion. You say: 'Is there a being in the whole world who could forgive and who is permitted to forgive?' There is someone, and he can forgive everything, all and everyone, and for everything, because he himself poured out his innocent blood for everyone and everything. You have forgotten him. It is on him alone that the building [he means the kingdom of God] will be built. To him we can cry: 'Just art Thou Lord, for all Thy ways have been revealed.'"

Protest atheism here, theology of the cross there. Dostoyevsky portrays himself in the dissimilar brothers Karamazov. And I think the same goes for theologians. We are conscious of both sides in ourselves, the rebellion against the God who permits so much meaningless suffering, and faith in the crucified God, who suffers with the victims and forgives the perpetrators. The person who has never "contended" with God like Job did doesn't understand the crucified Christ. And conversely, the person who doesn't believe in God and his justice ends up by no

longer rebelling against this unjust world either.

True faith in God isn't a naive, childish trust. It is a continually surmounted unbelief: "Lord I believe, help Thou my unbelief." Profound faith grows up out of the pains and the doubts, the torments and the rebellions, that we permit. Life is not fair, but God is good. True faith is the strength to say "Nevertheless," and to stand fast in assailments. People who recognize God in the face of the crucified Christ have protest atheism within them—but as something they have overcome. So I can understand the atheists who can no more free themselves of their atheism than they can free themselves of the God they deny.

"I don't like these atheists," the Catholic writer Heinrich Boll once said, who was so important for postwar Germany. "I don't like these atheists. They are always talking about God." I experienced the same thing as a student pastor in secular Bremen. I liked the company of the "unchurched" atheists, because they had something against God. When I was with them I felt completely free to talk about God and faith, sometimes freer, even, than in the company of the good and the pious who were at peace with God. My experience at that time taught me that theology is not just something for "insiders"; it is for "outsiders" just as much. So theologians must not get to know just the devout and to love only the religious; they must also know the godless and love them.

HOW DOES ONE BECOME A TRUE THEOLOGIAN?

By "true," I mean here the personal side of theology and its existential depths. Theology isn't an objective science concerned with ascertainable data and provable facts. It doesn't belong to the sphere of objective knowledge over which we can dispose. The scientific concept of knowledge is not applicable to theology, because the concern impelling theology's search for knowledge cannot be "knowledge is power." (Francis Bacon) Theology doesn't aim to know its object, God, in order to dominate him. Theology belongs to the sphere of the knowledge that sustains existence, that gives us courage to live and consolation in dying. It is knowledge about the things we can rely on. It also belongs to the sphere of the knowledge that lends us bearings, the knowledge we seek in order to perceive the path we are to take.

Theology doesn't belong, either, to the sphere of technology, a skill that we acquire so as to dominate things, control feelings, and manipulate society. Of course every pastor and teacher needs the know-how to run a church or to lead a class. But true theologians are more than good religious managers, for their hearts must be in what they are doing. Without personal authenticity, no one will believe in the truth of their message.

Theology has only one problem: God. God is our passion, our torment, and our hope. But, as the *Sh'ma Israel* says, one can only love God "with all one's heart

and all one's soul and all one's might" (Deuteronomy 6:4) or not at all. It is impossible to love God if we are half-hearted and divided in mind, or only in passing, as it were, as if our love kept office hours. A theologian has to invest his own existence in his theology. Kierkegaard was right when he said that here "subjectivity is truth." But if we contribute our own existence to the search for theological knowledge, we sense immediately that God isn't a philosophical idea or a religious notion. God is a terrifying and yet fascinating mystery (a *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum*). We find ourselves caught up in a personal struggle with God, like Jacob's struggle at the brook Jabbok. It is "terrible to fall into the hands of the living God." We emerge from these struggles with God not only limping, but also blessed. For a wise old theological saying tells us that "to know God means to suffer God." We "suffer God" when we sense his absence, when God "hides his face," as the psalms put it; we sense firsthand the God-forsakenness of Jesus on the cross when "the dark night of the soul" descends on us, and we can find no answers to our questioning: My God, why? There is only silence. Luther described this out of his own experience in his second lecture on the Book of Psalms in 1519:

By living—no, much more still by dying and by being damned to hell—doth a man become a theologian, not by knowing, reading, or speculation.

(*Vivendo, immormoriendo et damnando fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo aut speculando*)

(WA 5, 163)

By saying this he was not, of course, condemning study, reading, or knowledge. But he was nevertheless pointing unmistakably to the personal experiences of God out of which theology springs and from which a theologian emerges. This isn't theology as science or technology. It is theology as wisdom made wise by life and death experience: *sapientia*.

Before people become psychoanalysts, they have to undergo analysis themselves. I think the same is true in the case of true theology. A true theologian has to have addressed and come to terms with his or her personal experiences of God—his or her fears of God and joys in God. Theologians have to assimilate their personal experiences as God-forsaken sinners and as God's liberated children, pardoned and born again to true life. They must be consciously aware of these things and must not suppress them, especially not the negative experiences of the self before God. It is good if we can perceive in a person's theology his or her own self, in the sermon the preacher and in the company of the theologian the human person. For this, theologians need the courage of their own personal convictions. They must follow their own consciences first and foremost in all things and must

not cast an anxious eye in the direction of the church authorities or fall into line with the majority in their congregation. No one must act contrary to conscience. That is an ancient, universal Christian principle.

How does one become a true theologian? Luther laid down a simple and easy-to-remember formula for this: *oratio— meditatio— tenatio*. Luther probably took this triad from monastic tradition, but it is helpful in the secular world, too.

Oratio: I understand the first precept, prayer, to mean not just special times for prayer, but the consciousness of a whole life with God and before God, praying, thanking, complaining, doubting, anguishing, singing, and rejoicing, and with all the other manifestations of life. In the world we carve out our lives and work on them. But before God we *spread* out our lives, and respond to God in what we do. Prayer is really nothing other than the adventure of a life with God. The best aids for this can be found in the psalms and the hymnbook.

The need for the special theological prayer for knowledge of God and one's self is based on the fact that our knowledge of God is not objectively accessible, because God is not an object. In order for us to know God, God has to let himself be known by us. "In thy light do we see light." (Psalm 36:9) That is why all knowledge of God in fact begins with the prayer for God's revelation and enlightenment through the Spirit: *epiclesis*. In prayer we open ourselves for what God does in us. Without this inward opening no one can perceive who God is and what he does in us. Anselm of Canterbury began his book on the proofs for God with a prayer for enlightenment by God. For him theology was still the two things: talking with God and talking about God.

In the power of our religious fantasy we can fashion many images of God and invent new names for the divine mystery. But is there any criterion to tell us what is true? I believe that prayer is an examination of the theological imagination. In praying and thanking and glorifying, we sense what will do and what won't. When we surrender ourselves to God's address to us, not just "anything goes," not just "anything will do." In prayer our best theology becomes relative. "Concepts created idols. Only wonder comprehends," Gregory of Nyssa rightly said. And prayer is the human being's great marveling over the ineffable nearness of God, who surrounds us from every side. In wonder we become like children again, and perceive the "broad space" of God's kingdom, which opens up in front of us. (Luke 18:16f.) The beginning and the goal of all theological knowledge is wonder.

Meditatio: In talking about meditation Luther didn't recommend what we understand by meditation today: transcendental meditation, inward withdrawal, self-examination. He recommended a special kind of Bible study, similar to the kind that Mary practices when, as the Christmas story tells us, "she kept all these words and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19) In this kind of Bible study we draw

the biblical words into our lives and find ourselves in the biblical stories. Here theological exegesis of Scripture and existential, personal self-interpretation belong together. They complement and deepen one another mutually. They come into being together and at the same time.

Later Rudolf Bultmann called these individual dealings with the Bible, on the one hand, and personal existence, on the other, "existential interpretation," meaning by that more than a historical-critical exegesis, on the one hand, or a personal testimony, on the other. In the generation that followed Bultmann we expanded his "existential hermeneutics" into the "political hermeneutics" of the real, political, economic, and social situation of human beings. Today the favorite expression in ecumenical circles is the "contextual interpretation" of biblical texts. This is open to every woman and to every man, to children and to the old alike. It is not an advanced skill.

A wonderful example is *The Gospel of Solentiname*, which Ernesto Cardenal wrote on an island in Lake Nicaragua, with simple peasant farmers and fishermen, during the Somoza dictatorship. The community does not just contribute personal opinions to the reading and hearing of the biblical stories and to meditation on them. The people give expression to their practical, specific situation, too, and take the biblical texts into their own context.

All biblical exegesis is contextual, but not all exegesis is aware of the fact. Once we become aware of it, we have to interpret our personal and social context just as much as we interpret the biblical stories; we must lay bare the links between the two in our meditation. But, as the word "context" suggests, it is the *text* of the Bible that is determining for its present context, not vice versa. If we confront the biblical stories and messages with our present personal and political situation, what emerges are by no means only correspondences and agreements, but rather contradictions and conflicts between what we hear from the Bible and what we see and experience every day. It is only the will to liberate this life from its humiliations and oppressions that leads out of these contradictions, so that the contradictions may turn into correspondences. There are circumstances in our lives that seem to correspond to the biblical message about God's kingdom; but there are far more circumstances in which we can see only contradictions. "The kingdom of God is not indifferent toward prices in international trade," writes German Roman Catholic theologian J.B. Metz, because on the prices depend the living and dying of the poor and the children, to whom, according to Jesus' perception, the kingdom of God belongs.

Tenatio: This brings us to the third factor that makes someone a theologian. It is the conflict where internal and external enemies emerge. These are not personal enemies; they are the enemies of the liberating and consoling Word of God. For

Luther in his time, they were the religious and political “tyrants,” as he called them. They hinder and suppress the “movement of the Gospel,” and they have to be resisted. As we know, at the Reichstag at Worms in 1521, Luther was put under the imperial ban, and hence outlawed. All the rest of his life Luther lived as an outlaw.

Believers have to resist tyrants like this for God’s sake and for the sake of their consciences. The person who doesn’t contradict won’t be contradicted; the person who doesn’t resist won’t be persecuted either. By assailments, Luther means the real political and ecclesiastical adversaries of the Gospel. When faith is subject to persecutions of this kind in the outside world, inward spiritual temptations result, too: fear and doubt, resignation, a sellout of the self, and ultimately a falling-in with the stronger power at the expense of conscience. The outward assailments and inner temptations are not regrettable side effects that people who fear God more than human beings have to put up with. For Luther they are also intrinsic proofs of the right way: “For as soon as the Word of God dawns in you, the Devil will come and afflict you.” (WA TR 1, 146) Conversely, if the Devil doesn’t come, if you are not assailed, then the Word of God has evidently not properly “dawned” in you. The person who has found peace with God comes into conflict with a peaceless world. The person whom God justifies begins to suffer from the injustice in this world and to protest against it.

LAST QUESTION: IS GOD A THEOLOGIAN HIMSELF?

This idea sounds exceedingly presumptuous, because it seems to elevate theologians to the level of God and to make them God’s colleagues. But the effect can be humbling, too, for God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways. (Isaiah 55:8) But behind this question there is a deeper one: Does our subjective knowledge of God correspond to anything objective in God, or are we merely creating illusions for ourselves about the unknowable, unnameable mystery that is closed to every human being? Are we alone with our theology, or does it correspond to something on God’s side? Are we theological realists or crazy religious fanatics?

Early Protestant dogmatics held fast to Plato and distinguished between the knowledge that God has of himself and the knowledge that created beings can have of God. The first kind of knowledge is the *theologia archetypos*, the second the *theologia ektypos*. God’s knowledge of himself is God’s perfect and immediate self-consciousness. The knowledge that created beings can have of God is inferential knowledge, which corresponds to God only remotely, and in mediated form. So our human theology is an imperfect attempt to correspond to God’s own perfect theology. That is at once its promise and its misery. On the one hand, we truly hope to correspond to God with our theology. On the other hand, the infinitely wide dis-

tance between the finite human being and the infinite God remains. Our theological statements about God are at best inadequate analogies and metaphors. All theological statements about God are no more than "similarities in still greater dissimilarity," as the Fourth Lateran Council declared in 1215. Human theology is analogical, metaphorical theology. Consequently, negative theology is always part of it, too, i.e., the theology that tries to describe or paraphrase the mystery of God not through analogies but through negations. Orthodox theology knows this as apophatic theology. So every analogical statement "God is like..." has to be accompanied by the negation "God is not like..."—a father or a king, for example.

The positive possibility that finite human beings can talk about the infinite God in analogies, and are permitted to do so, is based on the presence of God in what he has created. His special presence is found in the beings he has created to be in his "image." To be an image implies correspondence, likeness, reflection, echo, and response. So human reason is created in such a way that with its ideas and concepts it can correspond to God and can express his eternal presence in its temporal metaphors. Through his general presence in the created world, the Creator authenticates the analogical knowledge of God through the beings he has created; for knowledge of the other presupposed the community of those who are different.

But this is only general, natural theology. Special Christian theology starts from a different presence of God in the world: God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. The distant, detached relationship of the Creator to his creatures is combined with Christ's inner relationship to God. This is the reciprocal trinitarian knowing of the Son by the Father, and of the Father by the Son, in the Holy Spirit. That sounds theologically somewhat complicated, but it only means what Matthew 11:27f. says in different words:

All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.

Perfect knowledge of God the Father is possessed by the divine Son, who is of like nature with him; and vice versa. It is an exclusive knowing of God by God the Father, of the Father by the Son, and of the Son by the Father. This exclusive circle is broken through by the Son-become-human, in that he reveals it. How does he reveal it, and to whom? By calling the weary and heavy-laden to himself, and by gathering them into his relationship to God, so that they know God as they are known by God. In the liberating fellowship of Christ we are no longer dealing with analogical images of God. Here we have to do with God himself, with the knowl-

edge of the Father by the Son and of the Son by the Father. We no longer stand far off before the divine mystery, but through Jesus are led into, and accepted into, and live in the divine mystery. We know the Father of Jesus Christ and call on him as Jesus himself did: Abba, dear Father. We know ourselves like Jesus to be the messianic children of God. The refreshing of the weary and heavy-laden in this world is the revelation and indwelling of the triune God in this world. These are no longer merely metaphors for the otherworldly mystery of God drawn from the inadequate human world. This is the mystery itself: "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children." (Matthew 11:25)

We can rely on this revelation of God through Jesus Christ; we can rely on his invitation and his refreshing. We have to say to metaphors: it could be like this—perhaps! But to Jesus' knowledge of God and his revelation of God we respond: Amen, this is indeed true! With Jesus Christ, general metaphorical theology becomes concrete and performative theology, and analogical language becomes sacramental language: "If you forgive the sins of any, they *are* forgiven." (John 20:23) If one would turn around and ask, Is this true?, you can't answer, Oh, it was only an analogy of what could be, or, I only used a metaphor for the unknown divine mystery, or, Maybe. Every sentence cannot be true and false at the same time. You must take a stand and answer: They are forgiven in time and eternity. Amen, this is true. 🌸